

of when just eight pupils out of every ten satisfy the standard requirements. People whose ideas of schools have been obtained from their experience of those in towns or on main roads can form no conception of the disadvantages under which teachers and pupils in the aided schools in the back districts suffer. School-sheds of corrugated iron, unlined and unceiled, or of roughly-hewn slabs; tracks so bad that the school furniture has to be "packed" in sections from the nearest town; treacherous rivers that have to be crossed on the way to and from school—these are some of the experiences of the children of the pioneer settler during their early school-days. Considering all these circumstances, then, we confess that, were a very high percentage of passes obtained, we should be inclined to look with suspicion upon the examination-test given.

While we consider the total percentage of passes for the district on the whole satisfactory, we certainly think that in some of the large schools the higher standards might well have done better, and so the percentages in Standard V. and Standard VI. would have been higher. The percentages in individual standards are as follows: Standard I., 89·2; Standard II., 88·7; Standard III., 73·7; Standard IV., 70·9; Standard V., 62·6; Standard VI., 67·9. Standard V. was thus the weakest class; and failures in this class and Standard VI. were caused by arithmetic and geography most frequently. It is worthy of note that as many as sixty-nine schools were represented by Standard VI., and as many as eighty-three schools by Standard V., and that these high standards were found in several very small schools. Further, it often was brought prominently before us that the number of pupils in Standards V. and VI. was comparatively higher in the small schools than in the large ones; and how varying was the proportion the numbers in these standards bore to the numbers on the rolls the following table will show:—

School.	Number on Roll.	Number in Standard V.	Number in Standard VI.
Feilding	353	16	6
Momohaki	65	5	5
Foxton	247	6	5
South Makirikiri	30	1	5
Marion	327	23	7
Waverley	212	27	9
Stoney Creek	48	6	4
Turakina	63	8	2
Matarawa	27	6	1

With regard to the preparatory classes, the number of pupils on the rolls upon the examination days shows a decrease of twenty-five for the year. We are pleased to notice that during the past few years a considerable improvement has taken place in the proportion between the number in these classes and the total number on the school-rolls. In the year 1891 the number of pupils presented in standards expressed as a percentage of the roll-number read 61·5, while for 1895 a similar calculation gives 67·1.

Of the 3,067 pupils in the preparatory classes, 694 were over eight years of age. In accordance with Regulation 5, the teachers interested gave us the necessary written explanations for the non-presentation of these children in Standard I., and on the whole such explanations were satisfactory. "Under two years at school since enrolment" was responsible for 474 cases, 77 children were Maoris, and "Irregular attendance" and "Dulness" accounted for the balance. With regard to irregular attendance, we may say that it appears to us that many parents consider that the attendance of their children should be regular only when the standards are reached, the children in the meantime being sent to school only when it suits the housewife "to get them out of the way." This is a grave mistake, for a good First Standard class depends largely upon sound grounding in the primer classes. Similarly, good higher standards depend in a great measure upon the foundation laid down in the lower standards.

The average ages of those pupils passing each standard may be seen in the last column of the table. We freely confess that we think these average ages are too high as they stand represented in that column; but we desire to point out that they are very misleading, and that under the attendant circumstances of the district we do not see how they could be much lower than they are. We say these average ages are misleading, because the children at the majority of schools are much younger than appears from them. At the newly-opened bush schools, and at some very small schools, however, it is quite common to find children over ten years of age in the First Standard—*e.g.*, Taikorea, 13 years 8 months; Penberton, 12 years 2 months; Matarawa, 11 years 11 months; Moutoa, 10 years 11 months; Upper Pohangina, 10 years 10 months; Upokongaro, 10 years 7 months; and it is such schools as these chiefly that are responsible for the raising of the averages. We say "these schools chiefly," for there were two or three large schools where the average ages were abnormally high.

INSTRUCTION.—Owing to the changes in the Inspectorate during the year we do not purpose to write at length under this heading; also, reports in past years have been so full in this direction that there is nothing new to note about the work done in several subjects, and there is really no need for extended remarks from us. We will, accordingly, confine our attention to those subjects in which the work obtained at the examination was least satisfactory.

Arithmetic.—The examination-cards were issued, as in 1894, by the Education Department. In Standard VI. and Standard V. the failures were for the second time more frequent than they used to be when the tests were drawn up by your Inspectors. It is only natural that this should be so for a time, because, while the Inspectors did not demand in Standard VI. a knowledge of compound interest, present worth, and true discount, and in Standard V. did not set questions in compound proportion, or in time, rate, and principal in connection with simple interest, the department not only exacted the fullest requirements of the syllabus, but also took, to our minds, a stringent view of those requirements. In Standard IV. the cards for last year were easier than