

lengthened over two or more. It is very discouraging to see a good school, after several years of success, dragged down to the lowest level through frequent changes of the teachers, and their incompetency. Frequent complaints are made to me of the irregular attendance of families whose non-attendance cannot be accounted for by reason of distance or bad roads. The following—an entry taken from one of the quarterly reports—will show that frequent efforts to improve the attendance are not overlooked: "I have repeatedly interviewed the parents of these scholars, and received ample promises of reformation as to attendance, but very meagre performance of them." It is hopeless to expect improvement in several quarters without some drastic resolution of the Board. Further, this irregularity seriously hinders the preparation of the younger children in the preparatory classes, whose classification, now prominently before me at examination time, supplies such necessary information as enables me to watch the progress of each child. Many whose names appear for two to four years on these registers are unable to meet the simple requirements of Standard I., or the senior preparatory class. I have, in a number of instances where the ages ranged to fourteen years, tested such children, but have in every case been unable to advance the child.

The schools closed in December, 1890, with a register number of 2,701. In December, 1891, the number, reduced by withdrawals after examinations, was 2,997. The September quarter was, however, higher, the number being 3,052. The large increase in numbers includes the addition caused by the enlargement of the educational district in the same quarter. The number presented for examination was 3,005. This is exclusive of the numbers in attendance at the Pukearuhe and the Hurford Road Schools. 1,159 were presented in the preparatory classes, and 1,846 in standards. All the standards, especially Standard IV., show an increase of presentations. The absent and excepted numbers were respectively 131 and 112. The following table gives the remaining figures:—

Year.	Of Failures.	Of Passes.	On Class-subjects.	Of Additional Marks.	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Grammar.	Geography.	Inspector's Marks.
1889	25.4	39.1	51.6	46.8	89.7	82.0	92.1	73.8	70.1	52.9	61.8	64.7
1890	23.8	41.1	54.9	49.7	90.9	84.2	92.9	86.4	73.5	57.8	69.4	63.9
1891	23.9	40.5	60.7	46.9	82.7	85.8	92.3	68.4	69.2	52.1	57.2	63.2

The work of the year has again been seriously interrupted. The removals of teachers have more than exceeded those of past years, with the result that the returns are nearly similar to last year's. I did not expect to see these percentages reached. The bad effects on several of the schools are shown in the low positions they take. An occasional failure may be expected, but where so many are working under serious disadvantages which shut out all hope of success the only plan is to encourage those in charge to work, so that no ground may be lost. In doing so, several subjects have to give place, frequently through the teacher's want of experience, to the more important ones which, it is desirable, should not be allowed to drift behind. This will account for the lower percentages in several of the subjects. With the experience of a year or two, however, most of the schools now in this unfortunate position should, if further changes do not interfere, take better positions, and therefore add to the future improvement of the yearly returns. In spite of these deplorable failures, good work has been done. Higher marks have been awarded on the papers than formerly, and a number of schools are year after year taking a better position. Wherever regularity of attendance and efficient teaching go together, there are evident signs of improvement. The results from the larger schools are making this more apparent. With two or three excusable exceptions, they are giving the best results and standing highest in position. The smaller, subject to continual changes in their teaching staff, are either fluctuating one way or the other, as the ability or the inexperience of their teachers may determine. The following shows the number of schools, and a rough estimate of their percentages of failures: In six schools the percentage of failures ranged from 0 to 10 per cent.; in thirteen, 11 to 20 per cent.; in ten, 21 to 30 per cent.; in six, 31 to 40 per cent.; in two, 41 to 50 per cent.; in three, 51 to 60 per cent.; in three, 61 to 72 per cent. The work in ten of the fourteen whose percentages ranged from 31 to 72 per cent. was several times interrupted by changes of teachers, or the schools were closed for a time.

The teaching of the preparatory classes is a decided improvement on that of the past. A system of classification is now generally followed, and the instruction is fairly well graded. It would be well to have in each school the scheme of lessons written out and shown on the wall or in the class-book. This plan is followed by a few teachers. Reading has been well prepared, especially at the Central, West Infants', Inglewood, and several other schools. Occasionally its treatment was moderate only; but the attention given to its instruction is certainly an advance on former effort. In arithmetic, the preparation of addition tables is frequently put to one side, and too great prominence bestowed on the teaching of mechanical arithmetic or process-work on slates. This is a mistaken idea, for teaching on such lines will not only hinder future progress and alacrity, but develop the bad habit of counting, with its waste of time. This is undoubtedly the chief factor that is still producing so many slow workers. The best advice is to keep the slate in the background until the mental addition tables are perfectly known by the pupils. Lead them to construct their own tables by comparison of objects and figures. Teachers who know this are ever watchful at this stage of the training of these classes. I have had in a few schools to call attention to the weak instruction of slate-writing. A low standard of quality satisfied the teaching in each case. For such, a visit to schools in the neighbourhood is the best remedy to bring about reform. Object-