

ever system be adopted individuality will influence the hand after the pupils leave school, sometimes producing improvement, sometimes deterioration, and the latter cannot be wondered at if we consider in how many cases children's "fingers are all thumbs."

My remarks in last year's report on drawing and arithmetic still hold good. Composition in Standard III. was generally satisfactory, and in Standard IV. showed an improvement, though much still remains to be done. Except in a few schools the composition in Standards V. and VI. was indifferent, and much of the teaching had been confined to setting and correcting simple exercises.

Geography in Standard III. was satisfactory, but in Standards IV. to VI. it was responsible for many failures. The physical and mathematical geography was generally very poor.

In Standard III. grammar is, as a rule, satisfactory, and is taught intelligently. In Standard IV. and upwards, however, it is poorly taught. In Standard IV. the pupils have to distinguish adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions, but as little care is taken with these satisfactory answering is confined to the parts of speech studied in Standard III. As the grammar of Standard III. is by no means heavy, it would be well for teachers to give pupils at least a fair idea of all the parts of speech, as they would be less liable to make errors in their own work. In Standards V. and VI. the work was rarely satisfactory.

Science is a subject that does not produce satisfactory results. The lack of suitable apparatus is a great drawback, but, as I have previously pointed out, much might be done by the teachers to obtain simple inexpensive means for illustrating the lessons. The term "science" makes teachers that have had no scientific training afraid of the subject, but as defined in the standard regulations it is by no means alarming. If teachers looked upon it as "useful knowledge" of natural phenomena less difficulty would be found in producing satisfactory results. Thus, in agricultural knowledge the pupils should not be required to learn off long tables of silicates, phosphates, and carbonates, terms which they cannot understand, but they can readily be led to understand how a plant absorbs its food from the soil which in time may become "exhausted." Technical terms should be used only so far as they are necessary to an understanding of the lessons. Ability to say off a string of (to children) meaningless names does not constitute knowledge.

Singing is a subject much neglected in our schools. At inspection one very seldom hears a note sung, and at examination a couple of simple songs may be all that can be shown for the year's work. In only a few schools are marching songs sung during admission and change of classes. I should like to see special lessons of instruction taken at least once a week, and singing forming a prominent part of the school work. It might be taken also as a reward for diligence, and as a relaxation and stimulus when the pupils are tired with routine work. In large infant departments it is of the greatest importance, and ability to teach it should be a *sine qua non* in the appointment of an infant mistress. Where it is systematically taught the pupils look forward to the lesson and thoroughly enjoy it. For their certificates teachers are examined in singing, but so far as practical results are concerned the examination is in many cases a failure, for when certificated teachers are asked to teach singing they avow they cannot do so, and are with the greatest difficulty prevailed upon to attempt it.

In carrying out the examinations I endeavour to make the school work of practical importance to the pupils after they leave school. Thus, in Standard IV. bills have to be made out, and I take round the printed forms and require them to be properly filled in and receipted. Letter-writing, again, is generally taken on foolscap, but I found that the pupils acquired so many false ideas that I provide note-paper and envelopes. When I first did this the pupils ruled margins to the note-paper, wrote the addresses on the last sheet, and omitted the beginnings and endings, but now in nearly the whole of our schools the pupils know the correct forms for ordinary letters, and address the envelopes fairly well.

The order in the schools as a whole is very satisfactory. Occasionally, however, lax discipline is met with, and is sometimes a cause of friction during the examinations, for I have been compelled to personally check talking and surreptitious assisting, a thing it is most undesirable an Inspector should be obliged to do. Where the order is good the work proceeds smoothly and pleasantly, for one can relax a little to overcome any nervousness or timidity on the part of pupils and to gain their confidence, but where the order is poor one has to assume control to insure that the results laid before the Board really represent the work of the individual pupils, and is thus placed at a great disadvantage. Class-motions, admission, and dismissal are not always so orderly as might be. During my visits the pupils were well-behaved, courteous, and eager to do their best.

I have, &c.,

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc., Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Board Office, Wanganui, 28th February, 1898.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui district for the year ending the 31st December, 1897.

Number of Schools.—At the close of the school year 127 schools were in active operation, as against 123 at the close of 1896. During the year new schools were established at Utiku and Moawhango in the interior, and at Anderson's Road near Eltham, while Komako in the Pohangina Valley was re-opened. Teachers' residences were erected at Marton, Hawera, Birmingham, Apiti, and Cheltenham. Several school buildings were enlarged.

Enrolment.—For the last quarter of the year the average weekly roll-numbers were: Males, 5,261; females, 4,929: total, 10,190, as against 10,077 for the corresponding quarter of 1896. For