

district the children in the preparatory classes who are over the age of eight years is 9·4 per cent. of the whole number attending school.

The numbers returned as belonging to the schools at the close of each quarter are naturally different from the totals as shown in the examination schedules. The average roll-number for the whole year, as represented by the quarterly returns of school attendance, was 7,505·75, and the average attendance was 6,256, or 83·3 per cent. of the average roll. For examination purposes the children as entered on the examination schedules by the teachers numbered 7,221, of whom 4,561 were presented in standards, and 2,660 in the preparatory classes. These numbers do not include the 172 children belonging to the Catholic schools in Meanee and Gisborne, who were examined in similar tests to those given in the public schools. The number actually examined in standards in the Board schools, excluding twenty-nine pupils who had already passed Standard VI., was 4,449, or 113 more than in the previous year; and the actual passes were 3,628, or 81·5 per cent. of the whole number examined. These results bear favourable comparison with those of previous years, and they show that steady progress continues to be made in the average work throughout the district. And it is but common justice to the staff of teachers who carry on the work at the Meanee Catholic School to say that progress and improvement are as perceptible in that school as in the other schools of the district.

The following table shows in summarised form the complete results for the year, and for the purpose of comparison the totals for 1895 are also added :—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined.	Failed.	Absent.	Passed.	Percentage of passes to examined.	Average Age of those that passed.	Improved or otherwise, in Proportion of Passes.
							Yrs. mos.	
Above Standard VI.	29	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	257	256	80	1	176	68·7	14 0	Fallen.
" V. ...	561	549	145	12	404	73·5	13 2	Improved.
" IV. ...	774	759	158	15	601	79·2	12 5	Improved.
" III. ...	962	941	227	21	714	75·8	11 2	Fallen.
" II. ...	999	983	118	16	865	88·0	10 0	Fallen.
" I. ...	979	961	93	18	868	90·3	8 11	Improved.
Preparatory ...	2,660	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals for 1896	7,221	4,449	821	83	3,628	81·5	11 7*	Improved 1·8 per cent.
Totals for 1895	7,086	4,336	880	97	3,456	79·7	11 6	...

It is interesting to notice the fewness of pupils absent from examination. In outlying districts especially one is sometimes surprised to find even on wet days all the pupils present at examination and in time. Thirty schools had no pupils absent on examination-day, thirteen others had only a single absentee, and the largest number absent from any school was nine. Napier, with a roll of 1,000 pupils, had six absent; Gisborne, with 617 pupils, had three away; and Hastings, with 537, had only one absent. A good deal perhaps may be set down to the fine weather that generally prevailed, but I cannot help feeling that much must be placed to the credit of the teachers and to the desire on the part of the children to pass the examination for promotion to a higher class.

The numbers presented in Standards I., II., and III. approximate each other very closely, but the passes show a wider contrast. Compared with last year the passes in Standards II. and III. have fallen about 2 per cent., but Standard I. shows an improvement of nearly 4 per cent. The results in Standards I. and II. are those of the teachers themselves, for, as pointed out by me last year, Regulation 6 of the Standards of Instruction gives absolute control for pass purposes of these standards to the head-teacher of a school, and the Inspector has no alternative in the matter, so long as pupils meet the Inspector in class on examination-day. The presentations in the three higher standards when read along with those of 1895 show how many young children leave school before they succeed in passing either the Fourth, Fifth, or Sixth Standard. Thus, in Standard III. 704 pupils passed the requirements in 1895, and 200 failed to pass Standard IV. at the same time. These together give 904 pupils as actually belonging to Standard IV, at the beginning of the year, but, as shown in the above table, only 774 were presented for examination: in other words, 130 children belonging to this standard are not accounted for. In the Fifth Standard there were 561 presentations, but 739 pupils belonged to this standard according to the results of the previous year. Here 178 pupils are missing. In Standard VI. there ought to have been 363 pupils, whilst the presentations were 257, or 106 short. It thus appears that during the year 23 per cent. of the pupils in the Fourth Standard throughout the district, 24 per cent. in the Fifth Standard, and 30 per cent. in the Sixth Standard left school after obtaining either a Third, a Fourth, or a Fifth Standard certificate. Appended to this report are tabulations giving the separate results for each school. These need some explanation as it is possible that some of the figures make schools to appear better than they really are. A high percentage of passes is not necessarily the criterion of a good school, although it is usually a characteristic. Some schools have a fairly high percentage of passes, but they have few children in the higher standards, the passes belonging mainly to Standards I., II., and III. A really strong school is one well balanced throughout, and it is curious to find that this characteristic is more common to the

* Mean of average age.