

Reading.—More attention is now being paid to the preparation of the lessons; but we find here a complaint which appears to be very general throughout the colony, that the course of reading is not nearly wide enough. Our recommendation to teachers *re* the use of extra readers, though followed by many, has not been universally adopted, and consequently we feel constrained to insist next year upon the full preparation, both for reading and spelling, of two books at least in each of the following standards: I., II., and III. Though this course may appear heavy at first, especially in Standard III., the results should be a more thorough grounding in the lower classes, and, consequently, greater ease and pleasure in the work of the higher. A wider course of reading should give a greater command of English, be an additional aid to composition, increase the child's general knowledge, awaken his intelligence, induce him to read for pleasure, and develop a taste for literature. We beg to call the attention of Committees to the matter of school libraries, towards the general extension of which much remains to be done.

On our inspection visits we find that too little teaching is given, the children simply being made to read and re-read selections from their books till in the lower classes they know them by heart, and yet no indication of the correct phrasing or grouping of words is given, little model reading, and in the higher classes no questioning to elicit the meaning of a phrase or passage as distinct from that of a word. As extra readers for the use of the higher classes we recommend, in addition to our stock of geographical and historical readers, three recent publications—the “New Zealand School Reader,” Longmans’ “Geographical Reader for New Zealand,” and Nelson’s domestic-economy reader entitled “Girls at Home.” Committees would be doing good work in providing a small stock of extra readers for each school; and, as the children would not be required to make a special preparation of the matter contained in them, it would be always fresh, the books would be always available, being never allowed out of the schoolroom, and they should, with care, last for many years.

Spelling.—In addition to the dictation tests prescribed, a few words of spelling selected from the reading-books were given this year, and for these a proportionate allowance was made. In a few schools we found the more difficult words correctly spelt, whilst mistakes in the simpler passages of dictation were numerous. This would show that likely words had been specially prepared for examination to the neglect of transcription, or that the children had not paid sufficient attention to or had their powers of observation awakened in the reading-lessons. The best results were produced in Standard VI., and the reduced number of failures in the higher standards may be taken as a proof that the natural difficulty which so many experience with this subject is year by year being overcome.

Writing.—Legibility, neatness, and cleanliness may be fairly said to characterize the writing in almost all our schools, the exceptions being few and far between. What is now chiefly to be desired is a closer attention to the rules for forming and joining the letters. In using Jackson’s Vertical copy-books, which are generally adopted throughout the district, it is imperative that the letters shall be so joined that the pen need not be raised until a word is completed, the dotting of the *i*’s and the crossing of the *t*’s being done at the conclusion of the word. This ought to be insisted on in the preparatory stages when the whole of the writing is done from the blackboard, so that when the children make a beginning in copy-books they have nothing to unlearn. The transcription generally gave satisfaction, although some teachers had not closely adhered to the syllabus, which prescribes a different kind for each standard.

Drawing.—From the books produced for our inspection and containing the year’s work of the pupils we see that the children are trained to work neatly and carefully, but too often with a laboured stiffness and lack of boldness and freedom that betray little facility of hand; and many of the freehand and model-drawing tests done before us showed that it is one thing to produce under the eye and correction of the teacher a neat and faithful copy, and another to make a pleasing picture without such supervision. The child’s unaided effort is the best test of his proficiency, and unless he is therein successful the chief aim of the study, the training of the eye, has not been accomplished. Although in the main the syllabus is carefully followed by the teachers, in many cases they appear to have overlooked the regulation providing for the enlargements and reductions of copies in Standards V. and VI. We are pleased to note some improvement in model-drawing, and capital work is often produced in scale and geometric drawing, the latter branch being sometimes taken by the girls as well as the boys.

Pupils from Richmond Boys’ School competed in the first-grade examinations held by the Wellington Technical School, and were very successful in each of the four branches. We regret that more do not avail themselves of these examinations, and would strongly advise all teachers and probationers who do not possess a certificate for drawing to compete for the second grade certificate. We take this opportunity to remind teachers that these examinations may be held in their own schools, for the first grade usually in September, and for the second in November, provided that written notice is given to the secretary before the close of July or October respectively, and that suitable arrangements are made.

Arithmetic.—As the use of the term “pass” in any subject draws no distinction between work that is merely satisfactory and work that is really excellent, a list of passes or failures is not by any means an accurate criterion of the quality of the work produced; but, as such a numerical estimate has a certain value, we hope we may be excused for again quoting figures in order to show the progress made during the year.

The number of failures in arithmetic as a percentage of the number present in each standard:—

			Standard VI. Per Cent.	Standard V. Per Cent.	Standard IV. Per Cent.	Standard III. Per Cent.
1894...	...	...	69	61	55	39
1895...	...	...	51	57	40	29