

The extension of settlement throughout the district is adding to the number of memorials before the Board for providing increased school accommodation. In response to these petitions three new schools were opened during the year and two others are now under contract for erection. Notwithstanding this increase in the number of the schools, and the enlargement of the Urenui, Ngaire, and Cardiff Road schools, at least four buildings in newly-settled districts are urgently required. The number of children on the school-rolls, also, has been greatly augmented, rising from 3,148 in December, 1892, to 3,358 in December, 1893. This increase of 210 is much higher than any that has obtained in previous years, and shows that the school accommodation in the country districts, where the increase in attendance has chiefly taken place, will have to be largely added to within the next few years.

The following table is the summary of results for the whole district :—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	3	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	92	4	2	31	55	14 6
" V. ...	167	8	11	71	77	13 7
" IV. ...	372	21	27	121	203	12 8
" III. ...	444	32	42	132	238	11 9
" II. ...	401	25	19	34	323	10 10
" I. ...	468	30	20	22	396	9 4
Preparatory ...	1,076	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	3,023	120	121	411	1,292	12 1*

* Mean of average age.

The percentage of passes in standards is 42·7; the percentage of failures is 24·1. The first percentage is a slight improvement on that of last year, which was 41·5; the percentage of failures is, however, higher by 2·8 per cent. This falling off in the progress of the work is beyond doubt the outcome of the frequent interruptions that were caused throughout the year, not only by the continuous and heavy rains making the roads in parts of the district impassable, but also by the severe outbreak of measles which unfortunately continued during the last quarter of the school year, when the greater number of the examinations were held. The school attendance, moreover, was for some time of so irregular a character that it was found necessary to close the majority of the schools for several weeks. In general, the largest schools in the country districts were the most unfortunate in this respect; their attendance was greatly reduced, and consequently their returns were of a more or less unsatisfactory character.

In the "class" and "additional" subjects the percentages are lower. They are 59·8 per cent. and 47 per cent. respectively. The percentages of passes in the various subjects are shown in Table IV. of the Board's annual report. Reading and drawing in all the standards, and the grammar of Standard IV., are the only subjects which have steadily progressed. Geography, composition, arithmetic, and spelling were by no means so well prepared.

Distributed over twenty-nine schools, the number of children over eight years of age in the preparatory classes was 290, of which about 65 per cent. were attending bush schools. One hundred and ten of these scholars had been irregular in attendance, ninety-one were in attendance for a less period than fifteen months, thirty-two were returned as dull, nine had been in ill-health, and forty-eight were not sufficiently advanced in preparation. The total number is an improvement on last year's return, and I have good reasons for expressing the opinion that there is a wide-spread desire on the part of the teachers to promote those pupils over eight years of age that are at all likely to succeed in Standard I. On the other hand, not a few pupils in this district are late in beginning school life, and do not pass Standard I. until they have reached an age at which pupils in other districts have passed Standards IV. and V.

While expressing my satisfaction with the work of the preparatory classes, I find it necessary to call the attention of several teachers to the need for frequently exercising the young scholars in these classes in mental addition. With practice in adding the digits arranged on the blackboard in a circle or in groups, these scholars can be trained to add rapidly and to work questions on their slates without the aid of finger or stroke counting. In reading, also, the first step in every lesson should be word naming or reading backwards; this method is the one in daily practice in the best-taught schools in the district. At this early stage, when the words of a lesson are familiarly known, word grouping should be begun, and special care taken to have the grouping natural and agreeable to the ear. Underlining the words grouped in the primer books or arranging the words in groups on the blackboard will be found useful aids to the teacher.

In Standard I. some weakness was frequently evident in the preparation of the aliquot parts of the pound sterling. Notation and numeration were very well answered, and the slate tests in addition and multiplication were rarely inaccurate. Reading, spelling, and writing were as well prepared as in former years. The hints given last year in the use of the set squares had been well received and acted upon, for I found a complete reform in the mode of manipulating them.

Although the Order in Council of the 27th April, 1893, requires that Inspectors shall not insist on a knowledge of the technical words of geometry, I found that the teachers preferred to treat such work in the junior standards as it had been prepared in the preceding year. Their reasons for doing so were that the lessons presented little difficulty and were very popular among the pupils; that the training was progressive; and to pupil and teacher the antecedent preparation lessened to a great extent the amount of work required in geometry in Standard IV.