

as I considered necessary, including new fences, repairs to fences, improvements to grounds, &c. I have also added a list of necessary requisites for each school, and I should be glad if the Board would supply these as soon as possible; for, where some teachers are to be found who, with commendable zeal, always make the best of everything, taxing their inventive powers to supply any deficiency in teaching materials, and who always do good work even in adverse circumstances, there are others who, for lack of some requisite, will be ever ready to make that an excuse for their shortcomings.

THE HEALTH OF THE TEACHERS AND THE TAUGHT.—Notwithstanding the very severe winter that was experienced this year, the health of all has been very good. In one or two instances country schools were closed for the midwinter vacation rather before the prescribed time in consequence of a falling-off in the attendance caused through some epidemic, which, however, speedily passed away, and I do not think the attendances were very materially affected on that account. In no case has a school been closed owing to ill-health on the part of the teacher. In order to guard against an event of this kind occurring, the health of the teacher should be studied as far as possible, especially where so many females are employed, as is the case in this district. With this object in view I would ask the Board to consider the advisability of supplying schools with high desks and stools, which should be placed on platforms, conveniently situated and raised slightly above the level of the floor, in lieu of tables and chairs as at present. Teachers would then be able to rest, and at the same time have a complete view of their classes—impossible under present conditions—and such signs of physical and mental strain as haggard and weary faces, hands involuntarily raised to the head, &c., which I have constantly observed, especially with regard to our female teachers, and which must eventually have some effect on their constitutions, would be at least mitigated.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—Irregular attendance still plays an important part among our schools, and the Act whereby Committees are empowered to enforce attendance is practically a dead-letter. I see it is now suggested to transfer the power from the Committees to the Boards, and I think if this is effected it will go far towards remedying the evil from which all teachers suffer, more or less. I should like to see another column inserted in the present examination schedules in which the total number of attendances made by each child could be recorded. I find having this very necessary information under my eye at the time of examination a great convenience, and the work of the teacher for the year is not prejudiced by any ill effects which might otherwise be produced by the quality of the work of those pupils whose names appear in the bad-attendance list.

THE ANNUAL EXAMINATION.—All the schools under the Board were examined. The results obtained were in most cases better than those of last year, and the quality of the work was of a much more uniform character. Schools where little or no method was shown last year in setting out work have made vast progress in this respect, and anything like slovenly work is now rather an exception throughout the district. The syllabus is fully complied with in our largest school, and almost all the country schools have made strenuous efforts to work as near to the full requirements as possible. I may here state my appreciation of the manner in which the teachers, as a rule, have received suggestions from me with reference to various improvements in their schools, and of the way in which they have endeavoured to meet my wishes.

The following is a summary of results: Total presented for examination, including infants and class above Standard VI., 1,684; total presented in standards, 1,066; total present in standards, 1,007; total passed, 829.

ATTENDANCE.—The attendances at the examinations were exceptionally good, there being but few absentees throughout the district, and where these were recorded very satisfactory reasons were forthcoming in every case.

TEACHERS' EXAMINATION OF STANDARDS I. AND II.—With but one or two exceptions (these in the very small schools) the discretion displayed by the teachers in their examination of Standards I. and II. was very satisfactory indeed.

THE INFANT CLASSES.—In our larger schools these classes receive excellent instruction, and the children are well advanced in their work; but in the smaller ones, where there is only one teacher, sufficient time cannot be devoted to these classes to bring them to anything like such an efficient state; in all these schools teachers would find it advantageous to have their primer classes more advanced.

THE PASS-SUBJECTS.—Reading.—In most schools a great improvement has been effected in this subject, and the pupils show by their reading they have a good grasp of the matter contained in the lesson. In a few of the smaller schools, however, the reading is still utterly devoid of expression.

Writing.—I should like to see a more uniform improvement in this subject. Whilst some schools, notably Greymouth and Ahaura, produced exceptionally fine writing, others, chiefly the smaller schools, produced quite the reverse.

Arithmetic.—This subject was as a rule well treated, a more extended use of the unitary method having proved most beneficial. In almost every school all the questions were attempted, thereby showing faithful and honest treatment of the subject.

Spelling.—This is still well treated, and, as a rule, the children proved themselves quite equal to the tests imposed.

Composition.—Satisfactory progress may be recorded with reference to this subject. I might, however, point out that the teacher's aim should not be so much that the pupils should be able to write a certain number of lines on some one of half a dozen subjects, as that they should be able to express their own ideas simply and grammatically. A much larger variety of subjects would afford greater facilities for teaching this subject, and the work produced at examinations would not have such a mechanical appearance.