

Writing and drawing are, with few exceptions, well taught. The pass results of first-grade examinations in drawing for this year as compared with last are here shown :—

			Freehand.	Geometry.	Scale.	Model.
1895	...	...	777	1,263	689	387
1896	...	...	819	1,063	1,006	418

Eighty-three schools presented candidates. The marked feature of the year is the improvement in the character of the model-drawing. Owing to the progress made in our science instruction, especially in chemistry, and to the publishing of better text-books, the time has arrived when modification in the syllabus will be advantageous; and we purpose in our "Suggestions to Teachers" making some changes which now appear necessary, but still retaining a choice of subjects, including domestic economy with physiology for girls' classes. During the past year the magic-lantern has been adopted in several schools, to which the Board is able to lend a selection from about four hundred slides, illustrating travel, biology, and astronomy.

The teaching of singing and drill is satisfactory. The former improves year by year in all our large schools, and in smaller schools where it can be taught. The efficiency of the drill is well maintained by the military instructors, and fairly well by the head teachers for other classes and in small schools. Of the large schools, the best drilled, on the whole, is Te Aro, to which Clyde Quay and Newtown come very closely.

In history and geography, including the physical geography programme and the making of prescribed maps, much good work is done, and we are generally satisfied with it. In future years physical geography examination will be taken *viva voce*.

We have nothing much to add to our remarks last year on the grammar and composition. In schools where this work has been begun in Standard II. we notice the best results.

The general order, discipline, control, and management of our schools have much improved during late years. Most of the head teachers in charge of these schools have held their appointments unchanged for many years, and they have proved themselves men of large practical experience and increased usefulness. Changes in the teaching power are not now made anywhere so often as formerly, and this is all in favour of better work being done. We are pleased to notice that commands in class are often given by a sign from the teacher; the children are being taught to speak more distinctly, so that questions need not be repeated, and to give their answers in a connected form; that the uses of porches for class-rooms is being discontinued; that children answer more readily when spoken to; and that in many schools they are more respectful in behaviour. But the old-time drawback of irregular attendance still faces every teacher, although experience shows that the highest average attendances are maintained in the best schools, and in classes taught by the most popular teachers. Still the evils of irregular attendance cannot be apparent to the average parent. On examination we often find that the results come out in order of merit almost in the same order as the attendances made. This speaks well for the teaching, but badly for the neglectful parent. To show how far this irregular attendance is the great hindrance to progress in a system of free education, we will quote a few extracts from this year's special reports which have been sent to the several School Committees: "It was very disappointing to find only eighty children present out of 113 on as fine a day as any one could wish for." "The teachers are hardworking, but are considerably hindered by irregular attendance of many pupils." "Out of 116 candidates there were only six failures, all of whom were either weak or irregular pupils." "The teachers work hard, but they have to contend with such difficulties as a shifting population and great irregularity of attendance." "Roll, 99; the average attendance for first three weeks of the quarter was below 65." "The average attendance is considerably lower than it ought to be." "The irregular attendance of many of the children militates against the work of the head master. The average attendance since the winter holidays has been only 71 per cent. Such a low percentage materially affects the work of the school." "The day of my visit was fine, but the attendance was very poor, being only 59 per cent. of the roll." "On books, 72; present, 49." "On books, 49; present, 29. Weather fine."

Touching the question of attendance, we would call the Board's attention to the low physical condition in which many children daily present themselves. They arrive at the school practically with their physical, and we might also say mental, energies exhausted; and the time in school is a time for resting their limbs and recouping their energies. Here is a case in a small country school in the Wairarapa. The boy gets up at daylight, milks four cows, walks three miles to school and home again, and then has to set to work again when he gets home. On making full inquiries into the cases in a large school, in which we had reason in part to excuse the head teacher for some deficiencies in the work of older boys, we obtained a return of thirteen boys in Standard VI. who each milked from two to ten cows (average over four), or did equivalent farm-work, every morning, getting up sometimes before, and generally soon after, daybreak, working from two hours to four hours and a half before leaving for school, and travelling generally from one mile to four miles and a half to school. They afterwards travelled the same distance home in the evening, and worked from an hour and a half to three hours before going to bed. Is it reasonable, we ask, for parents to exact so much manual labour from young lads? Or is it reasonable to look for educational results from boys whose physical energies are so continually exhausted?

"The Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act, 1892," has not operated largely in this district. Two small schools at Paraparaumu and Cross Creek are teaching a little manual instruction; cookery is taught at the Clyde Quay School, Wellington, and classes are about to be opened in Masterton, but not in connection with the public schools there. In England the teaching of manual instruction to boys, which means the handling of tools, the making of simple articles in wood, metal, &c., is making great progress. Instruction in cookery for girls is also becoming very popular in large centres. We are quite in sympathy with efforts made in the right direction to give such instruction. It should not, we think, be a part of the ordinary teacher's work, and it should