1898.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:

REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.–1B, Sess. II., 1897.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Auckland, 12th March, 1898.

I have the honour to submit the usual report for the year 1897.

At the close of the year there were 359 public schools in the Auckland District, being eleven more than at the end of last year. Of this number, 354 were examined. The remaining five were opened after the examinations of the neighbouring schools were completed. Three hundred and thirty-one schools were inspected, mostly in the earlier part of the year. This number includes nineteen half-time schools, in which only one of the pair of grouped schools was visited for inspection. Of the remaining schools, four were closed when the inspection of the neighbouring schools was taken, and could not be revisited later; five were opened after the usual time of inspection; and three small schools could not be inspected from want of time to overtake the work.

At the beginning of the year 1894, when 308 schools were in operation, an additional Inspector was added to the staff. Since that date the number of schools has risen to 359. The new schools are almost without exception small rural schools, which have not added largely to the number of pupils in attendance, though from their situation they have taken up a large amount of the Inspectors' time in visiting and examining them. In addition to this, the last three years have witnessed a notable increase in the size of a number of the schools in the suburbs of the City of Auckland, and especially in the goldfields of the Coromandel Peninsula and of the Upper Thames district. Through this expansion the number of pupils presented for examination during the year is greater by 3,614 than the corresponding number at the beginning of 1894. With these facts in view the Board will readily understand that the burden laid on the Inspectors is again growing heavy, and that it has taxed their energies and industry to the utmost to overtake the work of the year.

The following table shows in summary the chief examination results for the year:—

TABLE I.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	234	...	...	...
Standard VI.	1,427	1,385	1,106	14 2
" V.	2,468	2,360	1,813	13 2
" IV.	3,681	3,513	2,498	12 5
" III.	3,899	3,727	3,086	11 3
" II.	3,539	3,421	3,146	10 2
" I.	3,345	3,251	3,141	9 0
Preparatory	9,433	...	...	...
Totals	28,026	17,657	14,790	11 8*

* Mean of average age.

These figures show for the year an increase of 1,252 in the number of pupils presented, and an increase of 901 in the number of pupils that passed in one or other of the standards. Approximately 84 per cent. of the pupils examined in standards passed, a result that is to be regarded in the gross as satisfactory. In all the classes in which the passes have been determined by the Inspectors there has been an advance in the percentage of passes, and in Standard V. the advance has been considerable.

There has been a slight reduction in the ages at which Standards VI., V., II., and I. were passed, and an increase of one month in the case of Standard IV.

As the ordinary statistics prepared year by year for the Education Department do not throw much light on the efficiency of the instruction given in the several pass-subjects included in the regular course of study I have had the following return (Table II.) prepared for the information of the Board. Its compilation involved a good deal of trouble, a considerable part of which was willingly undertaken by the teachers; but the light it throws on the strong and the weak points of the teaching in the public schools yields ample compensation for the labour involved in its preparation. The table shows the number of pupils examined in each of the standard classes, and the number of passes gained in each of the pass-subjects for each standard. The results given under Standards I. and II. are determined by the head-teachers, who now examine these two classes for the standard pass. In the other standard classes the results given are those of the Inspectors' examinations. To facilitate comparison a few of the results have been expressed as percentages.

TABLE II.

Showing the results of examination in the several pass-subjects of each of the standards:—

Standard.	Number examined.	Passes in									
		Reading.	Spelling and Dictation.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.		Composition.		Geography.	
							P. cent.		P. cent.		P. cent.
VI. ...	1,427	1,316	1,213	1,344	1,349	828	58	1,155	81	1,165	82
V. ...	2,468	2,218	2,007	2,267	2,272	1,533	62	1,945	79	1,844	75
IV. ...	3,681	3,190	2,847	3,306	3,323	2,314	63	2,645	72	2,428	66
III. ...	3,899	3,442	3,141	3,543	3,556	2,989	77	3,230	83	3,028	78
II. ...	3,539	3,138	3,151	3,229	3,198	2,850	81	...	...	...	...
I. ...	3,345	3,094	3,095	3,202	3,180	3,071	92	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	18,359	16,398	15,454	16,891	16,878	13,585	...	*8,975	...	*8,465	...

* Out of a total of 11,475.

A brief examination of this table shows that the subjects of reading, spelling and dictation, writing and drawing, are in general efficiently taught; that composition is taught with considerable success; that there is great weakness in the teaching of arithmetic in the upper standards; and that there is some weakness in the teaching of geography, particularly in Standard IV. The inferior results in arithmetic and geography are not attributable to the high standard expected for passing, for in both the standard is less exacting than in spelling and dictation, and in composition. The inference is that they are due to inferior teaching, and this is, I think, certainly true of arithmetic, and to a considerable extent of geography also. In judging of the results it is necessary to bear in mind that failure to pass does not mean that the pupils who failed showed no knowledge of the subject or subjects in which they failed. It shows only that their knowledge did not come up to a satisfactory standard: in arithmetic, for example, the boys who failed did less than three-fifths, and the girls less than a half, of the work set for them to do. As a matter of fact, a large proportion of those who failed in arithmetic did two sums out of the five that were set. Bearing this in mind we must still conclude that the teaching of arithmetic in the three upper standards is much less efficient than it should be, and much less efficient than the mass of the teachers believe it to be. For teachers are very good at extenuating the failure of their pupils in arithmetic, and generally flatter themselves that they could and should have done much better. This optimistic view of the case I do not share, and I believe it is largely fallacious. The pupils have ample time to do the sums set, and throughout the year these have been as fair examples as could be given, except occasionally in Standard VI.; yet in school after school, and, in fact, year after year, the record in this subject bears the same unfavourable complexion. The chapter of accidents is no doubt an elastic thing, but it can hardly explain so uniform and persistent a feature of the examination results as this.

The inefficient teaching of arithmetic in the upper standards is, I believe, mainly due to the two following causes, but principally to the second. The first is the want of a sufficiently ready and accurate knowledge of tables and of simple operations involving their use that still prevails in the upper standards of a good many schools, though it has well nigh disappeared in the lower. We often see the pupils of Standard III. and Standard IV., and sometimes even more advanced ones, putting down small numbers of pence and formally dividing by twelve to change them to shillings; and we find them unable readily to make the simple transformations frequently required in changing one denomination to another, or in changing fractions from one denominator to another. This is a defect that can be cured only by sufficient oral drill in such transformations, and teachers must see to it that the necessary practice in appropriate oral and mental exercises is given.

But the chief cause of our failure to teach arithmetic better than we do is this: the teaching is not thorough enough; it does not give a clear and sure knowledge of the reasoning and the principles which the pupils are constantly applying in the working of examples. I do not mean that the teaching is unintelligent or deliberately careless, for this is seldom the case, but that it is not driven home; that the pupils are not trained to re-state the explanations given by the teacher; and that they can seldom tell clearly, even when an example has been worked through, what we want to

find, what facts or data are given us to work from, and how we reason out the solution. This indictment, I believe, applies to the majority, perhaps even to more than the majority, of our teachers. If teachers who doubt its correctness would take the trouble, after working out an example and by preference a problem, to ask their pupils, while the details are still clearly before the class on the blackboard, to describe shortly how they did the sum, giving not every detail (as they are very prone to do), but the main—the cardinal—steps in the reasoning, they will probably be much surprised at the result, and make a discovery of the first importance for themselves and their pupils. It is my custom at inspection visits to use this kind of test of the clearness and thoroughness of the teaching a good deal, and this is what I find: the pupils cannot rise above the details; they lose sight of, or never grasp, the principles and the real steps in the reasoning, and generally fail signally in giving any concise and clear statement of what has been done. The principles, which are nearly always few and simple, are obscured and lost sight of in the minute consideration of details of adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing. In short, the pupils do not see the wood for the trees, as the old saw has it.

Too many teachers assume that if a pupil manages to get the answer to a sum he knows all about it. This is very often a most mistaken assumption, as would be evident were the pupil required to state clearly how he had worked it out. In many cases, it would be found, he has puzzled it out by a process more akin to guessing than to reasoning, though he is quite unconscious of this, and looks surprised and humiliated on finding that he cannot tell clearly how he proceeded. He finds he is in a fog, and to learn that this is his real mental condition is a most salutary lesson for him.

Even in the most common routine work this fault of the current teaching may be seen. Ask a child what he must do to the fractions $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ before he can add them and he is at a loss for an answer. He has most likely never had impressed on him that he must change both fractions into others of the same value and having the same denominator. This fundamental principle he seldom knows; all he does know is that he must by a rule of thumb find the L.C.M. of the denominators, divide this L.C.M. by the denominator in each case, and multiply the numerator by the quotient. It is a sort of magic, but it gets the answer in the book; and what more can any one want? We want this and all other processes to be made agents in the training of intelligence; and to instil this virtue into the process our pupil must be got to see that he multiplies the numerator and the denominator of the first fraction by 3, and of the second one by 2, which gives him two new fractions, $\frac{3}{6}$ and $\frac{2}{6}$, that are of the same value as the original ones, and can now be added together, as they are fractions of the same kind. Take again the case of simple proportion. Ask a pupil what we wish to find in a particular sum and he will usually tell you. Next ask him what question he must ask himself before he can state the first two terms of the proportion, and in six cases out of ten he cannot tell you. These are not mere random assertions; on the contrary, they are statements founded on a good deal of careful inquiry. Many of our teachers handle arithmetical examples at the blackboard with great clearness and intelligence, and one would at first sight expect the teaching to be fruitful, but it fails for reasons that can be clearly assigned. Teachers almost habitually give too much aid to their pupils; they neglect to bring into prominence the cardinal steps in the reasoning; they do not generalise the principles applied; and they do not have the solutions summarised in a clear and logical way at the close of the exercise. Thus, in dealing with questions in proportion it is quite common for teachers to ask the very questions that pupils should be trained to ask themselves and to consider before they can state the first two terms —a proceeding that has the merit of being expeditious if in every other way unsatisfactory; and the same kind of taint runs through much of the instruction in other rules also. In a word, the teachers too often do the thinking; the pupils merely echo it, and are not made to assimilate it. I have dwelt at immoderate length on these defects in the teaching of arithmetic because I believe them to be real and of serious import, because I earnestly desire to see them remedied, and because it is difficult to explain all this to a widely scattered body of teachers except by means of such reports as the present, that they are likely to have an opportunity of studying.

It will be noticed that the results in arithmetic in Standards I. and II., which are determined by head-teachers, are much more favourable than those in the higher standards. The difference is chiefly due to the greater ease and simplicity of the work required of these classes, but partly perhaps to the fact that head-teachers do not give such weight to rapid oral exercises as the Inspectors desire, and would require did they determine the passes in these classes. There is no doubt that the teaching in these standards is much more thorough than in the higher ones and than it used to be a few years ago. There is seldom reason to doubt the care and honesty with which head-teachers determine the passes in this subject. It is only in judging of reading that they are prone to use too lenient a standard. Mr. Dickinson points out that there is still too little teaching of arithmetic at the blackboard, and this is no doubt true of a good many schools in other districts as well as in his.

As a rule, the arithmetical exercises in Standards I., II., and III. are done quickly and with satisfactory neatness and accuracy. In the higher classes quickness is nearly as general a desideratum as accuracy. There is still room for improvement in the full and clear setting-out of the working of problems.

Mental arithmetic is, as a rule, better done than one would expect from the general knowledge of the subject. The questions given are always simple, and do not involve large numbers. Mr. Crowe once more reports general backwardness in it in his district, but it is elsewhere of a satisfactory character.

The teaching of geography is certainly no worse than it has been in recent years, and in Standards II., III., and VI. it has of late made considerable improvement. The poor results in Standard IV. are as much due to inability to write down in a satisfactory manner what has been learned as to want of knowledge. The work of this class, too, is very extensive and heterogeneous; it is vaguely defined; and in part it requires a maturity of understanding that is not readily developed

at this stage. In all the classes above Standard III. the written answers are too commonly bald, indefinite, and poorly set out. The faults of the written answers are the ordinary faults of oral answering, and they are to be remedied by using more freely and more intelligently varied recapitulatory examinations to be answered in writing. All answers that are unsatisfactorily stated in these exercises should be written out anew in proper form. In this way pupils would be trained to make their written answers more representative of their knowledge, and we should cease to have to complain of such palpable omissions as the names of the countries in which the places that are being described are situated. I think it most desirable that the Education Department should issue a detailed syllabus of what each standard class should have to study, and believe that a clear definition of the work would be of the greatest benefit. On the whole, physical geography is but moderately taught in Standards V. and VI. The knowledge of the causes of the seasons is especially disappointing, and few pupils can sketch simple diagrams to show the limits of solar illumination at the different seasons. The influences affecting climate are also less clearly and correctly stated than we think they might be. Outline maps, too, should be better done. There is, however, a considerable number of schools in which geography is well taught, but it does not increase as rapidly as one could wish.

Reading continues to improve, and in the great majority of the schools it is as good as we can expect it to be. In a few schools it is not fluent enough, in a larger number it is low and deficient in natural expression, but on the whole it is of satisfactory quality. Mr. Crowe reports a less satisfactory state of instruction than prevails in the other Inspectors' districts. For this irregular attendance may partly account, but this explanation does not seem to me sufficient.

The explanation of the language of the prose lessons and of the poetry committed to memory receives year by year more careful attention, though much remains to be done in this direction. In a large number of schools the difficult passages are clearly and readily explained. There are here several faults of teaching to be remedied. Explanations need to be better impressed by recapitulation and the use of the blackboard. Preparatory study should be encouraged more, and be more systematically tested, for which careful previous preparation by teachers is indispensable. Explanations are often deficient in precision, and they should be more quickly dealt with. They should also deal with expressions that are worthy of consideration and present real difficulty of comprehension. In the lower classes much time is wasted in paraphrasing expressions that are already as simple and easily comprehensible as they can be made. Next to arithmetic this is the subject in which thoroughness of instruction is most frequently noted as still a desideratum.

The passes recorded in writing and drawing show that the Inspectors are fully satisfied with the teaching of these subjects, and I need note only that the writing in exercise-books, and sometimes on slates, does not conform as closely to the style taught in the copybooks as it should. This matter demands constant attention. Head-teachers and class-teachers should see to it themselves, and not leave it so much in the hands of pupil-teachers as they commonly do. I think pupil-teachers in the larger schools are engaged far too much in work of this kind, and that home-written exercises are too extensively used in many of our schools to be compatible with good writing.

Spelling and dictation have been well taught during the year, except in Standards III. and IV. The passes in this subject are but little below those in reading, and the results are quite satisfactory.

The composition exercises have shown a decided improvement in the division of the matter into sentences, and the work in this subject generally has been advancing. The attempt to roughly define the standard to be expected has done a good deal of good. There is still occasion to complain of the prevalence of long, rambling, unwieldly sentences in the exercises of the higher standards. Teachers must be more earnest and insistent in checking this fault. New arrangements have been adopted for the examinations in this subject, and I hope that the new test for Standard IV. will encourage a better knowledge of the structure of easy sentences, and lead to the use of sentences that are shorter, clearer, and less involved. It is very necessary that the "outlines" used for this class should not give the pupils too much assistance, or suggest the length of the sentences except in the earlier exercises. They should consist only of short phrases and single words, and throw on the pupils the entire burden of combining them and filling them out into sentences. I make these remarks because I have lately seen the "outlines" badly drawn up and unskilfully used in a number of the smaller schools. I have some anxiety as to the results of a test in paraphrasing in Standard VI., because our scholarship and pupil-teacher candidates seldom show any power in dealing with such exercises. To give in other language the sense of a passage of verse constitutes a fine test of intelligence and insight; and our teachers will need to see that their most advanced pupils are acquiring the width of understanding, the sympathy, and the imagination that are required to cope with this exercise.

It was not without regret that the former arrangements for examining composition were set aside. In the hands of skilful and competent teachers they led to good work, but they left too much scope for cram, and in many schools the writing of an original essay on a familiar subject was degenerating into a feat of memory.

The class-subjects continue to receive a sufficient share of attention, by which I mean as full treatment as the present congested condition of the syllabus will permit. Grammar, science, and object-lessons are the most important of them. Grammar is satisfactorily taught in a large minority of the schools, including most of the larger ones. Elsewhere the subject is taught with care and diligence, but with little skill or intelligence. This indifferent handling of one of the best means of education in the teacher's hands is, I fancy, primarily due to want of interest in the subject and to a knowledge of our language so limited as to make teachers depend too much on text-books and use them in a routine way. Many of the defects of the teaching are directly traceable to the text-books, and especially to a very poor but venerable text-book that is regarded with

great and unaccountable favour by the teachers of this district. The consideration of the functions of words as the only true guide to their classification under the parts of speech is not sufficiently emphasized in the text-books. Their exposition is not inductive, as the teaching ought to be, but dogmatic to the last degree. They almost ignore sentence-structure and the linking and subordination of clauses except as exercises in abstract analysis; and they do not show clearly that certain pronouns and adverbs, which pupils use every day with perfect correctness and ease, do connect clauses. In analysis they do not make it clear enough that "phrases" and "clauses" are to be classified by their functions just as single words are; nor do they use names for the phrases and clauses that make their use as elements of the sentence as clear as day. General terms, such as "enlargement," "adjunct," "extension," are constantly used where terms of a more explicit sense are indispensable for the clear guidance of the beginner. Such clear and decisive descriptions as "adjective phrase" or "adjective clause" to so-and-so, or "adverb phrase" or "adverb clause" to so-and-so, are for beginners infinitely preferable to such vague terms as "enlargement," "extension," &c., that usually convey little or no meaning to their minds, and tend to obscure the processes of thought necessarily involved. In view of these faults of the text-books considerable allowance must be made for unintelligent teaching and for the unwillingness of teachers to boldly embark on a better course of instruction that they have thought out for themselves. The syllabus of instruction in grammar is in considerable measure responsible for defects in the instruction, as it does not sufficiently indicate the aims the teaching should keep in view, and is not well arranged. The recognition of phrases and clauses as integral elements of easy sentences is introduced too late in the course—practically not till Standard VI. is reached. Their classification might with propriety be deferred to a late stage, but their recognition should be taken in hand much earlier; and this knowledge would tend to make the instruction in composition intelligent and educative, and not mere rule-of-thumb work, as it is now too apt to be. On the whole the difficulties in getting grammar intelligently taught are numerous and grave, and the progress that has been already made is creditable to the teachers and far from contemptible. Parsing, which even genius cannot suffuse with interest, must occupy too much attention under our present syllabus. It would be a great gain if the parsing of the verb could be simplified. Several of the details now deemed indispensable might be omitted without loss or disadvantage.

The work in science and object-lessons has been of much the same character as last year's. Where agricultural science is taken up, as it is in the great majority of the schools, the bulk of the knowledge gained is not living knowledge, but merely book-learning, largely unintelligible to school-children; and, from the nature of the subject and the age and general knowledge of the learners, I do not see how it can be otherwise. The chemical knowledge contained in the course, and forming but a small part of its contents, would alone suffice for a two years' course in science if it were treated in an experimental and educative fashion. A number of teachers have of late attempted to introduce some simple experiments in illustration of the lessons given, and these have added to the interest and value of the teaching, but at best they form but an insignificant oasis in a vast arid desert. In all village schools I would recommend the substitution of the general science course for that in agriculture. The former admits of a large amount of practical and experimental illustration, and is in general much more successfully taught. In rural schools a greatly simplified course of lessons in agricultural science would be more serviceable, and such a course I hope to be able to suggest for the Board's consideration by and by.

There has been noticeable improvement in the instruction in the laws of health, and the lessons are becoming more generally full enough to make the teaching clear and intelligible, as well as of service for the regulation of health. Teachers, however, are still to be found who think "Health in the House" a trustworthy and up-to-date guide in these matters. To these I would once more recommend a careful study of Foster and Shore's "Physiology for Beginners," and some brief modern book on hygiene. Lists of the experiments shown in illustration of the science lessons have been made out in most schools, and they have proved of material service in examining in the subject. As a rule, the experiments have been suitable, and the pupils have carefully observed and could satisfactorily describe the state of things at the beginning and the end of the experiments, and the changes that took place.

The chief fault in the treatment of object-lessons is the introduction of detailed descriptions of manufacturing and other processes that cannot be observed or illustrated. In a lesson on sugar, for example, the details of cultivation and of the processes of purification are nearly always given with considerably fulness. It is obvious that this does not bring observation into play, or afford scope for the simple inferences that link themselves to its action. The fault is, happily, becoming more rare, and object-lessons approximate in their aim more and more to what their name denotes. The practice of setting forth, at the head of the notes of lessons, a list of the objects and pictures shown in illustration of the lesson is also spreading, and should be adopted everywhere.

The other class-subjects and the additional subjects hardly call for special remark.

The primer classes continue to be well taught in a great number of schools, and especially in the larger establishments, in several of which simple kindergarten lessons have been introduced with great advantage. An example is thus set that should be widely followed, for in most schools in which two qualified teachers are employed time might profitably be found for such lessons. It is chiefly in the smaller schools that the instruction of the lower classes remains unsatisfactory. In a number of these the reading needs to be improved in ease and expression, and arithmetic must be more systematically and thoroughly taught. The learning of tables could be improved in grading, and the use of the ball-frame made more intelligent and illustrative in dealing with difficult points, and especially with the addition of numbers that involve an advance from a lower group of tens to a higher. In these schools too much time is still devoted to teaching counting at the ball-frame by two, three, fours, and fives.

Printing the reading-lessons of beginners on the blackboard is by no means as much used as it should be. This method is coming more and more into use in Great Britain, and is highly spoken of by all the experts. It is now very uncommon to find the younger pupils reading the lessons by rote without knowing the words, and I hope the practice will soon be altogether unknown.

The number of pupils who remain on in the preparatory classes till they have passed eight years of age continues to grow, and this year amounts to 2,150, as against 2,136 last year. An effort needs to be made to stop the slight but ever-growing increase in the number of pupils in this position. The large centres of population, where schools are at the doors of the people, contribute far too large a share to this total of backward children. Dulness, irregular attendance, and recent entrance are the causes usually assigned for withholding these pupils from the examination in Standard I.

The management of the schools is generally good. The pupils are being carefully trained in habits of order, punctuality, obedience, honest work, and reasonable diligence; and their manners and behaviour, so far as they come under the Inspectors' observation, deserve warm commendation. The chief faults under this head are a frequently noticeable want of smartness in dealing with the school work that may be due to climatic causes, and considerable listlessness and inattention most frequently seen in the large classes of the larger schools. These closely connected defects have their root in teaching that lacks earnestness, force, and stimulating power. In the "Suggestions to Teachers" I have tried to describe what good attention implies, and to indicate how it may be secured, and I would urge teachers to strenuously to endeavour to make their management come nearer the ideal there sketched out.

A certain sombre gravity seems to me too prevalent in our school management, while a cheerful play of geniality and good humour—no impediment to good discipline—is too little cultivated. The schools in which the relations between teachers and pupils are most natural and most cordial are hardly ever marked by an atmosphere of frigid and unbending seriousness and restraint.

In a considerable number of schools oral answers are well stated—fully, explicitly, and quickly. In many the constantly repeated caution "That is not an answer" tells of ineffectual effort to have answers properly stated. Where answers are badly given the style of questioning is often at fault. Many teachers do not sufficiently realise this, but keep nagging at their pupils for defects that are largely the legitimate and natural effects of their own want of tact and skill. In trying to state their answers fully enough and in the form of sentences pupils too often still eke them out by incorporating the question asked. As a rule, this practice is undesirable and unnecessary, and it should be checked.

In comparatively few schools do we find the examination of written exercises as careful and thorough as it should be, though downright careless correction is rare. Due correction is often a great burden to teachers, and I have often had to point out that the written work had better be curtailed than be perfunctorily examined. It should be the rule that teachers should only mark in a suitable way where errors exist, and that the pupils should discover and correct them as far as they can. This practice is more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

Singing still forms but a slight and incidental feature in the life of all but a few schools. The giving of the stated weekly lesson is a sort of solemn duty, and promises to grow into a virtue. The lessons given, however, are satisfactory as far as they go. Our children seem to love song only when exhilarated by a drive on the top of a coach or 'bus. One would gladly see more of this generous glow of feeling infused into the too dull routine of ordinary school life.

I shall not refer at length to the methods and spirit of the teaching, but I would fain see more thought given to them. We are all too prone to fall into routine, and in our attention to mere processes to overlook what the processes are meant to accomplish. And this is undoubtedly a besetting weakness with many teachers, who too often forget that their main business is not the working-up of a certain amount of knowledge, but the training of alertness and intelligence, and the building-up among their pupils of moral and social habits of good report.

Of the fidelity and diligence with which the vast majority of the teachers discharge their duties I can speak only in terms of honest praise. Not a few may fail to display special skill in teaching and management, but it is very seldom that they do not try to do their best for their pupils.

To my colleagues I owe a warm acknowledgment of the arduous service they have done throughout the year, and especially during its latter half. They have repeatedly done in one day the work of a day and a half, and have worked on many Saturdays, and we have thus been enabled to overtake the examination of all the schools that were open throughout the year, a task that could not have been accomplished but for this willingly rendered extra service.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Auckland Board of Education. D. Petrie, M.A., Chief Inspector.

TARANAKI.

Sir,— Education Office, New Plymouth, 9th March, 1898.

At the close of 1897 sixty schools were open, there having been an increase of 50 per cent. since the beginning of 1891. The schools bringing about the increase are small ones, costing for maintenance more than the Board receives as capitation on account of the average attendance, and as this opens up an important question I hope I may be pardoned for again discussing what I dealt with at some length in a former report. Districts that have within their boundaries few large schools and many small schools are labouring under great disadvantages, for the latter are a constant drain on the finances of the Board, and cause funds to run very low. Though the Boards in such districts may see the necessity for the collective

instruction of pupil-teachers in school management, for classes for instruction in drawing, science, &c., for grants for assisting the establishment of school libraries, for gymnastic and drill appliances, for apparatus for science and object-lessons, and for other well-known stimuli and aids to education, all of which are within the means of more favoured Boards, no funds are available.

Again, the salaries of the teachers suffer. In his opening address at the Teachers' Institute, the president, Mr. Davidson, stated that of the 385 teachers (exclusive of pupil-teachers and sewing-mistresses) employed in Taranaki, Marlborough, Nelson, Grey, and Westland (districts such as I am referring to), 226 receive less than £100 a year, and many much less. The effects of a low scale of salaries are obvious. Centralisation would remove all inequalities. Payment of salaries on a uniform scale by the central department would mitigate the evil, but the general impression seems to be that it would involve the abolition of the Boards, or such a reduction of their powers that the most desirable men would not seek election. These sweeping changes in our system of education would not, I think, meet with general approval, whereas the reform I suggested in my report for 1895 would not affect the system and would allow the present machinery to work more smoothly and efficiently. I pointed out that a sliding scale of capitation would overcome most of the difficulties. Instead of receiving £3 15s. *per capita* for all schools no matter what the average attendance, for schools up to 50 the Board might receive, say, £4 15s.; from 50 to 150, say, £4 5s.; from 150 to £300, say, £3 5s.; and from 300 upwards, say, £3, or £2 15s. I do not say that these should be the amounts fixed, but I strongly urge the adoption of the principle, which need not involve an increased expenditure to the colony, but would distribute the present vote more equitably.

Coming from the general question to our own case, one may naturally ask if something cannot be done though the capitation remain as at present. Taking other districts as precedents, we find that aided schools are established where the attendance does not reach a stated number, a fixed sum *per capita* being granted by the Boards to the local school authorities, who are required to argument it in order to pay the teacher's salary. The following table shows—A the districts in which aided schools are established, B the average attendance required before the Boards take over the schools, and C the amounts paid *per capita* :—

A	B	C
Otago	20	£3 15s.
Wellington	20	£3 15s.
Wanganui	20	£3 12s. for a female teacher, £5 for a male teacher.
Marlborough	25	Graduated scale, from £2 to £5.
Westland	20	£4 15s. for 15 or less, £4 7s. 6d. for 16 to 20.
Southland	20	£3 10s.
Auckland	None fixed	£3 15s.
Napier	30	£4 10s. and £4.
Nelson	20	£4.
South Canterbury	25	Graduated scale.

Two of the chief arguments advanced in favour of the establishment of aided schools are that the parents, having more direct interest in the education of their children, will send them regularly to school, and that the tendency to petition for schools near others already established is checked, and if there is any cogency in even these the scheme has much to commend it.

In some districts where the trains can be used for the free carriage of children fewer schools are established along railway-lines. As, until quite recently, the present number of ordinary trains did not run on Tuesdays and Fridays regular use of the railways could not be made, but now greater facilities are offered. Take, for instance, Norfolk Road and Tariki. The morning train from town arrives at Norfolk Road about 9.30, and at Tariki a little later; an evening train arrives at Tariki a little after 4 o'clock, and could be used for the return journey. Again, the morning train would suit excellently for the carriage of children from Waiongona to Inglewood, but the return train is somewhat late. Now, if there were no schools at Waiongona and Norfolk Road the pupils could be taught at Inglewood and Tariki at a diminished cost to the Board. As, however, schools are established the question becomes more complicated. At Waiongona the building is old and unsuitable, and the attendance is small; and at Norfolk Road the attendance is falling off; so that, in time, the question I have raised may be considered by the Board.

By the establishment of small schools adjacent schools are drained of their pupils, and more frequent changes of teachers and diminished efficiency result. If established schools were more supported and children kept at home till able to travel a short distance, I am inclined to think that at thirteen or fourteen years of age a pupil would be better educated than if, by the establishment of a smaller school nearer home, he could attend at a somewhat earlier age.

During the past three years the Board has spent a considerable sum in providing the most needful apparatus for schools. Additional maps, charts, blackboards, easels, &c., have been supplied, and worn-out, useless maps and appliances have been replaced. Map-stands, card-stands, reading-stands, science apparatus, and so on, though much needed, are not at present supplied. Another inexpensive, though useful, piece of furniture is a high stool to afford rest to a teacher while giving instruction. Standing all day is most fatiguing, and though chairs are provided, an energetic teacher will find them of little use during the greater part of the day, as when sitting he has not the command of his pupils that is desirable. Indeed, I hold it a bad sign if a teacher attempts to do much work while sitting on a chair. The stool, however, is not open to the same objections, and, I am sure, would be welcomed by the teachers. The apparatus is, as a

rule, well taken care of, and on only one occasion had I to report extensive damage caused by gross carelessness or wanton abuse. Rapid depreciation of property takes place and much trouble is caused to teachers by the frequency with which dancing and other functions are held in the schools.

The annual examination of pupil-teachers was held in June. In some of the larger schools the instruction of the pupil-teachers in general knowledge and in the special subject of school management is satisfactory, but in others, and in the smaller schools generally, there is much room for improvement. Careful inquiry by the Board after the last examination showed that in many cases the instruction had not been systematic and thorough, and in some cases there had been culpable neglect. In teaching school management teachers too often leave the preparation of notes of lessons till shortly before the examination, and consequently the lessons are poorly prepared, are not practised before a class and criticized, and the principles are not assimilated so that they can be appled to actual teaching. Notes of lessons, demonstration before a class, and criticism lessons should be undertaken as soon as the results of the pupil-teachers' examination are known, for they aim at producing increased skill which will manifest itself in the school work. Neglect and delay, on the contrary, make our pupil-teachers bad teachers and confirm them in unskilful and unintelligent methods. Most of our pupil-teachers are earnest in their work, and, where they receive satisfactory instruction, some teach with considerable skill. With average ability, a fourth-year pupil-teacher in a good school is quite capable of undertaking responsible work. The practice of grouping the pupil-teachers for their examination in school management was somewhat extended during the past year and with good results. The Board's new regulations regarding pupil-teachers are bearing fruit, and it must be gratifying to the Board to find that all the pupil-teachers who passed their final examination in June last obtained their full certificates at the January examination this year.

The examination for scholarships was held in December, and the work as a whole was very disappointing. Though in the pass-subjects fair proficiency was shown, in the class-subjects the work was poor in the extreme.

The percentage of attendance, though showing an increase, is still low compared with the percentages of other districts. A slight rise or fall may be due to a more or less careful purging of the rolls, but I believe that the gradual rise, year by year, is due to more regular attendance. The causes of bad attendance, exclusive of bad roads and inclement weather, may be classed under two heads—(1) The home circumstances of the pupils, and (2) the school and its authorities. Under the first head I may mention parental indifference or neglect and excessive work required from children of very tender years. I know that during the milking season some children have to milk as many as ten cows every morning, and, if they come to school at all, arrive late, and are so fatigued as to be unfit for the work of the day. Though I regret the fact, I am afraid that in some cases there is no just remedy, as in some of the outlying districts the struggle for existence is harder than many people imagine. I was told by one teacher that children at his school had to gather fungus during the day in order that the bare necessaries of life might be procured for the families, and I have no reason for doubting his word. The Board has appointed truant-inspectors to deal with cases of truancy and parental neglect, but upon compulsion alone too much reliance should not be placed. Under the second of the above heads there is ample scope for attraction. When a school building is ill-lighted, gloomy, and depressing one cannot wonder at children preferring to stay away more than at their preferring sunshine to dulness. Then by all means let our schools be cheerful, bright, and attractive, and let the walls be covered with interesting and instructive charts and pictures such as will arouse and sustain curiosity. Again, organization may help the attendance. Let the first impressions of the school-day be pleasant ones. Let us have means by which the children may amuse themselves during the recesses and before school opens, and they will, if possible, come early and regularly for a brief interval of companionship and amusement. Before the real work of the day is begun, let the pupils perform a few extension exercises, sing a few songs, or "work in play." Again, the personality of the teacher is a well-known factor in producing good or bad attendance. Lack of sympathy, harshness, carelessness, and incompetency will inevitably lower the attendance. Attendance-prizes given by the Committee are found very beneficial. These may take various forms—*e.g.*, books, inexpensive certificates showing a photo. of a group of the pupils obtaining prizes, small certificates given to every child making full attendance during a week, and a number of these to entitle to a more valuable reward. Quarterly reports on the progress, punctuality, and conduct of the pupils are often effective, as they serve to increase the parents' interest in the school work. Again, in the larger schools, emulation between class and class may be tried. Week by week the percentages of attendance made in the different classes may be shown on a board kept for the purpose, and the class with the highest percentage may be allowed some privilege during the following week (as getting away a little earlier on Friday afternoon).

Before leaving the question of attendance I should like to point out that there is a defect which needs remedying before the clauses of "The School Attendance Act, 1894," can attain maximum efficiency. The term "attendance" should be more exactly defined. At present it denotes a period dependent upon the time at which the roll is marked. The instructions on the registers state that the roll must be marked not later than an hour and a half after the opening of the school. The times fixed by the teachers are usually 10.50 a.m. and 2.30 p.m., and a child arriving a little earlier is marked present. Now, as our schools may be dismissed at 3 p.m., a child by attending a little over an hour and a half per day for three days may make six attendances, and the parents will evade prosecution. Or take an extreme case: a pupil by attending a little over half an hour on every afternoon and a little over an hour one morning may be recorded as having complied with the Act, whereas the total time spent under instruction may be about only three hours and a half for the week. I am not prepared to say that extreme cases such as the above do

occur, but I know that pupils frequently come an hour or an hour and a quarter late. A teacher might mark his roll at any time between 9.30 a.m. and 11 a.m. and between 1 p.m. and 2.30 p.m., and a pupil not then present would be marked absent, but few teachers are strong enough to do this, as a fall in the attendance with the consequent fall in salary is involved. In fact, a teacher has the choice of two evils: if he marks the roll early his salary may fall; if he marks it late he cannot get from the late pupils the work that should be expected from the number of their attendances. The Boards may fix a time for the roll-call, but the question is too important to be left to individual teachers or to Boards. The central department should take action and place all schools in the colony on the same footing. My own opinion is that the minimum period for an attendance should be one hour and a half for infants, and two hours for standard classes. School-hours are often shortened by a teacher's compliance with requests for pupils to leave early. Some teachers have been strong enough to refuse except urgent cases, and now have little trouble. Most teachers, however, prefer not to incur the contumely of refusal, and in some cases they have my sympathy. Exact definition of the period of an attendance would tend to reduce to a minimum this trouble also.

In this district the school day is generally four hours and a half instead of five hours as in other districts, and the weekly instruction is thus shortened by two hours and a half. Not unnaturally teachers devote the most of their time to the pass-subjects, and this shortening of the school day means that less time is devoted to the class-subjects—grammar, history, object-lessons, and so on.

In addition to visits for examination purposes, visits of inspection were paid to most schools, and in some cases more than one visit was paid. During these visits of inspection the organization, the discipline, the registers, the instruction and its quality, the methods and the skill with which they are handled, and so on, come under review. Another important point which must not be lost sight of, and a most important one in small schools, is the assistance an Inspector can give to inexperienced and earnest teachers. He may take a class to illustrate the working of improved methods, or, as the organization of a school of, say, five standards and the preparatory classes presents a problem of no little difficulty to a young teacher, he may take the whole school to show how the classes may be organized and the work of one class dovetailed, as it were, into the work of another. It will thus be seen that to bring about an improvement in the efficiency of the schools as much time as possible should be devoted to these visits. The Act, however, insists upon an examination every year, and the work in connection with this is so heavy, and the preparation of examination cards and the examinations of pupil-teachers and scholarship candidates take up so much time, that one has to curtail the period of inspection more than one desires. When I have been able to pay more than one visit of inspection, on the statutory or more formal visit a report has been written, but not necessarily on the others, which, as being less formal, I consider in some ways the more valuable. The feeling that a report does not follow a visit tends to combat the idea that the Inspector comes as a mere critic, and makes any assistance he may give the more appreciated. I should therefore like to see the work of examination lightened, so that more time could be given to these visits of assistance.

Oral work is improving, and in many schools is very creditable. This is due in great measure to full answers to questions being insisted upon, which makes the lessons, as it were, conversations between the teacher and his pupils. All lessons are benefiting by this, and the results are realising the hopes I expressed in my first report. In some schools, however, the conversational method of teaching is not employed during the year, with the result that the answers received are imperfect, the pupils' speech is ungrammatical, oral work is wanting in alacrity, and the pupils are unable to frame answers in the work they know. Good questions produce good answers, and some of the improved answering is, no doubt, due to improved skill in questioning. It has, however, often struck me that the questions are all on the side of the teacher and that the pupils do not ask questions on obscure points. Questions by the pupils should receive every encouragement, as they result from attention to the lesson and from an intelligent conception of its bearing. Moreover, anything taught as an answer to a question put by a pupil will arouse greater interest, and will consequently be better remembered than if it were merely told by the teacher.

In the larger schools the organization of the classes is generally satisfactory, but in the smaller schools, where the teachers have to manage several classes, it is often unsatisfactory, and in consequence much valuable time is wasted. Effective organization depends upon (1) the teachers' ability to draw up a time-table, (2) his ability to carry it out so as to keep all pupils profitably employed during school-hours, and (3) his interest in the work as shown by his preparing his lessons. The time-tables are as a rule satisfactory, but much of the non-success in many schools is traceable to defects in (2) and (3). Carrying out the time-table gives ample scope for ingenuity and skill, and I shall here give a few hints which may be of some assistance. Take, for instance, reading. On the time-table two classes, say, Standards IV. and V., may be shown as taking reading during the same half-hour. The time devoted by the teacher to each class will depend upon the size and proficiency of the class, but some such plan as the following should be adopted. While Standard IV. is being instructed Standard V. may read silently, using a dictionary for difficult words, may write out the meanings of phrases set upon the blackboard or marked in the books, may write a test in spelling or dictation (see below), and so on. During the lesson to Standard IV. difficult words and phrases are set upon the blackboard, and while Standard V. is being taught Standard IV. may write out these or do work similar to that assigned to Standard V. Such work as I have referred to admits of easy correction and keeps the pupils profitably employed. In spelling and dictation a teacher might save much time. If a class of four pupils has to be tested, the teacher should divide the passage to be dictated into phrases, and one of the four pupils may dictate it and at the same time transcribe it, so that he also benefits by the lesson. Without direction from the master, the books should be collected and placed upon the table. As a rule, however, teachers dictate to three or more classes at once, a procedure confusing to the pupils, and occupying time

that might be devoted to instruction. Arithmetic is taken generally at 10 o'clock, and before school commences the teacher should write on the blackboard such notes as "Standard V., Ex. 5"; "Standard IV., Ex. 6"; "Standard III., Ex. 2"; to show the desk-work of the various classes. At the time appointed one class will be brought up for blackboard instruction, and the others, without direction, will know what to do. When the class at the blackboard has been instructed and sent to the desks, they also know what to do, and without any loss of time another class can be brought out. Correction in the lower classes may be intrusted to monitors from the higher classes. Immediate correction of the work of other classes should be done by the teacher. The work in Standards IV. to VI. should be done in rough exercise-books (such as were referred to in my last report), and could be corrected at a convenient time. One objectionable mode of correction is used in some schools. The teacher calls out the answers, the pupils mark them right or wrong, and the slates are put away. It is scarcely possible to conceive a more effective means of encouraging carelessness and dishonesty. I have dealt with three subjects, and leave the teachers to exercise their ingenuity on the others.

Good organization implies careful preparation of the work by the teacher. He must arrange for some classes to be taught at the blackboard and for others to work in the desks, for new lessons to begin where the previous lesson left off, for oral work, for paper work, for slate-work, for correction, and so on. Moreover, the lessons themselves require preparation. During my inspection visits, however, I saw few signs of it, and teachers would ask such questions as "Where did we leave off?" "What is the next lesson?" before commencing work. Last year I referred to this, and here shall only quote from a well-known authority, Mr. Fitch: "Before undertaking so simple a matter as hearing a class read we should glance over the passage and determine on what words it will be well to dwell by way of explanation, and what form of illustration should be brought to bear upon it. . . . However simple the subject of a lesson is, it is never so good when unpremeditated as it would be with a little prearrangement and forethought. . . . It is only by such preparation that you can determine how much can fairly be attempted in the prescribed time, what is the order in which the parts should be taken up, how they should cohere, at what points you should recapitulate, and how you can give unity and point to the general impression you desire to leave."

One result of a want of preparation is a tendency for the instruction to degenerate into cram. The teacher shakes before his pupils the dead and dry bones of the lessons without vivifying them. Of the pass-subjects probably geography is most crammed. Many of the lessons in the text-books are mere outlines or teaching notes intended to be supplementary to the teacher's instruction at the map, chart, diagram, or blackboard. Too often, however, they are used as the only means of imparting the knowledge. If the question "Where is Rome?" be put, the answer comes, "Italy, Rome, on the Tiber," because the countries and capitals of Europe have been crammed in this order from the columns in the text-books. Again, pupils will state that the Himalayas are north of India, but cannot point them out on a map of the world, or show even in which continent they are.

Physical geography, in particular, suffers from this cram. The passages in the text-books or notes in the exercise-books are committed to memory, but are not understood. The result at examination is that questions requiring the exercise of intelligence are omitted or imperfectly answered. As physical geography needs to be assimilated slowly it should be undertaken early in the year, and not left till shortly before the examination. In the class-subjects—history, grammar, and science—I am afraid there is as much cram as teaching. That cram methods are recognised and adopted I had ample evidence from some of the pupil-teachers' notes of lessons.

Home-work sometimes engenders great dissatisfaction among parents, and in some cases, I must admit, there is just cause for complaint. I do not intend to discuss the general question whether home-work should or should not be given, but I wish to point out that when it is given teachers sometimes show a lack of discretion in choosing its character and amount. Its character should be determined by the school-work from day to day, and its amount by the average intelligence and capabilities of the different classes, and by the home circumstances of the pupils. A few general rules may be laid down. Lessons should be short and well within the capacity of the pupils. Lessons too long or beyond the pupils serve merely to discourage and check any desire to excel, and if only a few pupils can do the work punishment of the others is unjust. Lessons should be definite in object and quantity. Every lesson should bear directly on the school-work for the time being, and no lesson should be set merely to give the pupils "something to do at home." Composition exercises should be used with great care, for what one pupil will expand into a couple of pages another may dismiss in seven or eight lines. Lessons should admit of easy and thorough correction. Written home-work is often rendered worse than useless by imperfect correction. Sometimes the work is not corrected at all, though in this respect there is less cause for complaint than formerly. Written exercises should be but sparingly used. To those who are acquainted with the home circumstances of many of our pupils this is self-evident. Though the lessons are to some extent preparatory to the next day's work, they should be mainly supplementary to the work taught in the school, and should never break new ground. Neglect of this is responsible for much of the feeling against home-lessons. Take geography, for instance. The teacher will often hear the work that has been learned (?), correct mispronunciations, misunderstandings, and so on, which would not have occurred had the lesson been taught before being assigned for home-work, and he will then assign another and new portion of the work for next day. Now, the work assigned may present great difficulties. Names may be hard to pronounce, positions may be difficult to find, meanings may be obscure to the child, and, as the pupil may be so placed that he cannot obtain efficient help from home, the task is unreasonable. Moreover, a teacher should not throw his burden on parents, who, if they see that the children honestly attempt to do the work, ably second his efforts. Further assistance from parents must be voluntary and cannot be demanded. Now, if the teacher taught the lesson at a map, drew a sketch-map with coloured chalks, wrote difficult names on the blackboard, and used other well-known means of arousing interest and of

bringing the matter within the comprehension of the pupils, he could reasonably expect some home preparation. Arithmetic, again, opens the way to grave abuses of home-work. It is easily assigned, easily corrected, but too often the sums are long and have no bearing on the day's work. Under proper conditions, however, a sum may be set with advantage to both teacher and pupils. If during the day a new rule has been taught and thoroughly explained a very simple sum may be given for home-work, but it should be well within the comprehension of the pupils, and should contain as few figures as will serve to illustrate the principle taught. The pupils should thus require no home assistance, and if the work is wrong either the instruction has not been clear or the pupils have failed to comprehend it. From the quality of the work the teacher may gauge his success, and may know whether to repeat the lesson or to proceed to other work. I have taken the two subjects geography and arithmetic as typical of the two classes of home-lessons, memory-work, and written work, and the same care must be exercised with both.

Of the sixty schools open at the end of the year, fifty-six were examined. The following table shows the summary of examination results for the whole district:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	18	...	...	...
Standard VI.	86	82	56	14 2
" V.	247	229	122	13 10
" IV.	466	440	222	13 0
" III.	540	516	328	11 9
" II.	563	546	414	10 9
" I.	632	603	492	9 6
Preparatory	1,294	...	...	...
Totals	3,846	2,416	1,634	12 2*

* Mean of average age.

On the days appointed for the examinations 3,846 pupils were on the rolls; of these 1,294 were in the preparatory classes, 18 in the class above Standard VI., and 2,534 in Standards I. to VI. Comparing the above with the returns for 1896, I find the roll-number shows an increase of 68, the number in the class above Standard VI. an increase of 8, the number in standards an increase of 137, and the number in the preparatory classes a decrease of 80. The numbers in Standards IV. and V. have increased considerably. Standard I., also, has increased, and this, combined with the decrease in the preparatory classes, points to a more rapid transference of pupils from the preparatory classes to Standard I., due, I believe, to a diminished tendency to retain pupils below Standard I., and to the improved roads, which allow pupils to come to school more regularly and at an earlier age.

Though in reading a slight improvement was noticeable I am not satisfied with the instruction, as it tends to produce not an easy, natural, and intelligent style, but a stilted, laboured, and monotonous utterance of words. With only one reading-book in use in the four lower classes this is not surprising, for, as I formerly pointed out, the younger children know most of the lessons by heart, and when tested depend upon their memory of the text as much as upon the eye. In most districts two reading-books are insisted upon, and in some districts three are used. In three of our schools—the Central, Stratford, and Omata—supplementary books are being used in Standard I. The remedies for the poor reading are the more careful training of the pupils in the preparatory classes in the principles of good reading, better model-reading by the teachers, wider reading in all classes, and the establishment of school libraries.

Spelling is still unsatisfactory. The special tests may be fairly correct, but the spelling on the general papers is often poor in the extreme. Here are examples taken from a geography paper of "one of the best boys" (I quote the teacher) in Standard V. in a large school. In three lines "Otago" is spelled "Otaga," "south" is spelled "southe," and "north of of the river" occurs. Many worse cases could be mentioned, but these examples are taken from the first paper I touched in a pile of last year's papers. Our scholarship candidates are chosen presumably from the best pupils in Standard V. and Standard VI., and yet the misspelling I cited in my report on the last examination would almost lead one to suppose that spelling is omitted from the primary school curriculum.

Writing in most schools is satisfactory, and during the year good progress has been made in getting the pupils to write neatly on the examination papers and to arrange the work nicely. From business-men who employ ex-pupils as clerks one sometimes hears complaints of the quality of the writing. Whether such complaints are justified or not I am not prepared to say, though I have heard other business-men, whose opinions are entitled to respect, speak very favourably of the writing of our pupils. The complaints seem to me, however, to be made without a recognition of what our primary education aims at. It does not profess to make experts in any department, yet this is what seems to be expected in every department: the employer who uses mental arithmetic wants an expert, the employer of clerks wants an expert, the worker in timber wants an expert in measurements, and so on *ad lib.* What we hope is that, with the groundwork we give to the pupils passing through our best schools, specialisation of practice will produce the expert, but we cannot supply him ready-made. In so far as writing is concerned, my own opinion is that what-

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 quâ 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 dismission 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

the four quarters of the year the mean average weekly roll-number was 10,269·7, showing an increase for the year of only 143·2. The various quarters showed as follows: First, or March quarter, 10,348; second, or June quarter, 10,217; third, or September quarter, 10,231; fourth, or December quarter, 10,283.

Average Attendance.—For the last quarter of the year the strict average daily attendances were: Males, 4,319; females, 4,033: total, 8,352. The working-average for the same quarter was 8,459—that is, 107 higher than the strict average. For the four quarters of the year the strict average daily attendance was 8,257·5, and the working-average 8,368·2. The strict average attendance expressed as a percentage of the roll-number is 80·4. We are pleased to note an improvement year by year in the regularity of the attendance. For the past year there has been a gain of 0·9, and since 1880 a gain of 6·6. The percentages for the several quarters were: March, 78·3; June, 80·8; September, 81·3; December, 81·2. The percentage in the first quarter is always the lowest, and this, no doubt, is accounted for by potato-lifting and grass-seeding operations, coupled with dilatoriness on the part of the pupils in returning to school after the long midsummer holidays. Truant officers were appointed by the Board during the latter half of the year, and we are in hopes that they will be the means of still further improving the attendance.

Roman Catholic Schools.—The four Roman Catholic schools in the district were duly examined, but we were unable to find time to inspect them. The following are the examination results:—

School.	Number on Roll.	Presented in Standards.	Present in Standards.	Failed in Standards.	Passed in Standards.
Marist Brothers', Wanganui	73	72	71	20	51
Wanganui Girls'	105	51	46	15	31
Palmerston North ...	87	51	51	10	41
Hawera...	95	55	53	17	36
Totals	360	229	221	62	159

Inspection.—Nearly all the schools open for twelve months when we were in their respective districts we managed to visit for purposes of inspection, and in each case full reports were laid before the Board, and duplicate copies sent to the teacher. Altogether 109 schools were inspected. Several newly established schools were visited for the first time, the majority of them being towards the interior, as Parapara, Raetihi, Oakune, Moawhango, Taihape, Utiku, Ruahine, and Mangawhero. We firmly believe in the importance of thorough inspection, and therefore regret all the more our inability to visit every school. That we cannot do so is due not so much to the increase of late years in the number of schools as to the time it takes in mere travelling from one school to another of those recently established. For example, here is how one Inspector's time was taken up during the five school-days of one week: Monday and Tuesday, riding 78 miles to Raetihi, most of the journey being over a very dangerous bridle-track (save the mark); Wednesday, inspection of Raetihi, and 18 miles ride to Karioi; Thursday, 30 miles ride to Moawhango; Friday, inspection of Moawhango, and 28 miles ride to Mangaweka. Thus, to inspect two schools with a combined roll-number of 71 pupils five days of over twelve hours each were consumed, and 154 miles were covered on horseback! But in a fairly closely-settled part of the district eight to ten schools can be visited by one Inspector in a week. Then, again, the scholarships examination and the pupil-teachers' examination are a much heavier tax on our time than they were a few years ago, and it was only by excessive night-work that we were able to have our examination papers drawn out in time. Again, our clerical work in the office has much increased, and our correspondence in consequence is generally behindhand. Taking all these circumstances into consideration, we can clearly see that it is quite impossible for us to overtake both the inspection and the examination of all the schools. We presume both the Board and the Committees would prefer some of the inspections should lapse rather than some of the examinations.

Examination of Schools.—The following table summarises the examination results for each standard, and for all standards, in the district, and also shows the average age of those that passed in each standard. Another table, of which the one here is a summary, and which gives every information with regard to individual schools, may be seen in manuscript at the office.

Number of Schools examined in each Class.	Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Absent.	Failed	Passed	Per cent. of Passes on		Average Age of those that passed.
							No. presented	No. examined.	
									Yrs. mos.
...	Above Standard VI.	83	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
83	Standard VI. ...	388	373	15	88	285	73·5	76·4	14 6
98	" V. ...	763	739	24	183	556	72·9	75·2	13 9
107	" IV. ...	1,280	1,216	64	352	864	67·5	71·1	12 7
112	" III. ...	1,514	1,469	45	316	1,153	76·2	78·5	11 7
111	" II. ...	1,421	1,377	44	119	1,258	88·5	91·4	10 5
112	" I. ...	1,283	1,253	30	81	1,172	91·3	93·5	9 1
114	Preparatory ...	3,095	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Totals ...	9,827	6,427	222	1,139	5,288	79·5	82·3	Mean—12 yrs.

In all, 116 schools were examined in standards, Awahou being the only one that dropped out of the intended examination, and this was accounted for by a flood in the Pohangina River. Of the remaining ten schools shown as open during the last quarter of the year, Ongo Road, Ruahine, and Glen Nevis were temporarily closed when the Inspectors were in their neighbourhood; Raetihi, Ohakune, and Taihape were opened at the close of 1896, and they necessarily must be examined in the autumn of the year; Utiku and Moawhango were opened during the first quarter of 1897, and they, too, must be examined in the autumn; and Anderson's Road and Komako were opened only during last December. Four new schools—viz., Parapara, Mangahoe, Rewa, and Mangawhero—were examined for the first time. The manner in which some of the aided schools, as Ongo Road, Mangahoe, Glen Nevis, &c., are opened, closed, re-opened, and so on is very annoying.

On the days appointed for the examination in standards there were 9,827 pupils (5,076 boys and 4,751 girls) on the school-rolls. Of these, 6,649 were in Standards I. to VI., 3,095 were in the preparatory classes below Standard I., and 83 had already passed Standard VI.

The number of pupils presented in standards expressed as a percentage of the roll-number (the class above Standard VI. is thrown out of calculation) is 68·2—that is, 31·8 per cent. of the pupils on the rolls were considered by the teachers unfit for presentation in Standard I. In the majority of schools, however, where the percentage of the roll-number presented was low we found extenuating circumstances—*e.g.*, the children coming so late in life to school, as is generally the case in the back settlements, that it was quite impossible to make them fit for Standard I. At the same time we believe that some teachers kept back children who could readily have passed Standard I., while, on the other hand, it is only fair to state that other teachers presented and passed in Standard I. very young children whom it would have been very much better to have kept in the highest primer class for another year. Also, we have reason to believe that some teachers, instead of showing us as presented in Standard I. on our examination-day such children as failed for the standard at their (the teachers') examination, showed them as presented in the preparatory class; but if all teachers did this there could not be any failures for Standard I. With regard to the children over eight years of age in the preparatory classes (587) that were not presented for Standard I., 57 were represented as not having made half the possible attendances, 36 were Maoris, 360 were under two years at school, and for the remainder "dulness" was the excuse for non-presentation.

The percentage of the roll-number presented in standards varied very much at different schools. The following is an abstract for the district: Below 50 per cent. of roll-number, 5 schools; 50 per cent. but below 60 per cent. of roll-number, 16 schools; 60 per cent. but below 70 per cent. of roll-number, 44 schools; 70 per cent. but below 80 per cent. of roll-number, 36 schools; 80 per cent. but below 90 per cent. of roll-number, 11 schools: total, 112 schools.

The four schools in Wanganui are not included in the foregoing, as the Boys' School and the Girls' School have not got preparatory classes, while the two so-called infants' schools have only one standard (the first) represented.

The total number presented in the six standards is 99 higher than in 1896. Standards VI., V., IV., and II. show increases of 30, 64, 105, and 19 pupils respectively; while Standard III. shows a decrease of 14, and Standard I. a decrease of 105. Standard III. shows the highest number presented, and this we think is due to the fact of an unusually large number of pupils being two years in this class. Presumably such is the result of teachers taking too lenient a view when examining pupils in Standard II., for certainly it is not due either to the gap being too great between Standard II. and Standard III. or to any severity in the test applied to the latter standard.

Of the 6,649 pupils presented in the six standards, 6,427, or 96·6 per cent., attended and were examined; 222 were absent; 1,139 failed; and 5,288 came up to the requirements and were promoted. We are well satisfied with the percentage present, especially as many of the absentees had already passed a standard during the year at some other school. Others were accounted for by the fact that some parents like their children to spend two years in Standard IV., and, as bearing out this, it may be seen that the number of absentees is highest in that class. As usual, the Boys' School and the Girls' School, Wanganui, were responsible for several absentees—29 out of a combined roll-number of 628. To this the three Palmerston schools present a marked contrast, where, out of 698 presented in standards, only 7 were absent. At 44 schools all the pupils presented in standards attended, and at 22 schools only one pupil was absent.

Percentages of passes are not now calculated for individual schools, and rightly so, for they are very misleading with regard to the quality of the work sent in, which might be excellent, or merely of such a kind as to barely meet the limit requirements for a pass. When calculated for the whole district, however, percentages are useful for purposes of comparison, so we have shown them in the first case upon the number presented in standards, in the second case upon the number examined in standards, the absentees being thrown out. In the following remarks the second calculations will be referred to.

The percentage of passes on the total number examined in all standards was 82·3, which is the highest ever obtained in this district, and is 4·2 higher than in 1896. We consider it very creditable, for in districts of this kind, with many small bush schools, we cannot at all reconcile very high percentages with the taking of a fair estimate of the requirements of the syllabus. It may be very nice for all concerned when an examiner can say that only about 10 per cent. of the pupils failed to satisfy him; but, nevertheless, we think, taking all circumstances into consideration, there cannot be much grounds for complaint when only eighteen pupils in every hundred fail to gain promotion. This remark, of course, refers merely to the number of passes: it is quite possible for the number to be quite satisfactory, but the quality inferior, hence the deceptiveness of percentages.

In the individual standards the percentages show an improvement for the year in every case, as follows: Standard VI., 12·5; Standard V., 11·2; Standard IV., 6·5; Standard III., 2; Standard II., 1·9; and Standard I., 1·8. The vast improvement in Standard VI. and Standard V. is no doubt partly due to the tests in arithmetic being much easier last year than any year since the department

took the work in hand. Although Standard IV. has improved it shows the lowest percentage: arithmetic and geography were the subjects most frequently responsible for failure. The pupils in Standard I. and Standard II. were classified by the teachers. In the four other standards the number passed by us expressed as a percentage of the number examined is 75·3.

In the column showing ages of pupils the figures are very deceptive. If a few bush schools, where the ages were abnormally high, were left out the averages would be much lower than at present.

Instruction.—We have little new to write under this heading. Any teacher might take up the reports for the past five or six years, and he would find the majority of the remarks under "Instruction" more or less applicable again this year. Still, a few remarks will not be out of place.

Reading continues to improve as far as purely mechanical difficulties are concerned, yet still we often find that pupils who meet with an unfamiliar word are unable to break it up into its syllables and make a reasonable attempt at its full pronunciation. Expressive reading, showing an intelligent knowledge of the meaning of the text, is almost as rare as ever, and we are convinced that this will always be so as long as only one reading-book—and that an inferior one—is used in twelve months. We do not often fail a pupil in reading, but we are quite satisfied that, if we carried out the syllabus in its entirety, fully half the pupils we examine would fail in the subject. Thus, few pupils indeed give us reading that is "rhetorical in the best sense, but not histrionic"; and fewer still show us "the use of turns of the voice that are conventional but perfectly natural, depending only upon an adequate conception of the writer's spirit and meaning." (The quotations are from the "Inspection of Schools and Standards of Examination.")

With regard to expressive reading, there is no doubt in our minds that many teachers fail to obtain it simply because, though they use good methods and set a fair model, they are quite unable to sustain the attention of their pupils, and so get them to do their utmost to reproduce the model set. At several schools, indeed, we have noticed a kind of antagonism between teacher and pupils at the reading-lesson.

But there is a worse fault than lack of expression in reading, and that is inarticulate mumbling, with poor enunciation. The contrast at different schools in this connection is really remarkable. At some the pupils stand up in manly fashion, with squared shoulders and heads thrown back, and speak up so as to be clearly heard over a large room; at other schools they stand on one foot, loll against the wall, sink their chins in their chests, and read in a shamefaced fashion, and in such a low tone that the examiner cannot hear them. Some teachers candidly told us that they could not get their pupils to speak out; but we have noticed that another teacher, on a change being made, found no difficulty with the same pupils. As we have often pointed out, low reading, like small writing, is merely a cloak to cover faults. Finally, we may say that lack of intelligence in oral work is nearly always associated with low, mumbling reading.

Dictation, with spelling, improves slowly. In Standard I. and Standard II. there is little to be desired in spelling, but the few errors made generally showed an ignorance of phonetic principles that we had previously found were well known by the same pupils when in the preparatory classes.

In Standard III. errors in the five dictated words were very frequent, and they were of such a nature as to show that the pupils could not divide the words into syllables—a sure example of "cram." In the passage dictated from Standard II. reading-book errors of the following kind were very common: "of" for "off," "were" for "where," and *vice versâ*, "to" for "too," "main" for "mane," and such like. But errors of this sort point to very bad training.

In the higher classes the work was very varied. In many cases the passage was quite correctly written, but the majority of the words (five) were misspelled; while in others the passages showed marvellous carelessness (not reading sense), while all the words were correctly spelled. On the geography examination papers the spelling was often very bad. In any class there can be no excuse for beginning proper names with small letters.

In writing we seldom had to fail a pupil, and, taking the district as a whole, we believe writing is a strong subject, though by no means so strong as some years ago before drawing robbed it of an hour's teaching per week. Too many teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the manner in which the pen or pencil is held and to the position of the pupils. At some schools the writing on the transcription papers was far superior to the writing in copybooks; at others the reverse was the case. On the whole this district, we believe, is much above the average in writing. The examination papers generally were characterized by neatness and fine arrangement, and it would be very disappointing if such were not the case, considering the number of times we have written in examination reports examples of what is required. Occasionally we still come across a teacher who considers "life is too short" (words of a teacher) to spend time over inculcating habits of neatness and orderly arrangement; but such instances are rare, and the delinquent is generally a new arrival. No doubt the pupils of such a teacher will later on, if farmers, think "life is too short" to admit of a gorse hedge being kept in order; or, if artisans, they will be fine exponents of "the-good-enough-to-pass-inspection" theory.

Arithmetic was generally satisfactory in Standard I. and Standard II. as usual. In Standard III. we are of opinion that, considering the simplicity of the cards, the work might well have been better at more schools. In Standard IV. the results varied very much. At the best schools the pupils found no difficulty with the cards, while at others failure in the bill of parcels and in measure-tables and weight-tables was very common. Long measure, when knowledge of chains in a furlong, poles in a chain, and the like was required, brought many pupils to grief. Feilding School is deserving of special mention for the fine work in this standard. Of 45 pupils examined, 26 worked all the sums (five) correctly, 10 pupils were wrong in only one sum, and the remaining 9 pupils failed in only two sums. Also, the figuring and the general arrangement were very fine. There appears to us to be more than a fair year's work between the requirements in Standard III. and those in Standard IV. if the questions set in each standard were duly representative. In

Standard V. and Standard VI. there was a very marked improvement. This, no doubt, was mainly due to the questions being considerably easier than in any previous year since they were issued by the Education Department. At the same time, we consider the questions were quite difficult enough to be a fair and reasonable test of the requirements of the syllabus. We were pleased to find more uniformity as regards difficulty in the various sets of questions. In Standard V. bankrupt sums, and in Standard VI. compound interest, were more frequently wrong than any others. At Jackeytown School the three pupils in Standard VI. worked all the sums correctly.

Upon our inspection visits we noticed that the number of schools at which arithmetic is well taught is increasing. Blackboard teaching, we were glad to note, is getting more common. At too many schools, however, the teachers still do too much of the work, and so the attention of the whole class is not as well sustained as it should be. That the teaching at many schools must still be far too mechanical was plainly shown by the silly nature of some of the errors. Inaccuracy, we suppose, must always be expected, but there can be no excuse for, say, several pounds being given for a few shillings in an item in a bill of parcels, for the amount a bankrupt pays in the pound being set down as more than a pound, for length and breadth being multiplied together to find distance round. In teaching problems the chief fault we noticed was that, while suitable easy illustrations were set, little attention was paid to the principle involved. But it is the principle that should be taught until it can be stated by the majority of the pupils and be applied to similar cases of greater difficulty than the easy example.

In mental arithmetic there is still much to be desired. In the lower classes counting on fingers is far too common. In Standard III. the pupils were very backward or slow in the simplest calculations with various coins. Thus, such questions as "30 pencils at ½d. each?" "5 books at 2s. 6d. each?" "Half a sovereign + a crown + a half-crown + six threepenny-pieces?" were frequently quite beyond the majority of pupils in a class. In Standard IV. the experience was somewhat similar. "Ten half-crowns – ten florins?" would produce many answers in pounds. Then, again, the pupils often were quite unable to make use of in oral work their knowledge of aliquot parts. The question "2,400 at 1s. 8d. each?" frequently brought not a single response till the preliminary question "What part of a pound is 1s. 8d.?" was put in despair. But examination does not include induction. In Standard V. and Standard VI. improvement was very noticeable, but still there was a great lack of readiness in recognising short methods, and such numbers as 20, 240, 480, 960, 1,760, 2,240, and such like had no significance. In turning a number of pence to pounds the pupils were very inaccurate—*e.g.*, "One ton at a 1d. per lb.?" We spent a great deal of time at this subject, teaching rather than examining it, and we were often surprised at the cumbersome methods employed. Thus, in Standard V. not one pupil recognised the shortest method of finding the price of 239 articles at 6d. Again, in Standard III., instead of saying at once "Nine halfpennies are 4½.," pupils invariably said "Nine twos are eighteen, four into eighteen," &c.

Geography improves but slowly in Standards IV., V., and VI. We still have to urge the need of more intelligent teaching as opposed to memory work. The quality of the answers on the surface features of the continents was often very poor. Lists of names of mountains, for example, were readily given, but the answers showed little or no grasp of the relative positions of the ranges, their directions, and the watersheds they form. In this connection we cannot insist too strongly upon the necessity for rough sketches upon the blackboard during the progress of the lessons. "Geographical advantages" evidently do not receive due attention, for when we particularly asked for them with regard to a port or a capital the answers in nine cases out of ten conveyed no reference whatever to them, but simply stated other facts not implied in the question. With regard to mathematical geography, the same confused and hazy notions as noted in former reports were still in evidence. Again and again we were told that *within* the Arctic circle there is during the year only one day and one night, each six months in duration. The same also was said of places *on* the Arctic circle. In short, this was the stock answer to all questions with any bearing on the Arctic and the Antarctic regions. But the syllabus requires a knowledge of the significance of the parallels of latitude, with special reference to the seasons within the Arctic and the Antarctic regions. Some of the poor answering in these standards we consider to be due, in a large measure, to the fact that pupils are not trained to express in writing what they really know. Standard III. geography was often very fine, sometimes very poor; the mean was seldom found. Local geography was generally the weakest branch of the subject; but geographical teaching from the very first should be illustrated by local examples. A few teachers try to cover too much ground, and there appears to be a general impression abroad that the rivers upon which capitals are situated are required. Hence we sometimes found pupils who could not recognise the Andes and the Amazon prating about the Eastern Ghats and the Manzanares. We confess we should like to see geography placed amongst the "class-subjects."

Drawing steadily improves. Scale-drawing is very popular, and was often really excellently well done. Freehand on the whole was good, but at too many schools we found evidence of ruling and measuring where they were expressly forbidden. Several teachers appear to think that in Standard IV. freehand drawing it is allowable not only to rule the guiding-lines, but also to rule squares, triangles, &c., round the copies, and then proceed to do the same on the drawing-paper before "blocking out" the figure. We found many of our copies ruled in this manner. The oral requirements in Standard II. and Standard I. were neglected at several schools. Standard IV. geometry, while not as good as we might reasonably expect it, has improved. Model-drawing in most of the few schools at which it was taken was poor.

In composition the results received were more varied than in any other subject. In Standard VI. and Standard V. the examination cards, as usual, showed three different requirements—first, a letter upon one of the several prescribed subjects, the majority of which were taken from a list presented to us by the teachers as having been treated during the year; second, a simple piece of paraphrasing; third, a few sentences showing corrections of false grammar, proper usage of words,

punctuation, or synthesis. In Standard IV. a letter was required upon one of several subjects chosen as in the higher standards, and an extra question was given, which was generally on the combination of sentences, or on putting certain words into sentences so as to show a knowledge of their correct usage. In Standard III. the requirements were a little composition exercise on one of several subjects, and a few sentences either in answer to direct questions or embodying given words as "where," "were," "to," "two," "too," and the like.

Now, with regard to the work received, all the remarks in our last report are again applicable. In Standard VI. and Standard V. with regard to essay- and letter-writing it was very marked what different views teachers took as to the kind of subjects upon which their pupils should have intelligent ideas that they could express well upon paper. Thus at some schools, notably College Street, Palmerston, leading international questions were written about, and many letters not only gave a considerable amount of correct information, but also showed an intelligent grasp of the subjects, and an orderly and logical arrangement of the facts. On the other hand, at many schools such subjects as "The Bush," "The Surrounding District," "A Trip up the Wanganui," were considered quite advanced enough for these standards.

In letter-writing in Standard IV., and frequently even in Standard V. and Standard VI., the usual complaint with regard to beginnings, endings, and addresses has to be made (see former reports), notwithstanding the manner in which the cards are printed with special features which pupils might be liable to forget shown in bold type.

In Standard III. the composition exercise was very fairly done at many schools, but little attention was paid to the note on the card, and we were generally pestered with inquiries regarding the second question. And here we may say that it was often a matter of great surprise to us that, though the questions are of the same nature year after year, though copious notes upon errors and bad methods found are sent with examination reports annually, and though the examination cards of each year are distributed (when finished with) amongst the schools, many pupils by their oral questions and by their methods of treating printed questions showed that they had no idea of the general lines of treatment required.

The class-subjects—grammar, history, geography (S. II.), science, object-lessons—were thoroughly examined at every school whether small or large. Before writing in detail on the various subjects, we may say that we think it a great mistake to require every one to be taken up at a small school with one teacher and several standards. Surely at such schools history, at all events, might be omitted.

Grammar continues to deteriorate above Standard III., and in several schools the work received by us plainly showed that incalculable harm is being done by the present loose method of treating grammar. This is much to be regretted, for grammar, if properly taught, is one of the most educative subjects in the primary school course. As Mr. Matthew Arnold points out, "grammar is an exact subject, every answer on which must be right or wrong, and no answer on which can have any value if it keeps to vague generalities. It compels a pupil, even more than arithmetic, to give the measure of his common-sense by his mode of selecting and applying, in particular instances, the rule when he knows it. . . . . It is more effective than arithmetic as a logical training, because it operates with concretes or words, instead of with abstracts or figures." But as grammar, if well taught, is pre-eminently calculated to develop the intelligence of the pupils, so if treated in such a manner as merely to bring to light "lunatic mistakes" (Mr. Thring points out there is as much sense in parsing "children" singular as in calling a dog a calf) it must have just the opposite effect, for the more perfect the tool the worse results it obtains when in undisciplined hands. Grammar, we certainly think, should be placed amongst the "pass-subjects," and analysis should be begun in Standard IV.

History on the whole was a more or less unsatisfactory subject, but the number of schools at which it was intelligently taught in Standard III. has increased. The weakness in the subject is accounted for partly by poor, loose methods of treatment and partly by the unpunctuality of the pupils, history being the first subject on the time-table at the majority of schools. We hope in time to see the mere reading of an historical text-book substituted for class-teaching in history.

In Standard II. geography the work in general was satisfactory. It is most surprising to us that while pupils in this standard year after year show a fair knowledge of the relative positions of oceans and continents pupils in Standard IV. often display utter ignorance in the same connection when asked to describe ocean routes.

In science the favourite subject was agricultural chemistry. We believe better results would be obtained in it if less ground had to be covered. In object-lessons the treatment generally was disappointing. We are of opinion that most teachers look upon science and object-lessons merely as a means for imparting information, and quite ignore their educative value when properly treated.

Mental arithmetic has already been referred to.

The order and discipline, taking the schools as a whole, were excellent. Anything in the shape of bad behaviour was, as far as our experience went, almost unknown. The attention was not always what it might be. Teachers should remember that good attention does not consist in pupils merely sitting still and attempting answers when specially appealed to. When a question is put generally to a class every pupil should be on the alert to give an answer, and even after a fairly correct answer is given by one pupil there should be many others anxious to improve upon it. In oral work a kind of mental torpor, showing that the pupils were not following either the drift of their teacher's questions or the answers of their class-mates, was a prominent feature in many schools. Answering in low, shamefaced tones has still often to be condemned: how teachers can tolerate it for a moment we cannot understand.

We are sorry to have to state that we had to fail four pupils for deliberate copying from books. We take this opportunity of stating that in future no books, other than reading-books, are to be brought into the class-rooms on examination-day.

Manners generally were very satisfactory in school; outside there was often much to be desired.

In conclusion, we may say that much good work has been done during the year. The teachers, as a body, are earnest and zealous, and they are respected and esteemed by the parents of their pupils. Failure to procure reasonably good work, all circumstances being considered, was very seldom the result of deliberate neglect. Suggestions given by the Inspectors have generally been taken advantage of, and have borne good fruit.

Two great obstacles to progress have been irregular attendance and changes of teachers during the school year. With regard to the former, the disadvantages are so manifest that there is no need to say anything here. With regard to the latter, we generally found bad work at schools that had two different principal teachers during the year, and each teacher put the blame on the other's shoulders. We are inclined to think that the retiring teachers relaxed their efforts on news of their promotion, and that the incoming teachers did not work as hard as they might, waiting till after the examination.

But another very serious obstacle to satisfactory progress has sprung up during the past few years—viz., the dairying industry. At many schools in the northern portion of the district the pupils appeared thoroughly tired and worn out at the very beginning of the work on the examination day, and some actually fell asleep *while writing*. But this cannot be wondered at when it is remembered that these children were up at about 4 a.m., milked several cows and did other farm work, and then had to wash and dress, get breakfast, and ride or walk some distance to school. We have come across children from six to twelve years old who milked as many cows morning and afternoon as they could count years in their lives! It must be very evident that it is impossible for children who have to work in this manner to make satisfactory progress during the school year, or to do themselves justice on the examination day. We often sorely pitied them, but an Inspector cannot make distinctions.

We have, &c.,

W. H. Vereker-Bindon, M.A.,
Chief Inspector.

James Milne, M.A.,
Assistant Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

Sir,— Wellington, 28th February, 1898.

We have the honour to report on the work and condition of the primary public schools of the Wellington Education District for the year 1897.

The number of schools examined was 120, including all in operation in any locality at the time of our visit. This is an increase of fourteen on the number of the previous year, caused by the opening of seventeen and the closing of three small country schools. Of the seventeen new schools, five are in the approximate neighbourhood of Wellington, four lie east of Masterton, one is near Carterton, and the remaining seven are in the Forty-mile Bush country.

The demands for school accommodation have been fairly met in all urgent cases, and certainly as far as it is possible to meet them with the funds available. In the City of Wellington, the building of the school at Roseneath now under contract, the reconstruction lately effected at Clyde Quay and the Terrace, the recent extension of South Wellington School, and alterations already decided upon in the Willis Street School, will afford needed improvements; and we hope the time is not far distant when a better building will be provided for the Mount Cook Girls', in accordance with the suggestions made in our last report. Speaking of the country properties, it is evident that the wear and tear on the large number of buildings now erected is very considerable; and to keep them in repair, to make alterations necessary from time to time, to put up outbuildings, and to do the painting at even long intervals, is a heavier charge upon public funds than is commonly supposed. As a consequence, some buildings are left too long before repairs are effected, and in other cases cramped and unsuitable accommodation has to be put up with.

The attendance shows an increase of 506 children—from 13,688 on the books in 1896 to 14,194 in 1897. The number present for examination in standards is augmented by 336—from 8,977 to 9,313; and the number actually passed in standards was greater by 548—from 7,559 to 8,107. The number of passes increased from 84 to 87 per cent. of the number of pupils examined. The classification of the children passed is shown in the following table:—

	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
1896 ...	1,597	1,581	1,583	1,338	942	568
1897 ...	1,639	1,684	1,588	1,407	1,080	709

Besides these there were 392 in the class above Standard VI., representing those who had already passed Standard VI.; and in the previous year the number so classed was 349.

In reporting on the passes made we are pleased to say that both in numbers and in quality of work they represent more than an average year's progress. In numbers an increase of 3 per cent., with an upward movement of the passes in all standards, and more particularly in the higher ones, is satisfactory, and it follows that there is a steady uplifting of the work, which means a steady progress of the classes. We fully recognise, however, that in the matter of passes quality is of far greater importance than quantity, and in going again through our schedules and notes we find sufficient evidence of improved quality of work, and more particularly in greater fluency in reading in many classes attributable to the introduction of more varied reading matter, and in the use of shorter and better methods of teaching arithmetic.

In many schools there was clear evidence of extended general knowledge, due to the introduction of Science Readers, and, in part, to the extended use of school libraries. Much improvement was effected in the writing by the adoption of a more upright style; and map-drawing was generally improved in printing and tinting. There was marked improvement in other subjects, as in physical and political geography, and in the teaching of more facile, thoughtful, and accurate composition.

In summarising our reports on the several schools, we find that in the twelve largest, which contain on an average 600 children each, and in the aggregate rather more than the remaining 108 schools, there has been no case of serious disaster, the least satisfactory having one or two weak classes, but all showing commendable work in the best classes. In eight of these the class-work was more or less satisfactory throughout. We are pleased to notice the improved position taken up by the Mount Cook Schools, and we note with satisfaction the improved upper work in the Masterton School.

Next in importance to the large schools are eighteen with an average of 153 on the rolls; and, of these, we can report favourably of thirteen. In the remaining five the work is never very good, and varies too much from year to year.

We have also twenty-six country schools, under two or at most three teachers, with an average of nearly seventy on their rolls. About twenty of these show painstaking work, the remaining six having inexcusable weakness in certain subjects.

There are now fifty-one schools each under one teacher only, not including ten small aided ones recently opened. Of these fifty-one schools six are below average merit, and better work will be looked for in them. The other forty-five, which are in all stages of progress, are in good working order.

The large Kindergarten schools fully maintain the favourable notice given in our former reports.

We now wish to call attention to a few defects, which should receive the special attention of careful teachers. One is the need of better preparation for the giving of lessons, especially in class-subjects, such as science and object-lessons. Another is indistinctness and often inarticulation in reading and speaking. We so often ask a pupil to repeat his answer, owing to the difficulty of making out what he has said. We know that both these defects are old-time troubles with teachers, but we are not less impressed with the importance of overcoming the difficulties; and we find on the latter point the British Education Department has lately issued a circular note calling general attention to the matter. As we indorse, from our own point of view, what is therein contained, we venture to quote a few extracts therefrom, which cannot fail to be of interest to teachers who are conscious of the defects complained of:—

The department holds that it is impossible to give sufficient individual practice in classes consisting of forty, fifty, or of even a greater number of children, or, indeed, any practice worthy of the name 'in the midst of confusion and clatter.' 'No answer to a question should be accepted from a child (unless he is conspicuously lacking in self-confidence) which is not clearly heard by every member of the class.' A practice full of profit to every member of a class, and to the teacher as well, is 'to make each in turn read exclusively to the ears of his comrades, and not as is usually the case to their eyes alone.' Teachers are advised that they will do best to divide reading-lessons into two separate parts, attention being continuously given, at the one time, chiefly to the matter read, and at the other, chiefly to the manner of reading. Finally, 'children should not usually be asked to read a passage aloud until they have had sufficient time to master its general meaning by silent study.'

Much of the success of any system of education depends on the complete staffing of the schools, on the selection of teachers, and on the inducement held out to them of obtaining promotion, of pursuing their education and training, and of maintaining their health and energies; for these inducements are great incentives to well-doing, and the chief means by which thorough interest in work is sustained. Speaking generally, the best interests of our teachers are carefully considered, and there exists a feeling of satisfaction with the administration, and a sense of justice done to the service. The instances in which teachers fail to obtain deserved promotion within a reasonable time are rare; and, on the other hand, there are very few cases in which teachers do not conscientiously perform their duties to the best of their ability. We think there is somewhat undue mental strain put upon our young teachers, who are engaged in their schools all the school day, and are required to attend instruction classes four hours a week, and, presumably, spend many more hours in preparation work. Besides this they have their household and social duties. In England it is now recognised by many of the chief provincial School Boards that pupil-teachers should be relieved from part of this work, and supernumerary pupil-teachers are appointed with this object. We are of opinion that a modified plan of this kind might commend itself to the Wellington Education Board, and we most respectfully suggest that the members should give due consideration to the matter. We think that when there are two or three pupil-teachers on the staff of a school, a supernumerary one should be allowed, who could relieve each of the others in turn from some portion of the class-work, giving them rest and affording them spare time for recuperating their energies, preparing lessons, and looking on at the work of other teachers. They would also act as relieving-teachers in case of absence. In large schools one such supernumerary might be allowed for every three pupil-teachers on the staff; and if this were done there would be no need of relieving-teachers in any school in which there were two pupil-teachers on the ordinary or unsupplemented staff. The effect of this suggestion would be to prevent undue mental pressure from over-work on young teachers. The gain to the service would be in the more vigorous teaching brought to bear on the classes, the reduction in the absence of sick-leave, and the freedom of action given to the head-teacher, who would be so much less hampered in his management. If this consideration were granted to pupil-teachers then it would be only reasonable for them to understand that at the completion of their year of service, or so soon after as they have

been given time to obtain an E certificate, they shall, when called upon to do so, take any appointment which may be offered them in any part of the district. At present many of our small schools are taught by uncertificated and inexperienced teachers, because ex-pupil-teachers duly qualified are unwilling to go into the back country, notwithstanding the experience of those who have done so and not regretted the step taken.

In the columns set apart in the appended departmental forms, in the one for "Order and discipline," we have given an approximate general statement of the condition under the headings so far as we have been able to judge. Sometimes it happens in a well-ordered large school that one teacher is deficient in discipline: and in the same way we find occasionally only one class or a section of a class in a school showing bad form in its manners. We feel that these are important returns; at the same time there is danger in making an apparently invidious distinction between one school and another. We can on the whole speak favourably of the tone of the schools, although there is much in the conduct of youths in our streets which is reprehensible, and of which it is difficult to say whether the schools are or are not in any degree responsible. The want of respect in many young people for persons and property is certainly deplorable, either because in this colony the spirit of mischief is too active, or the latitude allowed by parents to their children is too wide, or the sense of veneration is uncultivated. Be it as it may, we hope our teachers will keep the question well before them, and we feel sure that they will do all in their power by precept and discipline to train our rising generation to respect the feelings and belongings of others. There is one form of incipient vandalism which should, if possible, be suppressed with a strong hand, as there is no possible excuse for it; we mean that love of mere destruction which leads to the defacing of public buildings and the spoiling of trees and shrubs. This is, however, mostly the work of older boys; and the suppression of it falls more in the province of municipal authorities than in that of the schoolmaster.

An important step has lately been taken by the Board, which will in time lead to much improvement in the teaching of singing. It has been decided to hold an annual examination of teachers for a certificate of competency to teach class-singing, the examination to be conducted by a specialist on lines laid down by examining bodies on this subject in England. The suggestion came from Mr. Robert Parker, who holds the position under the Board of instructor of teachers in singing. His classes are held in Wellington and Masterton, and are largely attended and much appreciated, for he is an excellent class-teacher, and most enthusiastic in his work. It is thought that the annual examination, the first of which is to be held next June, will have the useful effect of stimulating our young teachers to qualify for the special certificate, many of them having already expressed a wish to do so; and others who possess more than average musical ability will be pleased to have their qualifications duly recognised. Other benefits will follow, such as the introduction of a better defined course of instruction, attention to voice production, the selection of the most suitable exercises and songs, and the supply of cheap copy in large quantity. This last is much desired, for it will pave the way for musical instruction, inasmuch as there has been a difficulty in the past both as to subject and supply of copy, the price of which was often prohibitive of class supply.

Another important step forward has been made in regard to drill, which the Board has decided to put on a more military footing. Company-drill will be taught in every school in accordance with standing orders; and in large schools companies of from forty to a hundred boys will be put in uniform and duly officered. In the country two or more schools may join forces to form a company. As occasion may require, and at stated intervals, companies will assemble for battalion-drill. There will probably be two battalions, one for the City schools near Wellington, and one for the Wairarapa. It is claimed for this system, which is working well in New South Wales and Natal, that it will in many ways have a good effect in improving the discipline of school life, making the boys smarter in movement, giving them better carriage and address, and improving their physique by the gymnastic exercises, including swimming, which are a part of the training. As a national movement in the military training of all citizens, of which it is the rational beginning, the system has much to commend it. Indirectly it will afford technical training, as in learning to play musical instruments by buglers and bandsmen, and in signalling, tent-pitching, and field exercises, and the use of the rifle. Companies are now being formed, and the movement has the hearty support of our teachers. So far as the teaching of drill is affected, it will make little difference in the work done by the boys, and the girls will retain the Indian club and pole drills. The present cadet corps at Mount Cook and Masterton will form the nuclei of their respective battalions, and the military officers from the Defence Department have already brought the city companies into a fair state of efficiency.

The subject of reading is always before us in any report on account of its foremost importance in our primary system. For years past we have experienced a difficulty in overcoming the resistance offered by parents to the purchase of sufficient varied reading-books for their children. There are still a few schools only using one book in each class, but in most schools two class-books are supplied; and in our best schools three are in use in many classes. The Board having lately decided to assist in this direction, as recommended in our last report, and a sum of £30 having been received from a fund collected by the City School Committees at the time of the Jubilee, we are now enabled to issue to all the City schools, and to many in the country, sets of class-readers to supplement those purchased by the parents. The sets lent by the Board for six months may be exchanged for other sets suitable for other classes; and in this way an extended use will be made of them, and parents will be encouraged in supplying two sets in all schools, for the series furnished by the Board will not be issued to any school unless at least two sets are already in use. In some schools funds have been locally raised for the purchase of a school set; and this is indeed most helpful in extending the application of the plan to more classes in the school. We are much pleased with the progress made in increasing the supply of Readers, and with the greater interest taken in the reading-lessons, for the new books afford fresh and pleasant reading and are beautifully illustrated.

We have lately amended the science syllabus, and adopted more suitable text-books for chemistry and botany. The programme is extended by the introduction of domestic economy in conjunction with physiology, the combination forming a course especially intended for classes of girls in large schools. Longmans' "Domestic Economy Readers" are now very largely used as class-books by the girls, and Blackie's "Young Chemists" by the boys; and this arrangement, if carried out with necessary experiments, appears calculated to lead to still further improvements in the teaching of science. The chemistry taught in all our large schools, and the domestic economy taught in the Clyde Quay School, are very satisfactory. Science without experiment is nothing; and the more pupils can perform experiments themselves in any subject, the more scientific the instruction. As one or two large schools, including Mount Cook Girls' and Thorndon, have so far attempted to teach domestic economy without experiments, we wish to point out that the little knowledge of cooking at present required can be taught with the help of a kerosene stove and a few accessories, costing about £1. By adding to this a small oven, the whole programme can be covered.

Manual instruction in the use of tools and in wood-carving is carried on at the Technical School, Wellington, at Mauriceville West, and at Paraparaumu. Mr. Joplin at Mauriceville devotes his skill and energy to a class which has worked with keen interest and great success.

The passes in scale and model drawing this year were less in number than those of the previous year, but there was an increase of those in freehand and geometry. This does not necessarily indicate any falling-off in the work; and, as a matter of fact, we find the certificates now held by the children, which include former passes, are greater in numbers than they have ever been. The following table shows the late examination results:—

	Freehand.	Geometry.	Scale.	Model.
1896	819	1,063	1,006	418
1897	962	1,177	848	380

We notice from the reports of other Inspectors that there is a general expression of opinion that the syllabus needs amendment in some particulars, and in this we concur. In late reports we have pointed out the need of an amended arithmetic course, and in our leaflets issued last year such a course was sketched out. We also agree with the Canterbury Inspectors that a modification of the grammar syllabus is necessary; although we are of opinion the change should not altogether follow the form suggested. Whilst we are more than doubtful as to the wisdom of the proposal to make geography a class-subject, we think the geography syllabus might be made more useful and interesting. And further, we have always advocated the adoption of a seventh standard, and practically made one, by re-examining all children who have previously passed Standard VI. in harder work. There are now 392 pupils attending school in the class above Standard VI., and perhaps as many more attended a considerable part of the year after passsing Standard VI. If Standard VII. were instituted, then all these pupils would have more incentive to work, and more inducement to remain at school, for most of them are only thirteen or fourteen years of age.

As this district was the first by nearly two years to introduce the standard system into the colony in 1874, and as we have carefully watched the working of the system from the start, it may not be out of place if we suggest that the time has come for considerable modifications in the method of promotion, which, as now carried out with a complex syllabus, involves too much waste of energy on the part of the Inspectors. Their time is now wholly taken up in passing candidates from standard to standard, and the much more important office of overseeing is being set aside. We know the standards have been most useful in bringing school work into system; but now that is fairly accomplished, we contend the standard system is only useful in so far as it may enable a teacher to classify his scholars according to that recognised standard, and suggest to him what is the broad outline of his work. If the promotion of the scholars is left to the head-teacher, then his scope of work is enlarged, and he works with greater freedom, throws into his work more individuality, and can afford to give his class work, as well as his standard work in all subjects, equally fair consideration. It will, of course, be always necessary for an Inspector to satisfy himself that the promotions made by the head-teacher are deserved; and the Inspector would probably always re-examine in Standard V. and Standard VII., assuming that Standard V. be the standard for exemption, and Standard VII. the highest. He would also check some portion of the other passes; and if he had occasion to suspect that promotions had not been earned, it would be his duty to re-examine the whole school. But in a large district like this, in which there is no training-school for teachers, and, when an inspection of a school may be of so much use in inquiry into methods of work, discipline, the staff, accommodation, and more especially in practical teaching, it is a work of supererogation to examine for promotion only, when that can be well done by the head-teachers. The examination of a school for promotion in standards should be made as the present examination in Standards I. and II. is now made, about a week before the date of the Inspector's visit, and the results should not be declared until they are approved by the Inspector. With this proviso, there is no reason to our minds why the promotion in standards should not be left to the head-teachers. In Britain, the Department of Education have gone even further than this, standards are practically abolished, and the whole work of the Inspector is in overseeing, testing here and there the teacher's methods, and making suggestions as to improved methods of work or as to school requirements. It is contended that the schools profit more by the assistance given at the inspection than they did by the previous examinations; and the teachers impress their own individuality more upon their work, and are afforded greater scope for their energies.

We have, &c.,

ROBERT LEE,
T. R. FLEMING, } Inspectors

The Chairman, Wellington Education Board.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	392	...	...	...
Standard VI.	869	851	709	13 10
" V.	1,371	1,337	1,080	12 10
" IV.	1,778	1,728	1,407	11 11
" III.	1,951	1,901	1,588	10 11
" II.	1,842	1,814	1,684	9 9
" I.	1,701	1,682	1,639	8 8
Preparatory	4,290	...	...	...
Totals	14,194	9,313	8,107	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,— Inspector's Office, Napier, 17th January, 1898.

It is seldom that the opportunity offers of tracing the growth of an education district for a period of nearly twenty years under the same Chairman, and it has struck me as not an inappropriate thing to give a few facts of a retrospective character in connection with this my nineteenth annual report to the Board.

At the opening of the third school quarter of the year 1878 the estimated population of the Hawke's Bay District, including Cook County, was 17,367. Thirty-one schools were then under the Board, at which there was an attendance of 1,763 pupils. At the end of the year just closed 68 schools were in active operation, the population of the district numbered 42,701, and 7,348 were returned as belonging to the schools at the date of my annual visit for examination. This is exclusive of the attendance at the Catholic schools in the district, 4 of which were also examined by permission of the Board. These contained 356 pupils, so that the number of children examined last year was 7,704.

In 1878 Cook County had 4 schools in operation with an attendance of 303 pupils; it now has 15 schools with an attendance of 1,410 pupils. Wairoa County had 2 schools with 110 pupils; it has now 4 schools with 270 pupils. Hawkes Bay County, including Napier Borough, had 12 schools in 1878 with 871 pupils; it has now 17 schools with 3,065 pupils. Waipawa County, including Patangata, had 13 schools with 479 pupils; it has now 32 schools with 2,603 pupils.

In 1878 the school attendance over the district represented 10·1 per cent. of the total population; and for the year just closed it was 17·2 per cent. for Board schools only, and 18 per cent. including the attendance at the Catholic schools examined by me. The following table contains much that is of interest with respect to the educational growth of the district between the years 1878 and 1897:—

Counties.	1878.						1897.					
	Population.	Schools.	Attendance.	Teachers.	Certificated.	Scholarships.	Population.	Schools.	Attendance.	Teachers.	Certificated.	Scholarships.
Cook *cum* Waiapu ...	Sum total, 17,367	4	303	9	...	...	8,101	15	1,410	38	22	9
Wairoa		2	110	3	...	...	1,490	4	270	11	5	...
Hawke's Bay *cum* Napier		12	871	27	1	1	19,395	17	3,065	70	46	23
Waipawa *cum* Patangata		13	479	15	1	...	13,715	32	2,603	82	55	10
Total ...	17,367	31	1,763	54	2	1	42,701	68	7,348	201	128	42

The best attendance to the total population is in the Waipawa County, and the lowest is Hawke's Bay. The latter, however, may be accounted for by the fact that there are several private schools and, at least, two Catholic schools for which no allowance has been made.

Of the school buildings belonging to the Board in 1878 only the small schoolhouse at Patangata remains, and this is in a very bad way, and is barely habitable for school purposes. In every other case new buildings have been erected either to replace the hired ones then in use or to supply the

requirements such as the large increase in the school attendance has made necessary. In 1878 there were no school buildings in Napier belonging to the Board, although three schools were being carried on, with an attendance of 516 pupils. There are now five schools in the town which are owned by the Board, with an attendance of 1,630 pupils. In 1878 Hastings had a roll of 43 children, Woodville of 58, Dannevirke of 40, and Gisborne of 196; whilst last year Hastings had 578 pupils attending school; Woodville, 397; Dannevirke, 416; and Gisborne, 613. The schools were staffed by 54 teachers in 1878, two of whom held certificates of competency as trained men. There are now 201 teachers in the service of the Board, 128 holding certificates of competency from the Department of Education in Wellington, the others being pupil-teachers who are undergoing a course of training under special regulations. From this brief retrospect and comparison between the past and the present it will be noticed that great changes have taken place in the whole aspect and condition of education throughout the district. Year by year the progress has been going on, although during the past three years the increase in the school population is not so large as in previous years.

Five new schools have been opened by the Board during the past year, with an aggregate roll of 89 pupils. Three of the schools are situated in districts far removed from the main lines of communication, and, though the average attendance at those schools was 32 for December quarter, it will take me, at the lowest estimate, seven days to visit and examine them, even though calling but once a year. Portland Island I have not been able to reach, though the school has been in operation for eighteen months or more, and there are several other schools like Motu and Mangatu where it is sheer waste of time to visit considering the days it takes to get there and the mere handful of pupils who attend them. With the permission of the Board it would be possible to arrange for the examination of the work at these small subsidised schools by means of paper tests, leaving it open for me to inspect such schools in my own way and in my own time as circumstances may permit.

All the schools excepting Portland Island have been duly visited and examined. My inspection reports have given in detail the condition and needs of the several schools, but it may be well to point out here that the time is coming when a fairly large expenditure will be necessary for maintenance in the case of some of the larger buildings. Napier (main school), Port Ahuriri, Gisborne, Hastings, and others will need important improvements, such as painting, fencing, and drainage. Increased attention is also desirable in the matter of office accommodation for both teachers and children. The care that is usually bestowed upon the grounds and building by School Committees has not been maintained in a number of instances, although to the credit of the teachers and Committees concerned it must be pointed out that the buildings, grounds, and arrangements generally at Woodville, Mangaatua, Kumeroa, Dannevirke, Makotuku, Makaretu North, Hampden, Waipawa, Petane, Tiniroto, Napier (side), Gisborne, and Patutahi are everything to be desired.

In several districts the office arrangements are very unsatisfactory, and due provision is not made even for a water-supply. Motu, Mangatu, Waimate, Wainui, Wanstead, Puketitiri, Mohaka, and Makaretu South all need attention in one or both of the wants mentioned, as great inconvenience exists in every school where these necessary requirements are not provided when the schools are first opened.

During the year I discontinued making recommendations as to the wants of schools in the matter of apparatus and appliances. Attention was drawn by me last year to the need of an official list of apparatus and appliances, stating the maps, diagrams, and appliances which the Board furnish to the various schools. Some schools are well supplied and appear to get what they want without difficulty, but there are others where I have been unable to examine in certain work for the want of suitable maps. Such a thing could not occur were the plan suggested by me in a special note adopted for the schools. The matter is one of urgency, for, as pointed out in my report last year, "Good diagrams are always of high value to teachers, and, although science can be taught and object-lessons given on subjects of local and general interest without the help of diagrams or other apparatus, it is still necessary to be supplied with such if children are to become acquainted with the world outside their own immediate environments."

Examinations.—All the school examinations were completed by the end of November, and the remaining portion of the year was spent in inspection and in the examination of candidates for the Board's scholarships.

I notice that the average number on the school-roll for the year as summarised from the returns for each quarter of the year was 7,600; whilst the number on the examination schedules, as already explained, was 7,348. The comparison shows that class registration varies very little during the year, and this aspect of school-keeping may be set down as satisfactory. The pupils belonging to the preparatory classes are fewer than last year, but the proportion of older children in these classes is still unusually large. Considering the kind of studies in the lower classes it is somewhat discouraging to find 630 children in the schools over 8 years of age and who are unable to pass into Standard I. Most of them, I find, are late-comers at school, but they also include the dull, the slow, the indifferent, and the irregular ones. Roger Ascham somewhere remarks that "hard wits prove best in every kind of life," and it may be that the slow ones in the lower classes overtake the others before the completion of the standard course, although I think it unlikely that such is the case. It seems to me proper to allow lady teachers who are in charge of the preparatory classes to exercise their own free judgment in promoting their children to a higher class. A wide basis and good grounding form the best possible qualifications for admittance to the standard course, and, although some may be late in quitting the preparatory classes, the average age of those who pass the several standards is by no means high. Of those who are returned as attending school at the time of my examinations, 4,673 were in standards and 2,624 in the preparatory classes. The pupils who were actually present at examination in the standards, excluding 32 pupils in the class above Standard VI., was 4,559, or 110 more than in the previous year.

The actual passes were 3,797, or 83·3 per cent. of the whole. The table below gives, in summary form, the complete results for the year, and for comparison the results of the year 1896 are added.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Failed.	Absent.	Passed.	Percentage of passed to examined.	Average Age of those that passed.	Improved or otherwise, in Proportion of Passes.
							Yrs. mos.	
Above Standard VI.	32	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	320	319	49	1	270	84·6	14 1	Improved.
" V. ...	559	544	140	15	404	74·2	13 2	Improved.
" IV. ...	773	754	184	19	570	75·6	12 4	Fallen.
" III. ...	986	968	172	18	796	82·2	11 1	Improved.
" II. ...	986	965	106	21	859	89·0	9 11	Improved.
" I. ...	1,017	1,009	111	8	898	89·0	8 11	Fallen.
Preparatory ...	2,624	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals for 1897	7,297	4,559	762	82	3,797	83·2	11 7	Improved 1·7 per cent.
Totals for 1896	7,221	4,449	821	83	3,628	81·5	11 7	...

It will be observed from this table that the results generally show considerable improvement. Curiously, the total number attending school only shows an increase of 76 compared with the previous year, although the attendances at four more schools are included in the list; but in all other respects there is much that affords cause for satisfaction. With respect to the number examined in standards, there is an increase for the year of 110, whilst the failures have fallen from 821 to 762. The absentees from examination continue to diminish, and it is difficult to realise that in so extensive a district, where there are schools 300 miles apart, only 82 children were absent from the standard examinations. In 33 schools no pupils were absent, and in 14 others only one in each. The character of the weather appears to have little effect upon the attendance when the examinations are in progress, and were the average attendance for the district anything approaching the attendance on examination-days the compulsory clause would be dead, and the numerous devices and aids that are now employed to improve the school attendance, such as prizes and the employment of truant and school-attendance officers, would be unnecessary. And why is it that the attendance on examination-days and ordinary school-days varies as much as 15 per cent. for the whole district? I cannot help thinking that if the same efforts were made by parents and teachers to encourage attendance at school on ordinary occasions the results would be much better on the whole than they appear according to the returns. As pointed out many times, most Committees are very ready to throw the distasteful work upon others, but I am bound to say that the moral effect upon children would be perceptible immediately in every school were it made clear that teachers, parents, and Committees are working in harmony.

The new plan adopted by the Board of appointing two attendance officers for certain districts has not yet affected the regularity; but, although I have no faith in compulsion of any kind where the moral sentiment of the people is defective, still the plan is worth a trial, as 15 per cent. of the Board's possible income is lost annually from causes which certainly lie outside what may be set down as proper excuses for absence from school, such as sickness or physical weakness of some kind.

It is interesting to notice the constant increase in the number of standard children as compared with the preparatory classes. The earliest records I have of examination results are for the year 1878, when the first standard examinations were held under the Act of 1877, by which all the schools of the colony were brought under one system. Of 1,985 pupils who were returned as belonging to the schools for the December quarter of 1878, 459, or 23·1 per cent. of the whole, were in standards. No pupils were in the Sixth Standard, and only 11 were in the Fifth; in other words, 76·9 per cent. of the children were returned as belonging to the preparatory classes. For the year under notice, 64·1 per cent. of the children belonging to the schools were presented in standards, and the proportion of children in the preparatory classes had fallen to 35·9 per cent. These changes show a large improvement in the proportion of children who are now receiving a higher standard of education than was possible even a few years ago, but they do not represent fully the advance that has been made. It is in the character of education where the progress, in my judgment, has been most beneficial and effective.

My predecessor as Inspector in this district is still with us, and every influence of his could only operate upon the children for their good, but up to the year 1878 the teaching material was absent, and it is in this direction the schools have benefited most. I would now draw a contrast between the teachers of the old type and the new, not between those who possess a certificate and those who do not, but certainly in these days most of the teachers are themselves examples worthy of imitation by their pupils, and it is here that the education is worthy of encouragement and praise. That the teachers toil hard for the mental and in some measure for the physical training of their pupils I am well assured, but the moral aspect, which is the most permanent form of school influence in its direct bearing upon character, has become of prime importance in the schools. But with all the progress made it seems to me that the work done in the building of schools, training of teachers, raising the standard of attainment, and improving the moral tone and influence that go to form character are only preparatory to what yet remains to be done and is possible of being done for the future of the district. The schools are in the condition when a

wider field may be explored without difficulty or danger. The material is ready but there is much uncertainty as to the direction the instruction should take. It is in the lower classes where much of the important work must be done. It is the breaking-in period of school life, and the good and bad perceptible during the higher course of training may be set down to the work done in the preparatory classes. Throughout the district the lady teachers who have charge of the younger children endeavour to do what they can with the limited means at their disposal, and it is surprising how much is really accomplished by some teachers who study to train their children by the employment of intelligent methods. Some of the Committees, failing help from the Board, have provided a limited quantity of apparatus and appliances for the use of their children, but more particularly for those in the lower classes. Kindergarten work is very effective as a form of infant training, and those schools are most promising where this form of instruction is carried on. At Wairoa, where many Natives are found in the lower classes, the introduction of calisthenic and kindergarten instruction has proved most beneficial as an aid to discipline and attendance, and I have noticed the same effect at Waerengaahika and other places. In the preparation of the pass-subjects there are few schools where one hears really bad reading, but the examples are as rare where the reading is really good.

A successful school is the outcome of the infants' department, and where the schools possess efficient workers in the preparatory division one may be sure that the effects will be seen and felt in the examination of the standard children. It would be easy for me to illustrate the truth of this statement by local examples. Some teachers do not appear to realise the pleasure derived by an examiner when listening to an intelligent reader with good enunciation and modulation. The fluent reader and speaker are synonymous, and I have never yet met a good reader unless accompanied by good enunciation in speaking. A slovenly mode of expression in class should never be permitted, and encouragement should be given to all forms of instruction in which the pupils are required to do much of the speaking themselves. The word-building exercises lately introduced into several of the junior departments by the lady teachers promise to be of great value as an aid to good reading.

Geography, drawing, and composition continue to be taught with considerable success in most of the schools, and it is seldom that complaints have to be made for defects in either of these subjects. I am unable, however, to express similar satisfaction either with the arithmetic or the writing in a number of the schools. Gisborne, Waipawa, Dannevirke, Kaikora, Makotuku, Kumeroa, Mangaatua, Napier (in part), and Port Ahuriri have usually distinguished themselves in these subjects, and certain standards in a number of other schools have also done exceedingly well; but after the very best has been said the fact remains that the average results are not good. My inspection visits have brought to light, in some cases, serious defects in the methods employed, alike in the preparatory as in the standard classes, and it appears to me necessary for the principal teachers in the larger schools to give more heed to the employment of improved methods by the junior teachers subject to their control.

In practice and reduction, and in fact in all compound processes, the synthetic and analytic methods should always be employed together in the initial stages, so as to show the children that questions for solution in these branches are merely forms of processes already known. I notice also in Standard III., where pupils are learning additions in money, that no conception is given as to the fact that the forms $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, and $\frac{3}{4}$ are not a farthing, a halfpenny, and three farthings respectively, but a quarter, a half, and three-quarters of a whole taken singly or collectively, and that one portion of the form tells the number of parts into which the whole is divided, whilst the other tells the number taken. By this means a pupil is made acquainted with fractional forms of a generalised character, but this is impossible if children merely learn the terms farthing, halfpenny, and three farthings. Defects of this kind arise from the national tendency to mechanical routine, hence the necessity for more critical supervision, especially where young teachers are being trained.

In few schools is the writing even fairly satisfactory, but I am convinced that the subject can be taught with success if only the same intelligent supervision is followed throughout the preparatory and standard classes. It has been a common error in certain schools to alter the style of the handwriting without sanction, or when pupils have been drafted from one division of the school to another. This is a great mistake. The same plan of writing should proceed throughout, and where this is done, no matter what style of writing may be employed, the results invariably are good. At Hastings, for example, the writing at one time was of poor quality, but now that the subject is taught systematically the results are highly satisfactory. Gisborne has always done well in writing, and so has Kaikora, with several others. In the last-named school the plan of using a "class copybook" is adopted, in which each pupil writes a copy in turn. This is in addition to the ordinary copy-writing. Thus the "class copybook" contains specimens of the handwriting of each pupil in the same standard, and really represents the quality of writing for the class. The plan seems to me a capital one, and I have lately recommended it to the notice of other teachers. Some complaints have been heard from members of Committees against the too early use of copybooks, but I have always replied that the fault, if it be a fault, is mine. Children cannot be broken in too early to the use of pen and ink, for carefulness and attention are certainly fostered by their use. These qualities far outweigh any small inconveniences, such as the increase in cost may present. Indeed, I am so satisfied of the ill-effects of slates in school training that I shall be glad when writing in school has to be taught solely by the use of the pen.

Class and additional subjects continue to receive considerable attention in most of the schools. Too little regard is paid, however, to drill and calisthenics, and I should like to see an instruction issued to teachers on this matter. All pupils, and not merely a class, should be taught drill and calisthenics, and teachers should qualify themselves to give the necessary instruction. The fact should not be overlooked that drill and all forms of disciplinary training are quite different from reading and similar subjects. The latter affect the individual only, but government affects society as an organization, and the training of children should have both these ends in view. Most of the schools give some instruction in drill or calisthenics, but the schools which have reached a high standard of excellency in both departments are Waipawa, Gisborne, and Woodville.

Sewing continues to be taught with excellent success by most of the lady teachers, but complaint is often made that the demands are too great upon the senior girls. I cannot but think that the subject is too important to relegate to a secondary position in the school course, and, indeed, the sewing-hour may be made a pleasant kind of relaxation for the girls under judicious management.

The prizes formerly given by the Hon. Captain Russell for practical work in mending have certainly had a beneficial effect upon the schools in this district, and have given a bias to many teachers in selecting practical work for their pupils. I am not inclined to suggest that the time now given to this important subject should be lessened, although work of a more practical kind might be allowed at the choice of the lady teachers. In the recent examinations many schools gained the mark "Excellent" for the work sent in, and the Napier School received special commendation from the examiner for the excellent work in cutting out and dressmaking which had been taught by a lady specially paid and appointed by the Committee. The step taken in this direction is an important one, and I look forward to the time when other schools will follow the example set by the Napier Committee. Gisborne adopted the plan of machine-instruction and cutting-out for the girls several years ago, and reports by independent lady examiners show that a high standard of excellence continues to be maintained. Little or nothing has been done in the way of practical science except at Gisborne, where an interesting experiment has lately been made. A practical cookery-class has been tried under the management of a lady who is employed when the classes are in session by the Auckland Technical Association. Fortunately, I was in the Poverty Bay district when the classes were in progress, and on three occasions I visited them in company with the Chairman of the School Committee, who has ever been active in extending this form of training in the school. I was impressed with the high value of the work done, and the report of the Committee shows that the classes were very popular, and the excess of income over expenditure will enable the Committee to widen the scope of their work during the coming year. No other school under the Board has carried technical instruction so far, but there is a spirit working among Committees that bodes well for the future. Perhaps the slow growth of this form of school training in its initial stages will prove best in the end, but I look forward to the time when much more practical work will be done in the schools than is now attempted. It may be wise to move slowly, but one cannot look over the educational fields of Europe and America without feeling that much more practical views are current as to what the schools ought to pursue in the way of training, and I am satisfied as to the possibility of regenerating the schools here in the direction of making them more practical and adaptive as stepping-stones into life for those who attend them.

Teachers.—I have ventured to direct attention to the need of some special training for the benefit of the pupil-teachers. This course is necessary if the efficiency of the schools is to be maintained. My own opinion is going against the employment of pupil-teachers as a class. With the examinations now open it is possible for young persons who wish to enter the profession as teachers to sit for examination in January, and some of the pupil-teachers are adopting this course. Thus, a pupil-teacher of the first year may hold a certificate of competency from the Department of Education, in Class E or D, and is yet required to come up for examination under the Board's regulations.

By a payment to young persons, based upon the average annual salary now paid to the pupil-teachers during the course of their training, a sufficient salary would be offered to attract people into the profession who would be older and much better qualified than the majority of candidates who now seek for employment.

The question is one of considerable importance in its bearing upon the future efficiency of the schools.

Gisborne District High School.—The higher classes of the Gisborne District High School continue to be carried on with creditable success. In the December examination five of the pupils matriculated, and those in the lower division acquitted themselves well in the special examination held for their benefit. A detailed report on the work has been already submitted to the Board. It will thus be seen that, on the whole, the year's work shows good and advancing progress. Defects have been pointed out and remedies suggested, and now that the schools labour under so few disadvantages as compared with what were common a few years ago it may be expected that higher ideals will be set up by all who are engaged in the work of education. The ideals may not be reached, but every teacher of young children may well be encouraged by the words of the late Lord Beaconsfield when he says, "No man ever rises to greatness in this world who does not aim at objects beyond his reach."

Conclusion.—I cannot close this report without giving expression to my deep regret at your proposed retirement as Chairman and member of the Education Board. Nineteen years and a half form no small part in the span of one's life, and during the whole of that time it has been my pleasure and privilege to report year by year to you as Chairman upon the progress of education in this district. When this report was begun I was unaware of your intended retirement, but the facts given will serve to show what has been done in this education district under your direction during your long term of duty as the Board's Chairman. Throughout the whole period I do not remember a single occasion when I received from you anything but kindness and encouragement, and to me it is gratifying that this opportunity is given of offering you publicly my best thanks and dutiful regards.

I have, &c.,

H. Hill,

Inspector of Schools.

Hon. J. D. Ormond, M.L.C.,
Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

MARLBOROUGH.

Sir,— Blenheim, 12th January, 1898.

I have the honour to submit my seventh annual report on the schools under the control of your Board.

There have been sixty-four schools at work in the district during the year. Of these, eleven

small household schools have not been examined this year. The number of children on the rolls at the dates of the examinations was 2,130, and if to these be added sixty-two, the roll-number of the schools not examined, the total number of children who have attended during the year will be 2,192. This is only seven more than were returned as presented for examination in 1896, although the number of schools in operation has increased by four. This year 1,412 scholars in standards were present at the examinations, as against 1,497 in 1896, a decrease of eighty-five, or about 5½ per cent. The decrease in the number passing was only eighteen, or about 1½ per cent. The classification shows a decrease in the presentations in the class above Standard VI., and in Standards VI., IV., II., and I., and a marked increase in those of the preparatory class and in Standards V. and III. The number of scholars in the preparatory class, returned as above eight years of age, is 118. Several teachers, however, neglected to give the ages of the children in this class, an omission which I did not discover until it was too late to obtain the information. The reasons given for the non-presentation of these scholars in Standard I. were: Irregular, 20; dull, 14; late entrance, 30; delicate health, 4; no reason given, or only "unfit," 38; confirmed truant-player, 1; and eight at a school under a new teacher who was not responsible, and could not account for the backward condition of this class. Although the number is probably less than the truth, it shows an increase of about 4 per cent. over last year's returns. The Blenheim School had fifty scholars above eight years of age in this class, out of 185, or 27 per cent., and Picton had twenty-three out of sixty-six, or 35 per cent. These particulars are given in compliance with the terms of the regulations, but inasmuch as the compulsory clauses of the Act can be applied only to children of seven years of age or upwards, and even then only when scholars live within two miles from the school, I do not consider that any neglect or incompetence is necessarily indicated by the presence of numerous children above eight years in these particular classes. A more important question is the length of time since admission, and without this information the mere age of the scholars has not much significance. Still, as the regulations demand that reasons should be given for the retention of scholars above eight years of age in the preparatory classes, those teachers who have neglected to supply the information have to that extent failed in their duty. As might be expected the ages of the scholars in the several standards at aided schools are, on the average, higher than those attending the larger and older schools, and the average age of scholars passing in this district in the four upper standards is consequently higher than the general average of the colony.

As regards the proportion of passes to presentations, Marlborough last year occupied a very low position compared with the other education districts, only three districts showing a lower percentage of passes. There is some improvement in this respect this year, but not more than is due to the fact that a large number of scholars who failed last year were (very properly) presented again in the same standards. In the absence of any regulations regarding holidays, the length of the school year varies considerably in different schools. Leaving out schools that have been recently started, the average number of times (half-days) that the schools throughout this district have been open between the last two examinations is 411. The aided schools average 418, and the Board schools 404. The aided schools at Te Weka and Kekerangu were open respectively 484 and 482 times. The longest school year at any Board school was 462 half-days, and the shortest was 318. These figures have a very important bearing apon the apparent results of the examinations. The length of the school year has been very much affected at several schools by the prevalence of infectious diseases which led to the temporary closing of such schools on the recommendation of the Health Officers. More important, however, than the length of the school year, is the regularity (or otherwise) of the attendance, and here there is still much to be desired. Year after year nearly every teacher complains of the irregularity with which children attend school, and in spite of the compulsory clauses, truant officers, and Inspector's reports, the evil still prevails.

The number of scholars in the district who failed this year was 231, and by adding a column to the examination schedules to show the attendance of each child since the previous examination, I have ascertained that 38 per cent. of this number had not attended so much as three-fourths of the time, and many of them very much less. In the Blenheim Girls' School there were in all forty-nine failures, and of these twenty-eight, or above 57 per cent., were due in a great measure to irregularity. At the Boys' School nearly half the failures might be set down to the same cause. But the ill effects of this irregularity (as has been pointed out year after year and repeated *ad nauseam*) are not confined to the irregular scholars themselves, but have a detrimental influence on the progress of the whole school, so that, probably, irregularity is responsible for many more failures than those with which it is credited above. The question naturally arises, Who is responsible directly or indirectly for this defect? and can anything be done to diminish it? It is clear that in its present shape at least, the School Attendance Act is not effective; but are other means sufficiently employed to check the evil? In my opinion at the present day there is, generally speaking, not sufficient intercourse between teachers and parents; that the former hold themselves to much aloof from the latter, and thereby deprive themselves of a most powerful auxiliary in all matters relating to the discipline of the school—namely, the sympathy and co-operation of the parents. I believe that by the exercise of a little tact, the teacher might influence the parents of irregular scholars, not by merely sending a formal written notice of absence, but by personal interviews, and in a friendly and persuasive manner reasoning with them on the injurious effect of this irregularity, not only upon their own children, but upon the school generally. I am convinced that the establishment of more friendly relations between parents and teachers would do much to remove this, and many other causes of trouble and annoyance, for I have noticed that where the teachers are more "in touch" with parents this irregularity is almost unknown. Although not a panacea for all the evils that trouble the teacher, the employment of this method would at least tend to remove one feeling too generally entertained by the less prosperous classes, that the teachers regard them as altogether beneath their notice, an impression which naturally leads to indifference, if not actual hostility, to the wishes of the teacher. There is, however, another aspect of the subject which must not be entirely overlooked. Nearly all writers on school management agree in attributing great irregularity of attendance to some defect in the

management of the school, one going so far as to assert that in most cases irregularity of attendance is the effect of weak or faulty government. Without endorsing this to the full extent, it may yet be permitted me to recommend any teachers who have much trouble in this direction to review their methods of control, discipline, and general management with a view to the diminishing, if not completely removing this cause of weakness and failure. I believe that all of our teachers are anxious and willing to do anything in reason to bring about an improvement in this respect, and that some have been successful in reducing irregularity to a minimum.

The results of the examination in pass subjects at the twenty-one Board schools are on the whole fairly satisfactory. Seven cases I consider very good, seven have done well, and the remaining seven may be classed as "fair to poor." Of these last schools, several were closed for some time on account of sickness, and two others have now passed into other hands. The aided schools have done as a whole remarkably well. At only one of the aided schools were the results entirely bad, and this has now changed hands.

There has been a slight improvement in the subjects of reading and writing; a slight falling off in drawing and composition; and a considerable improvement in spelling, arithmetic, and geography. Arithmetic, however, continues to show the least satisfactory results of all the pass subjects, and it is a perennial puzzle to account for this apparent weakness, in view of the very large amount of time generally devoted to the subject, and of the fact that some schools under teachers of undoubted ability, and having a long record of successful work, are among the lowest in this respect. Only four of the Board's schools have scored well in arithmetic. The arithmetic cards set for the same standard no doubt differ considerably as regards difficulty from a schoolboy's point of view, and some schools seem to be particularly unfortunate in the lottery; but in the most difficult cards that I have seen there are generally three questions at least that are well within the power of any fairly taught scholar. The papers in Standard V. for this subject seem to have given most trouble this year. In eight Board schools, including all the largest, out of 126 examined in Standard V., as many as forty-five failed to answer a single sum correctly. In the smaller Board schools, and in most of the aided schools, the results in arithmetic were relatively much better, nor is this otherwise than might be expected, since the scholars receive more individual attention than is possible in the larger schools. Neither is the difference to be accounted for by supposing that easier cards are reserved for the smaller schools. My tour of examination is mapped out long before the cards are received, and the sets are used seriatim, irrespective of the size or other conditions of the schools to be examined. It is almost impossible to believe that imperfect teaching is responsible for the majority of these failures, since such well-known, old, and experienced teachers as are at the head of the Havelock, Picton, and Renwick schools are as unfortunate in this respect as any of the others. I am inclined to think that insufficient solitary practice, together with the prevalence of a system of copying from one another during the year, may contribute towards this undesirable result. I seldom find at my inspection visits an arithmetic class at work upon different sets of sums, though they are seated close together, and the dull ones have every temptation and inducement to copy, or obtain help from their cleverer class-mates. If this is the case generally there can be little surprise at numerous failures when the facilities for obtaining assistance are more limited. In order to assist teachers to give more separate exercises in this subject, I am about to distribute amongst the Board schools all the arithmetic cards that have been used in this district during the last four years, and when these are exhausted, by exchanging with one another, the teachers can obtain still further variety. The slight falling off in composition, noted above, was to a great extent due to the very poor attempts in Standard V. to convert a passage of poetry taken from the reading-book into prose. The other pass subjects call for no special remark.

Class and Additional Subjects.—The following table shows generally the amount of success that has attended the treatment of these subjects throughout the district:—

——	Number of Schools examined.	Poor.	Poor to Fair.	Fair to Good.	Good to Very Good.	Very Good to Excellent.
Class subjects—						
Grammar	48	9	19	19	1	...
History	47	9	16	19	3	...
Science and object lessons ...	50	16	20	14	...	...
Mental arithmetic	51	9	27	8	7	...
Geography (Standard II. only) ...	40	2	5	11	16	6
Additional subjects—						
Recitation	52	1	22	22	7	...
Drill	8	2	1	3	2	...
Singing	9	1	2	4	2	...
Needlework	34	1	3	20	10	...
Comprehension	52	1	13	23	15	...

Grammar continues to be the most disappointing of these groups of subjects, and the very careless manner in which the work is done by the majority of scholars is, I believe, mainly due to their knowing that it is not necessary for a "pass." In most cases there is a sprinkling of good papers in each class, showing that the subject has not been neglected by the teacher, but the average marks of the class are greatly reduced by the inferior work of the careless scholars. The following specimens, taken from the grammar papers of one of the largest schools, will give some idea of the manner in which the subject is too generally treated. The errors, however, were few compared with the omissions, many scholars giving nothing but the "parts of speech," or fourth-

class work. In both these standards the analysis was generally less faulty than the parsing. Class above Standard VI.: The sentence containing the words to be parsed was, "'When I gave him the toast,' continued the corporal, 'I thought it proper to tell him that I was Captain Shandy's servant'": "Proper," com. noun, &c.; "I," per. pronoun, third person; "gave," third per. sing., agrees with "I"; "thought," an adjective; "to tell," verb, indic. mood; "that," adjective qualifying "I"; "Captain," adjective qualifying "Shandy's"; "Shandy's," . . . . . obj. case. In Standard VI., the same school, and the same sentence: "I," possessive case; "him," nominative to "toast"; "it," preposition governing "proper"; "it," preposition governing "thought." Standard V., "Six times the gossamery thread the wary spider threw": "Gossamery," noun (numerous cases); "threw," verb intransitive; "thread," a preposition; "wary," adverb; "wary," verb (several cases); "thread," an adjective; "wary," noun (several cases); "spider," adjective; "thread," a pronoun; "times," a verb; "thread," nominative to "wary"; "threw," verb, &c., objective, gov. by "threw"; "thread," nominative to "gossamery." In the Fourth Standard the simple parsing required by the Syllabus was on the whole fairly well done, but few attempts were successfully made to answer the questions bearing upon the inflections of the noun, pronoun, and adjective.

Mental arithmetic and comprehension both show some improvement this year. Recitation is improving in the lower, but is not so satisfactory in the upper standards. The best recitation in the lower standards this year was met with in one of the small aided schools. Military drill is practised at eight schools, and the ordinary class drill is attended to in most. As nearly all the smaller schools are under the management of female teachers, it is hardly fair to expect more than this. With regard to the class and additional subjects, I am quite in accord with the recommendation made by the Teachers' Institute, and which I have suggested more than once in former reports, that teachers should be allowed to select, say, two subjects from each group, instead of being expected to undertake the whole.

General Remarks.—Although the tabulated statement of the results does not disclose a very high "percentage of passes," I am quite satisfied that the state of primary education in this district is on the whole efficient and satisfactory; the teachers are painstaking and earnest in their work; and the order and discipline inside the schools, together with the manners and behaviour of the scholars outside (so far as they fall under my observation), give evidence of careful training that cannot fail to be productive of permanent benefit to the community. Perhaps the most pleasing feature in the educational prospects of the district is the excellent results obtained by the young teachers who have been placed in charge of schools during the last few years.

The inspection and examination of the small and widely-scattered aided schools in the Sounds County is a matter of no small difficulty, and it is greatly to be desired that a better system could be adopted, especially for the examination. Hitherto the practice has been for several schools to meet at certain centres, on a day fixed some months beforehand, and the parents have also to provide for the passage of the Inspector to the next centre. The elements, however, often interfere with these arrangements, and (as was the case this year) several schools may be prevented by the weather from reaching the appointed place. Under the most favourable circumstances, this puts the parents and children to much inconvenience, and not a little danger. Even when not prevented from attending, the weather, which is very unreliable at that time of year, often changes, and the return of open boats full of children with their teachers and parents is then a matter of much difficulty and risk. Similarly, if the Inspector is from the same cause prevented from reaching a centre of examination on the appointed day, the whole of the pre-arranged tour is thrown out of gear, and much inconvenience and delay are the consequence. There is only one way of obviating this difficulty, and that is the chartering of one of the small steamboats that ply in the Sounds to carry the Inspector from one centre to the next, calling on the way to pick up the children to be examined, taking them to the appointed place, and returning them in the evening to their respective homes. It would be easy to make some such arrangement, but of course it would mean an additional expense in connection with these schools, an expense, however, which I think would be warranted by the greater regularity and certainty of the inspection and examination visits. The average attendance at the twenty-six schools in the Sounds at the present time is 148, and the Board receives on account of these schools £555 annually, whilst the capitation paid by the Board for the same amounts to £718 per annum, or £153 in excess of receipts, so it seems hardly likely that the Board can afford to incur any much greater expense on their account. This is a matter, however, which I think might fairly be represented to the department as an additional reason for a more liberal treatment of this and other small education districts.

Blenheim Schools.—In my first report to your Board (for the year 1891) I expressed an opinion that it would be very much to the advantage of both boys and girls at those schools if they were taught together instead of separately, as now. I pointed out that in nearly all the large schools in the other education districts, with the exception of Nelson, the sexes are taught together, and referred to some of the advantages of the mixed system. At that time the suggestion that the schools should be reunited was by no means favourably received. The objections urged against its adoption, if of any validity in Blenheim, should be equally applicable to the organization of all the larger mixed schools in New Zealand, as well as of the country schools in this district; but no such objection is heard of in these places. Under proper regulations the intercourse between boys and girls would really be far less in a mixed school than it is at present under the separate system. Boys and girls are allowed to attend churches, concerts, picnics, &c., together, where there is far less vigilant supervision than there is at a well managed school, without any outcry being raised against the practice, and during an experience of twenty years I have never heard of a case of impropriety at any large mixed schools. I do not expect that anything I can say will remove the groundless apprehensions or unreasonable prejudices which have hitherto stood in the way of this most desirable alteration; but a glance at the tables of this report will show that there is a considerable difference in the results of the examinations of these two schools, greatly to the disadvantage of the girls, and I am convinced that this difference will exist, in a greater or less degree, so long as the present arrangement is allowed to continue.

Pupil Teachers.—It seems hardly worth while to repeat a suggestion that has frequently been made by Boards and Inspectors, and endorsed by Teachers' Institutes in all parts of the colony, since there seems to be a fixed determination on the part of the Government to avoid any alterations in the Education Act. But as the suggestion referred to—viz., the examination of pupil-teachers by the department—could be provided for without any alteration of the Act, merely by a Governor's Order in Council, it is difficult to understand why these representations have been consistently ignored. The advantages of the proposed change are so numerous and self-evident that no argument is needed in support of the proposal, which, if adopted, would at once place all pupil-teachers throughout the colony on a footing of absolute equality.

Private Schools.—Your Board is aware that, with its consent, I have for some years past examined the private schools maintained by the Roman Catholics of this district. I have not hitherto mentioned them in my annual reports, as it appeared to me unnecessary to do so. Seeing, however, reference to such examinations in other Inspectors' reports I thought it only fair to the Blenheim private schools to give the chief particulars of the results of their examinations this year. They are as follows:—

—	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	—	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.
St. Mary's Boys' School.				*Convent Girls.*			
Above Standard VI.	1	...	...	Above Standard VI.	1	...	...
Standard VI. ...	4	4	4	Standard VI. ...	5	5	5
Standard V. ...	5	5	5	Standard V. ...	6	6	5
Standard IV. ...	13	12	9	Standard IV. ...	11	11	9
Standard III. ...	16	15	12	Standard III. ...	17	17	14
Standard II. ...	12	10	10	Standard II. ...	18	18	18
Standard I. ...	...	...	...	Standard I. ...	30	30	30
Preparatory ...	...	...	...	Preparatory ...	24	...	...
	51	46	40		112	87	81

Amendments in the Education Act.—The suggestion contained in my last report, relative to a conference of educational authorities to consider this subject, was adopted by your Board, and a circular was addressed to the other Boards asking their opinions as to the desirableness or otherwise of the proposed conference. All the Boards, with one exception, replied to the circular, and most of them expressed approval of the idea. A letter embodying the replies received from the several Boards was sent to the Premier, with a request that steps might be taken to convene such a conference at the earliest possible period. The reply received was to the effect that the letter and its enclosures had been "forwarded to the Minister of Education for his consideration." There seems to be an unaccountable dread on the part of Governments, past and present, to approach the consideration of this very important question—such as almost suggests a reversion to the mysterious *tapu* of a former period. An idea appears to prevail in some quarters that any attempt to repair the educational building would bring the whole edifice about our ears. Those who hold this view must have a very poor opinion of the stability of the structure, or the prudence and sagacity of any to whom the revision of the Act may be committed. The attempts hitherto made to remedy some of the defects of the original Act have been chiefly confined to details of management, some half-dozen different amendments having been passed since 1877. But the chief faults of the system have been altogether disregarded. It is to be hoped, however, that the much-needed revision will be no longer postponed, since no fear need be entertained that the main principles of the Act would be subverted—unless, indeed, it should be found to be the manifest desire of a majority of the people that these also should be reconsidered.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Marlborough. JOHN SMITH, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Class above Standard VI.	68	...	...	...
Standard VI.	96	92	75	14 2
" V.	253	235	178	13 6
" IV.	266	253	189	12 9
" III.	347	341	270	11 1
" II.	283	273	259	9 11
" I.	221	218	210	8 9
Preparatory	596	...	...	...
Totals	2,130	1,412	1,181	11 8*

* Mean of average age.

NELSON.

SIR,— Nelson, 25th January, 1898.

We have the honour to submit to you our annual report on the Nelson public schools.

One hundred and eighteen schools have been at work during the year, the number showing an increase of four as compared with last year's list, and all of these except four have been examined. Of those omitted, three were established too late in the year for the scholars to be prepared for examination, and one small household school was temporarily closed during the Inspector's visit to the district. The establishment of a school at Millerton, which may soon become an important centre, has been authorised. We are informed that the Native Schools Department is about to establish a school for Maori children at Whangarae, in the Croiselles. This, we believe, will be the first experiment of the kind within this district. The names of two schools—Hardy Street and Top House—which were on last year's list, have disappeared from this one. The former has been amalgamated with Tasman Street, and the latter, a small household school, has been closed. A third, at Cable Bay, has been closed since its examination in July.

Visits of inspection have been paid to 102 schools. This year we can with pleasure report that time-tables are being more strictly followed, at any rate during the Inspector's visits, and that fewer general faults have been revealed, though there is still considerable room for improvement in the methods of work adopted by many teachers. A change in the staff has often disclosed a state of things most damaging to the professional reputation of the departing teacher. In one instance a new teacher, on taking charge at the latter end of the school year, complained that she could find no evidence that the teaching of more than four subjects had been even attempted. The practice of omitting subjects from the school course till a week or two before the examination is a most pernicious one, and when by the time-table the lessons have been professedly given the practice is simply dishonest. The plea of inability to follow the time-table is a plain confession of incapacity, as it is the duty of every teacher to frame one that can be followed. If the work is being systematically carried on by a capable teacher, another equally capable should find no difficulty in taking up the duty at any stage of progress, and yet in almost every case we find that the examination following a change of teachers has been a disastrous one. In some instances we fear that the cause of failure is that outgoing teachers who are leaving the service or being promoted to other posts have for some time prior to their removal relaxed their efforts. If these failings are not remedied, teachers must consider themselves to blame if the facilities at present afforded for obtaining a change of situation are withdrawn and promotion is made less easily procurable.

As some misunderstanding appears to exist concerning the management of a school during examination, we desire to make it thoroughly clear to teachers that we expect them to retain the control of all the scholars as on ordinary school days, and to issue for class-drill the necessary executive words of command, the only difference from the usual routine being that the children are expected to do their tasks without any assistance. To examine all the pupils orally, and mark all their written papers besides, is a sufficiently heavy task for an Inspector, without attempting class supervision, the special duty of the teacher. If the Inspector is called away from more important work to rearrange a disorganized class or to reprimand a scholar, as occasionally though rarely happens, this should be considered a grave reflection upon the management of the teacher, who should make a breach of discipline impossible, or check it himself.

The value of outdoor training as a benefit to health and an aid to mental development is being recognised by some Committees, who have supplied their schools with gymnastic apparatus. In another direction they might render great assistance to the intellectual training of the children. The interior walls of the schoolrooms usually present an unattractive and uninstructive aspect, being too often bare, or, at best, adorned with a few maps. Little children may readily acquire much useful information from pictures, and in some few schools the wall decorations are such as interest and instruct even adults. The natural history plates that are supplied by the Board at half cost price are particularly useful for this purpose, and afford valuable aid to teachers in giving object-lessons, for which Oliver and Boyd's boxes are also especially intended. Although all of these have been on the Board's list for many years past it would be difficult to find a single school yet supplied with a complete set.

The total number on the school rolls at our examinations was 6,054, and we were pleased to find a larger number than usual present—viz., 5,757. To the list of absentees, who numbered 297, the schools which contributed the largest proportions were: Eighty-eight Valley, Spring Grove, Pangatotara, Granity Creek, Wakefield Boys, and Lower Moutere. In forty-four schools, nearly double the number recorded last year, every child on the rolls was present at examination, the largest of these being: Richmond Girls', 74; Waimea West, 49; River Terrace, 46; and Little Grey, 44.

The number on the rolls at the end of the September quarter was 6,069, the average attendance of the first three quarters of the year being 4,927. In last year's report we directed special attention to the low average attendance in this district. From the report of the Minister of Education for 1896 we find that Nelson in this respect still holds the same relatively low position, the tenth on the list of the thirteen educational districts of the colony, though our average attendance for that year, 80·5 per cent., was higher than it had previously been. Otago and Westland, at the head of the list, both show the same average, 86·5 per cent., which practically means that of every 100 children in any of the districts mentioned from every lesson six more were absent in Nelson than in either of the two other districts. Omitting household schools, we find this year that only twelve in this district have exceeded the average maintained by all the schools of Westland and Otago. The best of these are Win's Valley, 96·1 per cent.; Awaroa, 94·4 per cent.; Kongahu, 89·6 per cent.; Brook Street, 89·4 per cent.; and Hampden Street, 89 per cent. The attendance at many schools in this district is still discreditable, several of the most unsatisfactory showing less than 70 per cent. We take this opportunity of calling the attention of teachers, committees, and

parents interested to the following schools, at which the attendance this year is so very far below the average of the colony (82·1 per cent. for 1896): Ranzau, 60 per cent.; Pangatotara, 62 per cent.; Ngatimoti, 63 per cent.; Fern Flat, 64 per cent.; Hope, 64 per cent.; Eighty-eight Valley, 65 per cent.; Lower Moutere, 66 per cent.; Lyell, 66 per cent; Sarau, 67 per cent.; Cronadun, 68 per cent.; Tadmor, 69 per cent. It is quite time stringent measures were taken to put an end to the unsatisfactory state of things prevailing in these school districts. To the table headed "Summary of Results" we have appended for general information a column showing the percentage of average attendance of each school for the year. We hope that the comparison will open the eyes of teachers to the deficiencies of their scholars, and stimulate all to renewed efforts.

We commend to the notice of teachers the following extract from the Southland Inspectors' report for 1896: "The attendance problem, of course, is always with us, but in a number of schools it is being quietly solved by the teachers themselves. In these schools certificates are periodically issued to each pupil, wherein are registered his degree of proficiency in each subject, his position in class, and his conduct as to neatness of work, punctuality, and attendance. The interest of the parents in the progress of the pupils is thus secured, and, as they sign the certificates every time these are issued, they are not likely to overlook the virtue of regular attendance for want of an object-lesson thereon. Teachers that have tried this plan tell us that the attendance problem has practically disappeared from their schedule of difficulties."

The plan suggested is by no means new to some schools in this district, and has to our knowledge had a stimulating and beneficial effect upon the general progress of the children concerned. Many other devices to encourage regular attendance may be resorted to, and we mention this one in the hope that some teachers who have as yet done nothing whatever in this direction may no longer betray negligence on this important matter.

Mr. Hill, of Napier, also points out that the percentage representing the average attendance of a district or of a school may depend very largely upon the plan adopted in regard to absentees of long standing, especially in the interpretation which teachers put upon the word "left." Our view of the regulation is that in making up a weekly return the name of a child should be at once removed from the roll if during that week the teacher is positively informed on trustworthy authority that the child has left the school for good.

There were in the employ of the Board on the 31st December 149 teachers, whose grading is as follows: Head teachers—42 certificated or licensed; assistants—23 certificated or licensed, 9 uncertificated; sole teachers—33 certificated or licensed, 42 uncertificated: total—98 certificated or licensed, 51 uncertificated=149. Four of the uncertificated sole teachers and one assistant have passed examinations entitling them to certificates, but their names have not yet been gazetted, or they have not yet served the necessary two years. In addition to the above list there were employed two sewing-mistresses and forty-seven probationers, seven of whom were certificated. At present it is difficult to avoid appointing uncertificated sole teachers to take charge of very small schools, but the employment of uncertificated assistants is one of the worst features of our system, and could very soon be remedied. The results of the scholarship examinations of recent years show that a very large proportion of the successful candidates come from schools that are staffed by teachers who have received some University or secondary-school training, scholarship winners and even candidates from schools outside of these becoming comparatively rare. To teach well up to one's own level of attainments is a rarity, for the knowledge of a higher course of training is almost essential to obtaining a thorough grasp of the lower in all its bearings. Herein we put forward another plea for the higher culture of our teaching staff. We hope that the new regulation providing an entrance examination for our pupil-teachers will do much towards supplying better material on which to build the superstructure. At the same time we cannot in justice refrain from pointing out the marked success that is attending the efforts of some of our young teachers who have but recently finished with credit their probationers' course.

In addition to the examination of the Board's schools the following have also been examined: St. Mary's Orphanages at Stoke and at Nelson; Nelson Parish School; St. Canice's, at Westport; and Whakarewa Orphanage. Owing partly to a misunderstanding of the managers and partly to the fact that pressure on the Inspector's time prevented him from rectifying the mistake, the Sacred Heart School at Reefton was not examined this year; but arrangements will be made for taking it as early as possible in 1898.

The following table is an extract from the annual return, and gives a general summary of results for the whole district, with the corresponding totals for 1896 :—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	138	...	...	...
Standard VI.	436	429	337	14 1
" V.	653	638	466	13 0
" IV.	829	805	582	12 1
" III.	848	822	621	10 10
" II.	823	805	711	9 8
" I.	692	680	641	8 5
Preparatory	1,635	...	...	...
Totals 1897	6,054	4,179	3,358	11 4*
Totals 1896	6,051	4,117	3,256	11 3*

* Mean of average ages.

The total number of children, including those who had previously passed the Sixth Standard examination, shows very little variation. The number in the preparatory class is also very nearly the same as in 1896, or 27 per cent. of the whole, the average proportion of the preparatory class throughout the colony as shown by the Inspectors being 30 per cent. Last year we pointed out that in this district the proportion in the preparatory class was considerably reduced, being in fact much lower than it had previously been. This we recorded with pleasure, as it indicated that a larger proportion of our children were in standard classes—that is, were sufficiently advanced to have received some at least of the rudiments of education. The decrease in the ratio that the preparatory class bears to the whole does not prove that the number of young children in the district is diminished, as a return of the number of children under a certain age, say, eight years, would clearly show, but is to some extent an evidence, however slight, of intellectual growth. The average age of passing the different standard examinations is one or two months higher in each class except Standard IV., where it is unaltered, so that the mean of average age, 11 years 4 months, is still very low and much below the mean for the colony as last recorded, 11 years 7 months. In this connection we must call the attention of teachers to the necessity for exercising the greatest care in entering the ages of pupils upon the examination schedules. In several schools, for the most part badly conducted, we found that teachers had made very careless entries in this respect. Some of the mistakes were due to badly kept admission-registers or careless copying without checking by inquiry from the children themselves. The errors made would, if undetected, have been sufficient to vitiate the whole of the returns under this head.

The number of children over eight years of age and yet considered unfit for presentation in Standard I. was 209. The reasons assigned for keeping them back were in sixty-six cases irregularity of attendance, in fifty-seven shortness of school life, and in eighty-one exceptional dulness, while for five others we can find no satisfactory reason recorded.

The pass-list this year shows a decided improvement in the two higher standards, Fifth and Sixth, the total number of passes being over 80 per cent. of the number present in standards. This, as a numerical estimate of efficiency, is a fairly satisfactory result, when we consider that no allowance is made for the irregularity, illness, or dulness of individual scholars. Though in general results it has been a year of progress, there are in all twenty-two schools which failed to satisfy the examiners. In these barely half—in some cases much less than half—of those examined by the Inspectors succeeded in passing the standard examinations. In nine instances the teachers were newly appointed, and could not be held entirely responsible for the shortcomings of their scholars, and in three others irregular attendance, for which we honestly think the teachers were not responsible, was evidently the primary cause, but for the rest an excuse cannot so readily be found. Four reports were considered of so damaging a nature that the special attention of the Committees concerned was drawn to them.

We, as usual, append a short criticism of the way in which the different subjects in the syllabus are treated.

Reading.—Though this subject is generally very well taught so far as the preparation of a prescribed book is concerned, we are not yet fully satisfied with the amount of literary training which this represents. By examining Standards I., II., and III. from two books we have at last induced the general preparation of a double course of reading and spelling throughout these classes. Next year we propose to extend this practice to Standard IV., allowing a slight relaxation of difficulty in the spelling and dictation tests for Standard III., which we have found on trial to be a little too severe when compared with those applied in the higher standards, while in Standard VI. we intend to be more exacting. For reading and spelling a similar plan of work should be adopted in the preparatory classes, in which, for a single course of about two years' duration, we expect at least the following or their equivalents to be read in succession: The "Little Primer"; the "Little Reader," Part I.; the "Little Reader," Part II.; and at least half of the "Royal Star Reader," Standard I. While all schools should take a second course of similar books as well, there is no reason why in our infant schools, and in every one in which more than two teachers are employed, a third course should not in addition be taken. For the children in Standards V. and VI., who should be capable of appreciating to some extent a literary treat, some teachers persist in providing a very meagre bill of fare—the "Royal Star Reader" only. In these cases we propose to examine the reading from previously unseen tests. The use of extra Readers of less difficulty but of an interesting and instructive character, to be used for practice merely, and not necessarily to be prepared, has been urged for several years past, but as yet with very little result. With suitable books, silent reading, if nothing further were attempted, might be encouraged, and a taste for reading so cultivated. In England, school newspapers and magazines are being largely employed with the same object, a practice that might well be followed in this country. The pupils, after all, should be taught to read, and the getting-up of a certain text-book is only a means to an end.

Arithmetic.—Far less trouble was experienced this year in this subject, which to the majority of children is probably the most difficult in the syllabus, as it has certainly proved in this district for some years past. The total number of failures in any subject is still the greatest in arithmetic, being almost equal to those in any other two subjects combined, while spelling, geography, and composition next in order claim the most victims. The foundation of the trouble is laid in the preparatory classes, where we often find even addition tables neglected. The number of failures in arithmetic expressed as percentage of the number present in each standard and compared with last year's return reads as follows:—

	Standard VI. Per Cent.	Standard V. Per Cent.	Standard IV. Per Cent.	Standard III. Per Cent.
1896	... 69	56	37	26
1897	... 39	45	39	28

It will be seen from this table that though the figures show somewhat worse numerical results in Standards III. and IV., these are more than compensated by the marked improvement in Standards V. and VI. The figures bear out the impression we had received from the perusal of the

papers, that while Standard III. was somewhat weaker this year in general work, Standard VI. showed a decided advance, especially in arithmetic, spelling, and composition. We are pleased to be able to record that this year, for the first time since the Education Department took upon itself the task of setting the arithmetic papers, the percentage of failures in each standard has fallen below 50. In other words, for the first time in four years more than half the children in each class have been equal to the tests applied.

Writing.—There is no doubt that "vertical" copybooks have advantages for the million in producing a clear legible hand, and that by their use much slovenly and sprawling writing has been quickly reformed. Yet it is questionable whether the freest and speediest writing cannot be produced under the old system. At any rate, much that is stiff and cramped in appearance is now being turned out with detrimental effects upon the writers. Three years ago we published a warning to the same effect, and we regret that we now find it was not unnecessary. In future we shall expect more attention to letter-junctions, roundness, and freedom, and we hope that teachers, if we wish to retain in use a style which has found so much favour with them, will do their best to prevent the abuses which make it suffer by comparison with a sloping hand.

Drawing.—Neat and well-kept books containing the year's work in freehand, geometric, and scale drawing are usually shown us, but very few of our teachers yet appear competent to teach model-drawing well. We hoped that the examinations held by the Wellington Technical School would afford a stimulus to teachers to make themselves proficient, but scarcely any have yet availed themselves of them. Pupils from Toi Toi Valley, Westport Boys', and Nelson Central Schools have competed successfully, chiefly in freehand and scale drawing, for first-grade certificates. In our Fifth Standard examinations the ground plan of a room to be drawn to scale was set as a test, but we were disappointed to find that but few had worked it correctly.

Geography is a much more satisfactory subject now than it used to be, though there is still a tendency to keep in one groove, questions off the beaten track and those involving merely the thoughtful application of knowledge already acquired being seldom attempted. Evidently the great trade routes are not always realistically taught before a globe or map of the world, the children depending too much on verbal memory. For instance, when a class has been asked to describe the route taken by a sailing-vessel from New Zealand to England the children have repeatedly given a careful description of towns, &c., on the overland route *vid* San Francisco. Descriptive power is little cultivated, as may be judged from the feeble accounts given of the mountain or river systems of a country, physical geography, like mathematical, being too often irrationally treated.

Composition.—The children in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Standard classes are usually able to write a neat letter or to reproduce with intelligence a short story read out to them by the Inspector. The Fourth class have also been more successful in dealing with the exercises in sentence-making, but the paraphrasing of poetry by the Fifth, although improved in a few instances, still leaves much to be desired. This exercise is defined in the syllabus as "the rendering of the sense of a passage of easy verse into good prose." Special care was taken this year to select passages of easy verse, but the prose renderings were too often characterized by a certain want of freedom, and in many cases by a disregard for the rules of grammar.

Class-subjects.—The following table shows approximately our opinion of the efficiency of our schools in those subjects known as class-subjects, which do not affect the individual passes, and are for the most part tested by oral examination.

	Weak. Schools.	Fair. Schools.	Satisfactory. Schools.	Very Good. Schools.
Grammar	63	28	14	1
History	19	39	28	19
Geography of Standard II.	13	29	29	33
Object-lessons and science	13	33	30	28
Mental arithmetic	28	36	45	3

Additional Subjects. — These subjects, which include recitation, drill, singing, and needlework, are not insisted on in the smaller schools, although any neglect of them in the larger schools is declared by the framers of the syllabus to be a ground of reproach. The foregoing remarks should therefore be borne in mind when reading the following comments:—

Drill, physical or military, which we would like to see much more common, is taught in thirty-seven schools. The training was considered satisfactory or commended in twenty schools, and marked "very good" in nine.

Singing has been taken up in some form or other in thirty-eight schools, but in a great number of instances nothing was presented beyond a few simple melodies taught by ear. We are far from undervaluing this humble attempt to brighten the lives of the children and to vary the necessarily monotonous routine of school work, but we think that more than this might reasonably be expected, especially in our larger schools. Regular instruction might be given in the reading of musical notation, and rounds and part songs might be added to the usual selection of simple melodies. Besides the ordinary lessons appointed in the time-tables, an opening and a closing song might be sung with good effect on the spirits of the children, and at a small expenditure of time. Marching to music is also a favourite exercise with children. In any case we wish it to be understood that the lessons should be spread over the whole of the school year, and not merely put in hand for a few weeks with a view to making a display at the examination, a practice which savours too much of show to be at all satisfactory.

The time-honoured custom of giving the children an annual treat, including a "tea-party," with outdoor games, and concluding with the magic-lantern and a few songs and recitations, has of late developed into what is now more ambitiously styled the "School Concert." To this a great deal of time is devoted which might be better employed. In some instances, we fear that the regular school course is seriously interfered with, and, for a time, practically set aside to make room for the elaborate preparations now considered necessary for this annual celebration. We feel assured that the frequent evening rehearsals, leading, as they often do, to late hours, must be detrimental

both to the bodily and mental health of the little ones. In the more populous centres, there is, besides the regular school concert, a constant succession of children's entertainments in connection with juvenile friendly societies, bands of hope, &c., the preparation for which keeps the youngsters in a perpetual round of excitement. This evil has been recently increased by the introduction of what is known as the "Kinderspiel," an entertainment to which the above remarks apply with tenfold force. Complaints have been made by teachers of the injurious effect on their pupils which has resulted from the weeks of preparation for these plays.

Kindergarten Training.—Being convinced of the value of the Kindergarten system in training the eye and hand, and generally developing the powers of observation in the younger children, we are pleased to note that in the infant divisions of the Nelson City Schools and especially in the Tasman Street School, something has already been done in this direction by the spontaneous action of the teachers. It is hoped that the recent action of the Board in sending one of its teaching staff to Wellington for a course of training in this department of work, will ultimately be of great benefit to the infant divisions of our schools throughout the district.

The schools are, as a rule, very orderly and well conducted, and our general estimate of the training that the children have been receiving throughout the year justifies us in congratulating the Board upon a successful year.

We have, &c.,

G. A. Harkness, M.A., } Inspectors.
W. Ladley, }

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

GREY.

Sir,—

I have the honour to present my fourth annual report on the schools under the control of the Grey Education Board, for the year ending the 31st December, 1897.

At the close of the year there were twenty-nine schools in operation, that number being one in excess of the number returned for last year.

During the year inspection visits were paid to all the schools, reports being furnished and laid before you as usual. All the schools under the Board were examined, and I am pleased to be able to record a very satisfactory improvement in the results, the improvement being numerically represented by about 2½ per cent.; this is all the more gratifying, because I am convinced it has been brought about by earnest, conscientious, and capable teaching, and is not in any way due to an easier examination test. For some time I have been pleased to notice that teachers have been taking a more liberal view both of their duty to the children and of the regulations, and, as a consequence, the tendency to work, as it were, between the lines has been growing gradually less—in fact, anything approaching purely mechanical work has become rather an exception.

The following table gives a summary of results for this and the three previous years:—

Years.	Number of Schools in operation.	Presented for Examination.*	Presented in Standards.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes.
1894	24	1,644	1,024	995	696	69·9
1895	25	1,684	1,066	1,007	829	82·3
1896	28	1,650	1,068	1,040	862	82·8
1897	29	1,698	1,085	1,041	898	85·3

* Including infants and class above Standard VI.

It will be noticed in the above table that I have included the number of schools in operation at the end of each year. In referring to this increase in the number of schools it is perhaps advisable to remind the Board that four out of five schools added to the list are small and comparatively expensive, and although owing to the scattered population of the district they may be very necessary, yet they are maintained at a considerable loss to the Board, and it is quite evident their number cannot be increased indefinitely—unless some special provision be made for their support—without serious injury to the larger schools.

The following table gives a summary of results for each class:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	48	...	...	...
Standard VI.	92	87	74	14 3
" V.	155	150	113	13 4
" IV.	209	197	157	12 4
" III.	226	219	182	11 5
" II.	220	210	205	10 3
" I.	183	178	167	8 10
Preparatory	565	...	...	...
Totals	1,698	1,041	898	11 8*

* Mean of average age.

I do not consider it necessary to refer every year to the treatment of all the subjects taught in the schools. I shall therefore confine myself to making a few remarks on those subjects which seem to call for special attention; but first I wish to state that, speaking generally, I am highly

pleased with the progressive nature of the work being carried on, and also with the general order, discipline, and moral tone prevailing.

Here and there the style and steady fluency of the reading taught seems to approach perfection; but I cannot help noticing many cases where all interest in the subject-matter is gone and the expression is purely mechanical. That this is the direct effect of using only one reading-book there can be no doubt, and I am more than ever convinced that before really intelligent reading can be obtained, and before a love of reading can be created or fostered in the pupils, adequate provision must be made for an additional supply of reading-matter. I notice that under several Boards, too, three and even four sets of readers are got through during the year. In some cases these are provided by the pupils themselves, in others by the parents and the Board jointly, and in the remaining cases by the Board itself. Of course the mere drudgery of the subject is done from one orthodox book. I would strongly recommend the Board to provide sets of three or four kinds of readers: these to be placed in charge of teachers, and to be passed on or exchanged periodically. The cost of the books would not be great, and, being in charge of teachers, they would last for some years.

The dictation and spelling were well done in all schools. An Order in Council having withdrawn the limitation with regard to the examination in these subjects, introduced some years ago, Inspectors now use their own tests. The following are employed through the district—viz.: Twenty to twenty-four words for Standards I. and II., and from six to twelve lines of dictation with a dozen words for Standards III. to VI. The errors allowed were in proportion to those in the regulation referred to.

In arithmetic more attention has been paid to oral work, and the methods employed show steady improvement. The tests for the subject are still set by the Education Department, and generally the pupils were readily able to cope with the questions set. The tests for Standard III. were of a far easier description than any before sent down by the department, whilst those for the other Standards remain about the same.

In both geography and composition I have to record a very satisfactory improvement. In the former subject my remarks in last year's report were well received and acted upon by teachers, and I am pleased to notice that tabulating of the matter is now almost a thing of the past. In many cases I received very full answers, nicely composed, to the questions set. With regard to the latter subject I find such a pleasing difference in the work of Standards IV., V., and VI. that I shall continue to use similar tests to those embodied in my last year's report, with this addition, that for Standard III. the principal test will be the making of complete sentences containing one or two particular words.

Writing still continues in about the same state, the quality varying greatly in different schools. After four years' experience I cannot say that I consider the introduction of the vertical style to be a distinct success.

Science has this year been taken up with keen interest. The branch selected for the scholarship examination was ambulance work. This was generally taken up by the various schools, and proved both interesting and instructive to teacher and pupil—in fact, so much so, that it has been unanimously decided to continue the subject for another year.

The teaching of drawing is improving, and much more interest is being taken in the examinations conducted by the Wellington Technical School. Many of the schools presented pupils for the first-grade examination, the candidates meeting with great success. This will no doubt act as a stimulant to teachers of other schools. I may here mention that these examinations may be conducted in any school, the only provision being that some suitable person—*e g.*, Chairman of School Committee, &c.—shall act as supervisor.

The teaching of sewing is still well cared-for, and many excellent specimens of work are to be found in the schools.

With regard to the remaining subjects of the syllabus I have the pleasure to be able to note that good progress has been made.

Twenty-one pupils attended at the examination of the District High School, the work being of a very satisfactory character. Class-lists were laid before you in due course.

The carpentry class continues to be conducted in a most satisfactory manner by Mr. Arnott.

The Roman Catholic schools in the district were inspected and examined by me during the year. Reports, &c., were prepared and sent to them in every respect similar to those furnished to schools under the Board. The following are the results:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.
Above Standard VI.	9	...	...
Standard VI.	13	13	11
" V.	21	21	17
" IV.	27	25	18
" III.	29	27	25
" II.	30	29	26
" I.	35	35	35
Preparatory	77	...	...
Totals	241	150	132

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Grey. WILLIAM L. F. FETCH, M.A., Inspector.

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Hokitika, 8th February, 1898.

I have the honour to present the following report on the schools of the district for the year 1897.

The examination of the twelve aided schools of South Westland was conducted during February, and that of the remaining schools during the last four months. Inspection visits were also made to all except the smaller aided schools. Owing to numerous changes in the staffs two visits were necessary in several cases. Separate reports have been presented on the examination of the secondary classes of the Hokitika and Kumara District High Schools and of the Catholic schools at Kumara, Hokitika, Kanieri, and Ross.

The following is a tabulated statement of the results of the examinations held during the year in the primary schools under the Board :—

Classes.	Total presented.	Presented in Standards.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1896.
					Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary classes ...	37	...	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI. ...	39	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	119	119	115	106	14 4	14 0
" V. ...	168	168	162	141	13 2	13 2
" IV. ...	181	181	172	153	12 3	12 4
" III. ...	163	163	159	140	11 7	11 2
" II. ...	188	188	185	172	9 10	10 0
" I. ...	167	167	165	151	9 0	8 11
Preparatory	399	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,461	986	958	863	11 8*	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

The percentage of failures for the district has fallen to 9·9, an improvement of 2·7 on that of the previous year. This advance is owing, as will be shown later, chiefly to better results in arithmetic. The average age at which the pupils have passed the various standards again corresponds very closely with that of the whole colony. The mean of the average age remains at 11 years 8 months, a number exceeded in 1896 by only four districts. As the average attendance of pupils in the district is high and the staffs in general efficient, it is plain that the remaining factor in maintaining a high average rise of passing is present—viz., a strict and sufficiently exacting interpretation of the requirements of the syllabus of instruction in the examination tests. The distribution of the number presented for examination is expressed by the following percentages: Above Standard VI., 2·7; Standard VI., 8·2; Standard V., 11·6; Standard IV., 12·5; Standard III., 11·2; Standard II., 13; Standard I., 11·5; preparatory, 29·3. It may be noted that an increase has occurred in the percentage of pupils in the three higher standards, and that the number is nearly equal to that of pupils in the lower standards, which is owing to the fact that in this district the conditions of labour render it unnecessary to remove the children from school until the standard course is concluded. The number of pupils over eight years in age in the preparatory class is 18·1 per cent. of the class and 5·3 of the total roll. This number does not appear to be excessive, and the explanation given by the teachers as required by No. 5 of the standard regulations is satisfactory.

Appended is a return showing in detail the results obtained by the individual schools, and with this is stated the average attendance of each school expressed as a percentage of the average roll. The average attendance for the colony was 82·1 per cent. in 1896, and the following schools have failed to reach that percentage in 1897: Bruce Bay (aided), 64·9; Jacksons, 73; Arahura Road, 76·2; Lower Kokatahi, 77·6; Dillmans, 78; Blue Spur, 79; Kawhaka, 80; Kumara, 81·2; Otira (Lower), 81·2. With the exception of an improvement at Lower Kokatahi and Kumara the schools mentioned show a decrease in the regularity of attendance. In the remaining schools the attendance is very satisfactory, with the result that the attendance for the district in 1897 was 85·3 per cent. In 1896 Otago and Westland secured the highest percentage in regard to attendance, 86·5 in each case.

In the various pass-subjects the percentages of passes obtained during 1897 are: Reading, 98; spelling, 84; writing, 87; drawing, 96; arithmetic, 75; composition, 97; geography, 87. In arithmetic the percentage of passes for the four years during which the tests have been set by the Education Department are:—

	Standard VI.	Standard V.	Standard IV.	Standard III.
1894	... 68	71	82	70
1895	... 75	49	74	77
1896	... 66	48	69	86
1897	... 81	68	75	78

In writing there is retrogression in the number of passes, but it is pleasing to be able to record a distinct advance in the remaining pass-subjects. The introduction of a second set of readers has been followed not only by greater efficiency in the reading, but also by improved results in spelling

and composition. It is in arithmetic, however, that the most gratifying improvement has been effected, the number of passes having increased from 65 to 75 per cent. This increase has been produced by greater efficiency in the Fifth and Sixth Standards, the increase in the former being from 48 to 68 per cent. It would be of service for the purpose of comparison if in all districts, now that the test in this subject is the same, detailed information as to the results were published. There is no doubt, however, that the numbers quoted in connection with the arithmetic results of 1897 will compare very favourably with those of the other parts of the colony. This advance has been secured chiefly by the increased attention devoted during the past four years to the thorough preparation of the requirements in arithmetic in the lower classes, and there is every prospect, therefore, of a continuance of efficiency. The general record in the pass-subjects is one of marked progress during the past year.

In the statement here given of the results in the class and additional subjects the schools with a staff of more than one teacher are separated from those in charge of a sole teacher. In one of the former grammar, history, and elementary science are not included in the course, as the pupils are confined to those below Standard III.

Subjects.	In Schools with an Average Attendance of 25 or more.						In Schools with an Average Attendance below 25.					
	Omitted.	Weak.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Very Good.	Omitted.	Weak.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Very Good.
CLASS-SUBJECTS.												
Grammar	...	2	1	4	2	1	4	2	4	6	4	2
History	1	...	6	3	...	10	1	1	8	1	1	
Elementary science	...	2	3	5	...	13	1	4	2	1	1	
Object-lessons	...	2	3	5	1	...	2	13	6	1	...	
Mental arithmetic...	1	1	5	4	...	...	4	4	8	4	2	
ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.												
Recitation	...	1	3	6	1	...	2	3	7	10	..	
Drill	7	...	1	1	2	...	22	...	...	...	...	...
Singing	4	...	...	1	3	3	20	...	...	1	...	1
Needlework	...	...	...	2	8	1	11	...	2	2	6	1
Comprehension of reading matter ...	...	...	2	6	3	..	...	3	2	13	2	2

In some cases where, in the smaller schools, class-subjects are omitted, this is owing to the absence of pupils in the higher standards. In other cases the explanation lies in the fact that the teachers are not qualified to give instruction in the subjects in question. The omission of drill and singing in the larger schools and of needlework in all should be owing to very special causes, and every effort should be made by the teacher in each case to provide the necessary instruction. It is satisfying to find that in grammar, history, mental arithmetic, and singing considerable improvement is recorded, and the average results in the first three are now satisfactory. Where singing is taught the instruction is in nearly every case good. The work in elementary science and object-lessons has fallen below the standard of the previous year, and this defect calls for prompt action.

It is gratifying to record that the work of the schools has reached a higher point of efficiency during 1897 than in any previous year during my connection with the educational affairs of the district. While this progress is chiefly confined to the pass-subjects, there are signs of increasing general interest on the part of the teachers in the very important work of other parts of the curriculum. It is, of course, true that in individual cases the importance of these subjects has been inadequately recognised, but these are exceptions. I have not taken this opportunity to indicate how further improvement can be secured, as nothing more than a brief report on the results of the year's work has been attempted. Teachers will find, however, in notes on the standard course printed separately with the Board's annual report, a few suggestions, which it is expected will prove of service in the preparation of the subjects of the syllabus. In these notes no reference is made to grammar, history, and other branches, as the course in their case is definite, and the chief fault, where there is weakness, is the insufficiency rather than the lack of method that characterizes the instruction.

In regard to the exercise of the privilege of freedom of classification in the first and second standards, with the exception of those in charge of the two largest schools the teachers have preferred to waive the right and to leave the examination in the hands of the Inspector. In the cases referred to the classification was conducted with due discretion.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Westland. A. J. MORTON, Inspector.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Education Office, Christchurch, 29th January, 1898.

We have the honour to present the usual report on the schools of the North Canterbury district for the year 1897.

At the close of 1896 the schools of the district numbered 195, and since that time five more have been added, making the total 200. All of these were examined in due course, and to all but a very few—chiefly aided schools—the usual visits of inspection were paid.

In the schools examined there were presented 21,028 children, of whom 19,814 were present. In the standard classes—Standards I. to VI.—14,837 were enrolled, 298 had already passed the Sixth Standard, and 5,893 were included in the preparatory divisions. For the first time in a long series of years these numbers show a reduction, notwithstanding the continued increase in the number of schools in operation.

The number present and examined individually for standard passes in Standards I. to VI. totalled 14,339, and 12,003 of this number passed, the corresponding numbers for the preceding year being 14,602 and 12,212 respectively. The proportion of passes for the year is thus 57·1, if calculated on the total enrolment in the schools, and 80·9 on the basis of the standard-class enrolment. These proportions are practically the same as in the previous year, but it should be noted that the proportions then showed a drop of 1 per cent. on the basis of the roll-number, and 4 per cent. on the basis of the class-enrolment, so that the ground then lost has not been recovered.

The check thus shown in the progressive advance of the proportion of children reported as satisfying the standard requirements is not wholly a matter for regret, and may be readily accounted for on other grounds than any decrease in the general efficiency of teachers in the Board's service. Among influences affecting the result to a greater or less degree may be included some increase in the facility with which promotions are granted in the three lowest standards, and a corresponding increase of difficulty in the way of the weaker children at a later stage when they are thus confronted with the task of fulfilling requirements in advance of their mental capacities.

In making our reports on the examination of schools we have, at the risk of seeming antiquated, still adhered to one or two obsolete features prescribed in an earlier form of the regulations, as these features appeared to us to be abandoned on insufficient grounds We refer primarily to the distinction among the failures of those who have not made a fair number of attendances (formerly classed as "excepted," and numbering for this year 284), and secondly to the retention of numerical estimates of the value of the several class-subjects. In the former case, without laying too much stress on the significance of the relation of passes and failures, while indeed we have had in the past frequent occasion to deprecate the references commonly made in this connection, the distinction seems to us a very reasonable one, and a source of useful information. In the latter, numerical estimates of class-subjects, though they may not pretend to be more than approximations, possess several advantages, among which the greater dignity with which they invest the subjects of the group, and the greater facility of comparisons which they afford, are probably not the least. The absence of some such estimates, the utility of which, by the way, was never questioned, so far as the subjects of the group under notice were concerned, has deprived the colony of a valuable means of comparison, and adds to the nebulous ideas of the position these subjects occupy in the schools of the various districts.

In the following tables, which are pregnant with information for those who care to study them, we have summarised the results in class-subjects in as simple a form as was possible in view of the important question, frequently mooted, how far schools of different types, in respect of the staff provided, may be expected to deal efficiently with subjects of this group.

CLASS-SUBJECTS: COMPARISON OF SCHOOL GROUPS (1).

Schools having Marks 50 per Cent. and over in	In District.	In Town Schools.	In Intermediate Schools.	In Single-handed Schools.
Five class-subjects ...	18	5	8	5
Four class-subjects ...	32	9	14	9
Three class-subjects ...	42	10	20	12
Two class-subjects ...	48	3	27	18
One class-subject ...	36	1	10	25
No class-subject	24	0	0	24
	200	28	79	93

CLASS-SUBJECTS: COMPARISON OF SCHOOL GROUPS (2).

Subject.	Total Number of Schools.	Number of Schools in which Subject was valued highest.	Number of Schools receiving Mark 50 per Cent. and upwards.	Number of Schools receiving 50 per Cent. and over.		
				Town Schools (28).	Of Intermediate size (79).	Single-handed Schools (93).
Grammar	198	49	63	10	26	27
History	198	85	102	23	42	37
Geography (S. II. only)	188	...	161	27	78	56
Science and object lessons	200	91	107	25	56	26
Mental arithmetic ...	200	30	43	12	19	12

NOTE.—(*a.*) A town school is taken to be one with at least three adult or certificated teachers employed in it. In defining "single-handed" schools a sewing-mistress is not reckoned. (*b.*) In reckoning highest value geography is not included, as it is a class-subject in Standard II. only. In twelve single-handed schools there was no Standard II. class, and consequently no entry for geography as a class-subject.

Among the subjects of instruction in our schools, reading, arithmetic, and composition, in virtue of their importance, naturally take a leading place. The last subject we have already dealt with in connection with grammar (and incidentally with geography) in a memorandum recently forwarded by the Board for the information of the Hon. the Minister. We there advocated a return to the older practice of treating grammar and composition as a single pass-subject, but with a programme in grammar greatly modified on lines suggested, and we trust that the Department of Education—since we by no means stand alone in the matter among the Inspectors of the colony—will see its way to entertain favourably the opinions expressed. Meanwhile, so far as the existing syllabus of instruction will permit, we purpose adjusting our examinations in grammar to the suggested modifications.

On the subject of reading we have little to record beyond a general impression that this feature is improving. In point of "comprehension," too, we think we can recognise an advance, though the progress made in this respect against opposing obstacles may be but slow. When the new readers recently authorised come into use, "comprehension" must, with the better explanations provided, and with less to comprehend, prove much more generally satisfactory. With the introduction of shorter readers in the upper classes we trust the necessity of extending by means of supplementary books the amount of reading covered in a year will be kept fully in view, and we earnestly urge parents and School Committees to support the teachers in any effort they may make in this direction. For ourselves, where one reader only is used, we shall find it necessary to be a little stricter in regard to the reading and spelling than we should otherwise be, though we are not yet prepared to go the length of substituting in such cases an unseen book for examination purposes, as has already been done, with success, we believe, in another large district.

In arithmetic the principal tests used in Standards III. to VI. during the last three or four years have been those issued by the Department of Education in the interests of a uniform standard throughout the colony. The tests supplied during the past year have been much more even in character than before, and the sums have generally been recognised as of an improved type. In the Fifth and Sixth Standards, however, and especially in the Fifth, the arithmetic has not been well done in quite a number of schools. In such cases it has at times been very difficult to see why the pupils should not have made more successful attempts, for repeatedly quite legitimate sums of a typical character, of which numbers of specimens must have been worked throughout the year, proved to be stumbling-blocks. The defect has arisen, we believe, as much from limitations of intelligence as from any other source, and we can scarcely be far wrong in saying that the more practical the illustrations of the application of arithmetic to commercial dealings have been, the more the limits of intelligence and experience have made themselves evident. Up to the Fourth Standard the child passes in the subject on work that is too purely mechanical in character, and even in that respect with too much facility as regards Standard III.: his mental training is consequently found insufficient when he reaches a higher stage at which nearly every example entails more or less of a process of thought. In Standard IV. the balance might probably with advantage incline more in the direction of the concrete as against purely mechanical processes involving a good deal of figuring; in Standard III. there is good reason to believe that a harder test would be fully appreciated by teachers, as enabling Inspectors to make a better classification of their children. On mental arithmetic we should be glad to see greater stress laid, in schools at least of the larger size, as we are convinced much more may be made of the advantages the practice affords than is generally presented to our notice. In very small schools, where half an hour daily of direct teaching in arithmetic, distributed over several classes, is often all that the time-table will permit, not much in this direction can be expected.

Writing in the schools is a subject that occasions generally little trouble to teacher or Inspector. It is usually good enough to merit readily a "pass," but we are afraid that very seldom is real excellence attained. There has been growing up too much of a laxity of notions as to posture and method of holding the pen, the result partly of a general unsettling of ideas as to the type to which good writing should conform, and partly of a reluctance to enforce a constraint when the natural tendency is not in the required direction. In the relation of writing to drawing we have frequently reason to wish that the essential difference in the use of a single-pointed instrument, the pencil, and of a double-pointed instrument, the pen, were better appreciated. In

drawing itself, the freehand, which is nearly always examined by special tests done during the Inspector's visit, is distinctly good, and not rarely excellent. Of the other branches we cannot speak so favourably. The plane geometry and a certain amount of scale drawing are in most instances presented by the boys; the model drawing and projections are very commonly avoided.

Of the value of geography as an educational instrument we have a high opinion. There has been no lack of industry among teachers in dealing with the subject, and in general the work prescribed by the syllabus is well done, excepting only the feature of physical geography, which often shows much mental confusion. In Standard IV. it would be well to make the limits of the programme more definite, and in Standards V. and VI. something might be done to lessen the inducement to rely upon little tags of information committed to memory from text-books or notes. If the subject were wholly a class-subject an improvement in the programme and in the method of treatment could easily be made; in point of efficiency, under such conditions, we should probably be able to keep the subject on a reasonably good footing more readily than any other of the group.

Among additional subjects, in which the regulations are understood to permit to schools a certain option, poetry and comprehension of reading-lessons have been regarded as essential in all. In sewing all but the very smallest schools are provided for. The needlework is generally good, but where the number of girls is large the amount of "fixing" to be done has hitherto imposed a heavy burden on the shoulders of the female teachers. In drill, which, by the way, the Act makes compulsory for all boys, the town and suburban schools have been immensely benefited by the services of members of the Permanent Defence Force, kindly granted by the authorities, sevices that pupils and teachers keenly appreciate, with good reason. But this very improvement effected in the more favoured neighbourhood has probably tended to depress the interest taken in the matter in other places, where teachers unfamiliar with the newer drill have naturally felt discouraged from aiming at merit on obsolete lines.

Poetry is represented in 197 of the schools examined, drill in 123, singing in 148, sewing in 186, and comprehension of reading-lessons in 200.

In the preparatory departments of the schools there were 845 children over eight years of age on the date of examination. The reasons given for not presenting these children in the First Standard were generally approved. On the question of the classification in the different sections of the schools during a number of years the following table, here repeated with the necessary additions, is valuable and interesting, the steady persistence of certain tendencies being a very striking feature.

STATISTICS OF CLASSIFICATION.

—	Standard IV. and upwards.	Standards I., II., and III.	Preparatory Division.	Mean of Average Age, Standards I. to VI.
				Yrs. mos.
1888	19·3	45·9	34·7	11 8
1889	20·4	44·6	35·0	11 8
1890	22·4	44·8	32·3	11 8
1891	24·4	44·3	31·3	11 7
1892	26·1	43·9	30·0	11 6
1893	28·2	42·3	29·5	11 6
1894	30·1	41·2	28·7	11 5
1895	31·4	40·8	27·8	11 4
1896	32·3	40·1	27·6	11 4
1897	33·0	39·0	28·0	11 3

In the appendices to the report will be found the usual statistical details of examinations for all the schools of the district.

We have, &c.,

L. B. WOOD, M.A.,
W. J. ANDERSON, LL.D., } Inspectors.
THOS. RITCHIE, B.A.,

The Chairman, North Canterbury Board of Education.

APPENDIX.

I.—PASS-SUBJECTS: NUMBERS.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
					Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	298	202	...	80	...
Standard VI.	1,435	1,391	1,167	169	13 9
" V.	2,202	2,096	1,568	182	12 11
" IV.	3,003	2,878	2,121	189	12 0
" III.	3,164	3,059	2,461	190	10 10
" II.	2,635	2,571	2,393	188	9 8
" I.	2,398	2,344	2,293	190	8 6
Preparatory	5,893	5,273	...	199	...
Totals for 1897	21,028	19,814	12,003	200	11 3*
Totals for 1896	21,318	19,957	12,212	190	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

II.—PASS-SUBJECTS: NUMBERS REDUCED TO PERCENTAGES.

Classes.	School-roll.	Class-roll.		Passed, 1897.		Passed, 1896.	
	Presented.	Present.	Did not pass.	School-roll.	Class-roll.	School-roll.	Class-roll.
Above Standard VI. ...	1·4	67·8	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	6·8	96·9	15·6	5·5	81·3	5·5	80·2
" V.	10·5	95·2	24·0	7·5	71·2	7·4	71·3
" IV.	14·3	95·8	25·2	10·1	70·6	9·8	71·5
" III.	15·0	96·7	18·9	11·7	77·8	11·7	77·2
" II.	12·5	97·6	6·8	11·4	90·8	11·9	90·9
" I.	11·4	97·7	2·1	10·9	95·6	11·1	93·3
Preparatory	28·0	89·5	...	...	...	...	...
On totals	100·0	96·6	15·8	57·1	80·9	57·3	80·8

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Education Office, Timaru, 25th February, 1898.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1897.

No new schools have been opened for two years past; but towards the close of the year the Board had requisitions from householders for the establishment of three new schools, and the claims in each instance having been favourably reported on, there is a prospect of three schools being opened during the current year. In addition to the sixty-five schools already in operation, I have examined the five Roman Catholic schools, which have a total attendance of 731 scholars. The Roman Catholic schools were examined in May instead of in July as formerly, and the curtailing of the school year by two months must be taken into account in judging the results of the work as set forth in the appendix. The work of examining the public schools was begun about a month earlier than heretofore, and most of the schools lost a few weeks' preparation on this account. As timely warning was given of the change of date, the detriment to the work was of no great moment; but, as might be expected, the shortening of the school year was made the most of by the few teachers that had to find an excuse for inferior work.

Visits of inspection were paid to the Roman Catholic schools, and to as many of our own schools as I could find time for. I regret that the pressure of work compels me to forego the privilege and advantage of paying an inspection visit to every school. During a visit of this kind one gains an insight into the management and methods of the teachers that supplements the knowledge of these matters gained on the day of examination; and there is more time for friendly suggestion and help to the teacher than when one's ingenuity and strength are taxed to the full to bring within a reasonable school-day the work of examining the scholars in all the subjects of our extensive syllabus.

I have reported on the higher work of the District High Schools of Waimate and Temuka. The work was entirely satisfactory at Waimate, and creditable at Temuka. Thanks to the interest taken in the Waimate school by the High School Board of Governors there, which has found expression among other ways in generous encouragement of deserving scholars by a scheme of scholarships and exhibitions, and in a grant towards the salary of an extra master, the number of scholars obtaining the advantages of a high-school training is now very large; and it must be remembered that, with two or three exceptions, these scholars could not otherwise have attended any high school, for this would have involved the expense of higher fees and of living away from home, too costly an undertaking for the parents of those that form the bulk of the attendants at the higher classes of a district high school.

The following table shows the examination results of the Board's schools for the whole district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	109	...	...	...
Standard VI.	334	324	272	13 8
" V.	520	499	396	12 11
" IV.	759	741	532	12 0
" III.	745	727	608	10 10
" II.	705	695	673	9 7
" I.	592	582	574	8 6
Preparatory	1,475	...	...	...
Totals for 1897	5,239	3,568	3,055	11 3*
Totals for 1896	5,291	3,570	3,043	11 5*

* Mean of average age.

These numbers show for the year a decrease of fifty-two in the number of pupils presented. There is a falling-off of thirty-five in the preparatory classes, of seventy-five in Standard I., of fifty-two in Standard III., and of five above Standard VI., with a rise of thirty in Standard II., of thirty-two in Standard IV., of twenty in Standard V., and of thirty-three in Standard VI. This is my twelfth report, and the first in which I have had to chronicle a decrease. For the eleven years previous to this there has been a yearly increase averaging 103, or 1,134 altogether. The number present and examined in Standards I. to VI. is 3,568, as against 3,570 last year; and the number of pupils that passed in one or other of the standards is 3,055, as against 3,043 last year. The percentage of those that passed is 85·6; it was 85·2 last year.

Head-teachers have the promotion of the children of Standards I. and II. in their own hands, and the percentage of passes in these classes was 98 and 97 respectively. As I have pointed out in former reports, I examine Standards I. and II. in all their subjects to form a judgment on the character of the work as a whole, and to ascertain if the promotions have been awarded with discretion. In the main I was satisfied with the awards; but in at least six schools the head-teachers seem to me to have sadly blundered in granting passes that were not deserved. Better that the children should have had one good cry over the disappointment of failing than that they should be harrassed and worried for a year or two to come, trying to do the work of a class for which they are not sufficiently prepared. In Standards III., IV., V., and VI. the percentages of passes were 83, 72, 79, and 84.

The number of children on the rolls in Standards I. to VI. was 3,655, and of these 3,568 were present at examination—that is to say, 98 children out of every 100 on the rolls were examined. The average attendance for the year was 86·4; the average for the colony as a whole in 1896 was 82·1. To encourage regularity in attendance the Board awards nicely illuminated certificates of two grades, the first for perfect regularity, and the second for attendance that is almost perfect; and this year there has been a great increase in the number of scholars that have earned them. Many of the Committees also award prizes for attendance. With these incentives for those who in any case would make a good attendance, and with the activity of the truant officers directed towards those who attend only under pressure, the schools as a whole show a degree of regularity of attendance that is very satisfactory.

Of the 1,475 children in preparatory classes 185 were over eight years of age when the schools in which they are taught were examined. The reasons given for not presenting them in Standard I. appeared to me to be, in most cases, sufficient.

The infant-rooms of several of our largest schools are very pleasant places to visit. The physical exercises and marching are gone through with great spirit and precision, the children timing their movements with some bright song, or with the lilting of a dance-tune. Two schools, Timaru Main and Waimataitai, have recently procured pianos for school use; and in Waimate the infant-mistress has for years past been good enough to use her own piano with excellent effect. Lessons on colour and form; on common things and on animals; paper-folding and block-building; lessons on number with the ball-frame, with coloured reels—singly and strung in tens—with bundles of sticks, &c.; drawing of symmetrical forms on slates ruled in small squares: these and other occupations are engaged in with advantage to the progress of the children in preparing the ordinary subjects of the standard course. We have twenty-six schools with two or more certificated teachers engaged in each, and I should wish to find the infant-mistress in every one of these ever on the watch for anything that will make the work of her department lightsome and effective. Much might be learned by visiting, as opportunity offered, some infant-room that has a good reputation. Again, books on school method should not be looked upon merely as aids to passing the examination in school management for the D or E certificate, and thereafter set apart as votive offerings, too suggestive of stress and strain to be again looked into. It is when there is no need to go to them as to a task that the study of them will be most profitable. And here I would recommend to teachers of infant classes a careful reading of chapter vii. of Garlick's book, "A New Manual of Method." They will find much that is helpful and suggestive stated in brief; and having read one chapter they may be lured on to others all brimming over with information that should prove most serviceable.

With regard to the various subjects of instruction in the standard classes there is little to be said that has not been brought into prominence in past reports.

The percentage of passes in reading ranges from 87 in Standard III. to 97 in Standard VI. This is not an indication of the quality of the reading, for to pass in reading does not always mean to read well. Still, I am pleased to say that the reading was deserving of commendation in more than half of the schools, and in these were included five of the largest schools; in twenty-three schools it was fair; and in nine it was decidedly poor. Each class was tested in the reading-book used during the year, but the scholars had also had some additional practice in reading from their history class-book. A good many teachers meet with little success in training their children to answer questions on the meaning of what has been read. This is not always from want of effort on the part of the teachers, but rather from misdirected effort. The practice of telling what they have been reading about must be begun by the children in the infant-room and continued in the standard classes till it becomes a habit. The child of ordinary intelligence really knows perfectly well the meaning of the great bulk of the matter he meets with in his reading-lessons; but he must be made to feel that, having this knowledge, he must make the effort to give it expression in words of his own.

Spelling has been carefully prepared in most of the schools; but, as the percentage of passes in this subject was only 81 over all, it will be seen that there is still room for much improvement.

Writing was good to very good in forty-five schools, in thirteen it was only fair, and in seven it was poor. Practice in writing without teaching is still too common; and many copybooks are filled in which one looks in vain for that careful imitation of the pattern which is necessary for good writing, and the absence of which points most unmistakably to neglect of duty on the part of the teacher.

The quality of the freehand drawing was below fair in eight schools; it was fair in thirty-one; and good to very good in twenty-six. The drawing was judged in almost every school by exercises done during my visit; and they were generally best done in schools where the children, after completing the copies in one of the usual drawing-books, had practised the work in plain books from copies set on the blackboard. The boys of Standard IV. had prepared the geometrical problems and entered them in their books, and in most of the schools they were able to work them out before me on the blackboard. Geometrical drawing and drawing to scale in Standard V. were usually well done; and many of the boys of Standard VI. had a good understanding of the principles of solid drawing. The weakest part of the work was model-drawing, which was well taught in only one or two schools. Several times it has come under my notice that one kind of drawing is taken up for the earlier part of the year, generally the freehand; and when the freehand books are filled the geometrical, solid, or model are gone on with. This practice should be discontinued; the different kinds of drawing should be carried on alternately right through the year.

Taking everything into account, I think the results in arithmetic this year have been creditable to the teachers and the scholars. In many of the schools the teachers of Standards I. and II. have taken special care in the training of their scholars to readiness and accuracy in computation by frequent oral practice in "tots"; and in some schools the children run up the lines of addition with wonderful rapidity. Much remains to be done in this and in other ways in the lower standards to lay a sure foundation for the work of the higher classes. Whether the pupils can solve problems becomes the main test of the skill of the teacher and the ability of the pupils of Standards IV. to VI.; and it is imperative that there should be the greatest expertness in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, so that when the way of doing has been mastered, the doing should be quick and sure. Knowing full well that arithmetic presents difficulties of a very real kind to most children, teachers are seriously to blame when they add to these difficulties by employing cumbrous methods and by passing over slovenliness in the figuring and in the setting down of the successive steps in the process of working. Those teachers that insist on neatness and clearness of arrangement find in the greater success of their scholars a reward for the trouble they have taken.

Composition continues to improve in Standards III. and IV., the improvement being most marked in the latter; but there is not a corresponding advance in the quality of the work in Standards V. and VI. It is more than probable that the unsatisfactory condition into which the treatment of grammar has fallen will largely account for this; for it is certain that most of the children have not the advantage of being brought up in an atmosphere of correct speech, and must therefore depend on a knowledge of grammar for accurate writing.

In geography there is a percentage of passes of 86. Many of the teachers take great pains to make the lessons interesting and impressive; and in their teaching good use is made of blank maps and the blackboard.

In all the class-subjects, except grammar, it was not uncommon to find very good work done; in grammar it was most exceptional.

For recitation, drill, and singing, which take rank as additional subjects, praise was frequently bestowed. A few more schools have taken to the use of rods, Indian clubs, and dumb-bells for physical exercises; and the military drill of the boys in the four largest schools is very satisfactory. There are still seventeen schools where singing is not taught. The mark for needlework seldom falls below good, and in the majority of the schools it is very good.

At a few of our country schools the children have flower-gardens which they tend under the supervision of the teacher. As each child has his own little plot to look after, the consciousness of ownership and security of tenure is an encouragement to industry; and pleasant rivalry in the taste and skill with which the gardens are kept is engendered. I am pleased to state that many of the teachers take pride in having their own gardens well kept, and are careful to see that the school grounds are in good order.

The order and discipline of the schools were generally satisfactory, and I have seldom had to find fault with the manners and general behaviour of the pupils.

I have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury.

APPENDIX.

EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	8	...	...	...
Standard VI.	29	28	18	14 9
" V.	53	52	28	13 5
" IV.	84	80	54	12 6
" III.	100	99	77	11 6
" II.	106	102	93	10 2
" I.	94	89	85	9 6
Preparatory	257	..	...	...
Totals	731	450	355	11 11*

* Mean average age.

OTAGO.

SIR,— Education Office, Dunedin, 31st March, 1898.

We have the honour to submit the following general report for the year 1897.

Most of the schools were inspected and all were examined. The standard results of the examination are summarised in the following table :—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	651	...	...	...
Standard VI.	1,562	1,535	1,398	13 10
" V.	2,269	2,204	1,813	12 10
" IV.	2,796	2,710	2,157	12 0
" III.	2,884	2,829	2,477	11 2
" II.	2,705	2,654	2,567	9 9
" I.	2,543	2,508	2,474	8 8
Preparatory	6,550	...	...	...
Totals	21,960	14,440	12,886	11 4½*

* Mean of average age.

This table is given for what it is worth. It brings together the statistics given for the several schools in the department's Form 22, and is of value only as showing the proportion of children considered as fit to pass to the next higher standard. It gives results to which we attach little importance, but from which, unfortunately, the public judge the efficiency of the schools. With them the percentage of standard passes is everything, with us it is of little significance. We seldom think of it when reporting on the efficiency of the teaching as disclosed by examination. Our estimate of the condition of a school is based upon efficiency in subjects, not upon standard passes. One teacher may "pass" all his pupils and get but a fair report, while another may have 10 or 15 per cent. of failures and get a good one. Committees and the general public, however, appraise the work of the former as superior to that of the latter. They judge efficiency from the point of view of standard passes; we judge it from the point of view of marks won out of the maximum assigned.

Every well-taught school gains a high standard pass; but not every school that gains a high standard pass is a well-taught school. A few examples will suffice to make this clear. If a pupil reads the sight-test well he gets 3 marks; if he reads it fairly he gets 2; if he fails in this test, but passes in the class reading-book, he gets 1, and is credited with a "pass" in reading. The difference in the quality of the passes earned under these conditions is obviously very great. A comparison of hypothetical cases will serve for further illustration. Suppose two classes, A and B, each of twenty pupils :—

READING.

Class A.		*Class B.*	
10 pupils gain 3 marks	= 30	4 pupils gain 3 marks	= 12
5 " 2 "	= 10	6 " 2 "	= 12
3 " 1 mark	= 3	10 " 1 mark	= 10
2 " 0 "	= 0		—
	—	Total marks gained	= 34
Total marks gained	= 43	Total marks attainable	= 60
Total marks attainable	= 60	Efficiency mark = $\frac{34}{60}$ = 57 p.c. = fair.	
Efficiency mark = $\frac{43}{60}$ = 72 p.c. = good.			

In A 10 per cent. of the pupils fail; in B all pass; the former earn the mark "Good," and the latter the mark "Fair." These marks would be reversed by Committees and the public if not by members of the Board.

In spelling all pupils having not more than three errors in the text (about six lines and six selected words taken from the class reading-book) are awarded a pass in the standard. We desire to call particular attention to the number of errors allowed, for it is sometimes represented that a child failed because he had spelt a certain word incorrectly. Such a result is impossible: there must be at least four errors to cause failure.

SPELLING.

Class A.		*Class B.*	
10 pupils with 0 error	= 0	2 pupils with 0 error	= 0
4 " 1 "	= 4	3 " 1 "	= 3
2 " 2 errors	= 4	7 " 2 errors	= 14
2 " 3 "	= 6	8 " 3 "	= 24
2 " 4 "	= 8		—
	—	Total errors	= 41
Total errors	= 22	Mean errors per pupil = $\frac{41}{20}$ = $2\frac{1}{20}$ = fair.	
Mean errors per pupil = $\frac{22}{20}$ = $1\frac{1}{10}$ = good.			

That is to say, the spelling of the class in which two pupils fail is nearly 100 per cent. better than that in which all pass the standard test.

ARITHMETIC.

Maximum marks per pupil = 5; marks entitling to a pass = 3.

Class A.

5 pupils gain	5 marks	=	25
4 "	4½ "	=	18
2 "	4 "	=	8
2 "	3½ "	=	7
4 "	3 "	=	12
2 "	1 mark	=	2
1 pupil gains	0 "	=	0
Total marks gained		=	72
Marks attainable		=	100

Mean efficiency mark = $\frac{72}{100}$ = 72 p.c. = good.

Class B.

1 pupil gains	5 marks	=	5
2 pupils gain	4 "	=	8
4 "	3½ "	=	14
10 "	3 "	=	30
2 "	1 mark	=	2
1 pupil gains	0 "	=	0
Total marks gained		=	59
Marks attainable		=	100

Mean efficiency mark = $\frac{59}{100}$ = 59 p.c. = fair.

From the point of view of standard passes the results are the same: in each class 17 pupils pass and 3 fail, and each is credited with a standard pass of 85 per cent. In other words, passes between the efficiency marks of which there is a difference of 13 per cent. are, in the minds of the public, ranked as equal. It is unnecessary to go through all the subjects in this way. Sufficient has been said to enable the lay mind to realise how coarse is the mere standard test of efficiency and how little store we Inspectors set by it; but to make absolutely unmistakable the difference between the standard test and the test by which we estimate the condition of a school we give the standard results and the efficiency marks actually gained by one of our schools:—

Number of pupils examined in the standards		=	48
Standard result: all pass		=	100 per cent.

Efficiency marks in subjects (percentages):—

Pass-subjects.

Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.
62	1 error per child = 80	67	77	63	58	87

Class and Additional Subjects.

Grammar.	History.	Science.	Mental Arith.	Recitation.	Drill.	Singing.	Needlework.	Comprehension.
35	60	55	45	60	75	20	85	55

Here we have a mean of 70$\frac{4}{7}$ per cent. of marks earned in the pass-subjects, and a mean of 54$\frac{4}{9}$ per cent. in the class and additional subjects, results that are in the one case good and in the other fair, the mean of the two being about 63 per cent. Hence the efficiency mark is to the standard mark as 63 to 100.

With us the standard pass is a mere by-product of the examination: we judge the quality of the teaching by the efficiency marks gained in the subjects. Our test is a laborious one to Inspectors; but it is exact and fair. All the pupils taught by one teacher are regarded as constituting a working-unit; they are credited with every mark they earn; and their efficiency mark is determined by the ratio of the marks attained to the total attainable. There is no question of pass or of failure, all the pupils being regarded as contributing to the general result, the strong according to their strength and the weak according to theirs.

The following tables show for one school the detailed results from which the mean efficiency marks are derived. Such tables are made out for every school. The marks are reduced to percentages of attainable marks:—

CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.

Standard.	Grammar.	History.	Geography	Object-lesson and Science.	Mental Arithmetic	Recitation.	Exercises and Drill.	Singing.	Needlework.	Comprehension.
I. ...	...	...	...	50	...	60	75	50	70	...
II. ...	...	...	50		62	70	75	50	50	27
III. ...	48	40	...		36	75	75	50	65	75
IV. ...	50	...			62	60	75	50	55	85
V. ...	57	75	...	50	58	60	75	50	70	54
VI. ...	...				60	60	75	50	75	
Mean ...	*52	58	50	50	56	64	75	50	61	60

* Key to efficiency marks: 40 to 49 per cent. = weak; 50 to 59 per cent. = fair; 60 to 69 per cent. = satisfactory; 70 to 79 per cent. = good; 80 to 89 per cent. = very good; over 89 per cent. = excellent.

PASS SUBJECTS.

Standards.	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.
I. Taught by the mistress	54	$\frac{4}{8}$	74	54	68	...	...
II. Taught by the mistress	67	$\frac{15}{11}$	74	54	56	...	50
Mean	61	$\frac{19}{16} = 1$	74	54	62	...	50
III. Taught by the head-teacher	80	$\frac{10}{10}$	84	74	67	74	64
IV. Taught by the head-teacher	73	$\frac{24}{10}$	74	74	56	44	57
V. Taught by the head-teacher	67	$\frac{17}{8}$	84	64	36	54	75
VI. Taught by the head-teacher	67	$\frac{2}{4}$	84	74	63	74	75
Mean	72	$\frac{53}{32} = \frac{121}{32}$	81	71	56	59	65

In the fractions of the "Spelling" column the numerators indicate the number of errors made by each class in the test, and the denominators the number of children examined in the class. A mean of 0 to $\frac{1}{2}$ error per child = excellent, of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 = very good, of 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ = good, of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ = satisfactory, of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 = fair.

Of course, such tables as these may be compiled in a very mechanical way. If the Inspector marks answers simply as right or wrong, without distinguishing between their good and their bad points, the thing is easy; but if, as with us, he is careful to reward what is good as well as to penalise what is bad—in other words, to credit every child with what is intelligent in his answer—the labour is very great, and, so far as its literary side is concerned, the examination is a reliable test of the condition of a school. The abuse of examinations is much too indiscriminate. There are examinations and examinations, those that are stereotyped and mechanical and therefore detrimental to education, and those the aim of which is to lay bare the working of the school, to discover the good as well as the bad points of school life and work, to scrutinise methods as well as results and to give credit for what is good in both, to suggest better methods where methods are found to be faulty, and to stimulate both teachers and taught; and we hold that ours belong to the latter category: they are critical, stimulating, and informing, and their effect upon school life and method is, in our opinion, good. We are thoroughly in sympathy with what is said against mere *pass grind*. Nothing too severe can be said of it; but a test in methods and subjects, applied with sympathy and generosity, cannot but make for good.

Many head-teachers, we are glad to say, hold quarterly examinations and keep a permanent record of the results gained by each child. It would greatly increase the usefulness of these examinations to send to the parents a copy of the results gained by their children in each subject. To this might be added a brief note or two indicating the character of each child's attendance, conduct, industry, &c. The efficiency of our school system is, in no small measure, owing to the interest taken in it by Committees and parents; and, since whatever tends to bring them into more intimate contact with school life tends also to foster and increase their interest in education, we should spare no effort to win their sympathy and active co-operation by supplying them with all the information necessary to place them *au courant* with the work of their schools.

The Board's regulation as to keeping-in and home lessons is undoubtedly a wise one, but it is not always properly interpreted by Committees. The Board disapproves of "*excessive* home lessons" and "keeping-in for the purpose of preparing for the Inspector's examinations." Many teachers have complained to us that their Committees allow no home lessons and no keeping-in. The latter is a suitable form of punishment for certain classes of offences, and to forbid the teacher to adopt it is to compel him either to let such offences go unpunished or to use corporal punishment for every class of offence. As to the other question, we would like to say that, while we have a decided objection to excessive and unsuitable home lessons, we consider it a serious mistake to disallow home work of suitable kind and quantity; and the mistake produces more serious consequences in the towns than in the country, for town children, many of them, with no home lessons to prepare spend their evenings in the street, take the tone of bad companions, and rapidly acquire the character of the genus larrikin. Conduct, it has been said, is three-fourths of life. It is the expression of character, and character is determined partly by innate tendencies and partly, and probably largely, by influences acting from without. School influences are undoubtedly good; but, with home work gone by the board, they operate upon the children during only about one-seventh of their brief school life, and, where children spend their evenings in the streets, are more than neutralised by the evil influence acting upon them there. Character is the most important element in life; and, the character of a nation being but the sum total of the characters of its component individuals, the formation of character should be the chief aim of a national system of education. Whatever tends to realise this aim should be encouraged, and it is our deliberate judgment that a wise prescription of home work does tend to do so.

One of the most serious impediments to successful work is irregular attendance. The average attendance for the colony is 82 per cent.; for Otago it is 86 per cent.—that is to say, a seventh of our pupils are always absent from school. If the same children were always absent the work of the schools would not be affected. It is the circumstance that some are absent on one day, others on another, and others on another that so seriously breaks the continuity of the work and tends so powerfully to paralyse the efforts of the teacher and to retard the progress of the children whose attendance is regular. Nothing in school life tends more to cripple the energies of the teacher than

irregular attendance, and we would fain believe that if parents could be made to feel this they would realise their responsibilities and make the necessary sacrifices to render the condition of their school as favourable as possible to the intellectual life of all the children belonging to it. The rigorous enforcement of the compulsory clauses would no doubt do something towards maintaining good attendance; but what is done by compulsion is done unwillingly and with a sense of irritation. Liberty, even liberty to do wrong when he is disposed that way, is dear to the Briton, and to deprive him of it is to excite not his sympathy, but his hostility. We cannot at once compel and enlist sympathetic co-operation, and therefore compulsion should be resorted to only when other and better means have failed. Interest is the most effective weapon with which to combat indifference, and the teacher that succeeds in rousing the interest of parents in the school life of their children does immeasurably more to create a healthy local public opinion and to secure good attendance than can the best machinery devised by the Legislature.

The following table gives, in percentages, the efficiency marks gained by the district in all the subjects of examination:—

PASS-SUBJECTS.

Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.
67	Mean of 1 error per child = 80	70	70	64	58	66

CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.

Grammar.	History.	Object-lessons, Science.	Mental Arithmetic.	Recitation.	Exercises and Drill.	Singing.	Needlework.	Comprehension.
57	64	63	48	66	70	56	79	64

Being percentages of attainable marks, not of mere passes, the figures of this table represent as accurately as numerical statements can do so the actual average efficiency of the schools in the several subjects of examination. The mean efficiency mark for pass-subjects is 68, and that for class and additional subjects 63. The former is nearly good, and the latter stands nearly midway between satisfactory and good. They show conclusively that our schools are, on the whole, in an efficient condition. The general condition of quite a large proportion of them is, in fact, very good, the following criticisms on some of the subjects notwithstanding.

In reading the sight-test was applied throughout the schools, the children failing in this test receiving, as explained elsewhere in this report, a trial in the class reading-books for the year. Reasonable allowance was made for mispronunciation of uncommon or previously unseen words, and for mistakes such as any one might make through failure to grasp the thought on the first reading of a piece. If after reading a sentence the child was conscious of misinterpretation he was allowed to read it again without prejudice to his marks. He was, of course, expected to be able to syllabify, but not to accentuate, all new words of regular sounds. The mean mark earned in this subject shows that much of the reading was good. Naturally the reading of the large schools was generally better than that of the small; still, the latter furnished some of the best reading we heard. The chief defect in the reading, as in the speech of our children, is indistinct articulation. They read indistinctly because they speak indistinctly. Reading is the speaking of another's thoughts, an obvious qualification for which is ability to speak one's own. Hence the teacher who would make reading distinct must begin with the speech of his pupils. With the junior classes there should be mouth exercises, articulation exercises, exercises in the speaking of sentences, and in the recitation of such prose and poetry as lend themselves to dramatic treatment, the aim of the exercises being distinct articulation of single words and groups of words, flexibility of voice, and naturalness of gesture. If these essentials of cultured speech are not acquired in the junior classes they will not be easily acquired in the senior. Errors in articulation frequently pass unobserved owing to the circumstance that teacher and pupils listen to the reading, their eyes all the while on the passage read. To detect such errors they should now and then close their books and merely listen to the reading of the reader. This should be done in all the classes. It is owing to the absence of this ear-test that such errors as most of the following are so common:—

compny	for	company.	famly	for	family.	Itly	for	Italy.
usuly	"	usually.	counslor	"	counsellor.	actuly	"	actually.
quitely	"	quietly.	Artic	"	Arctic.	unertook	"	undertook.
busly	"	busily.	occasionly	"	occasionally.	espeshly	"	especially.
had sumed	"	had assumed.	generly	"	generally.			

The law of economy of effort is obviously operating here. In the following we have departure from purity of vowel and diphthong sounds:—

fŏŏd	for	fōōd.	vice	for	voice.	thā-ĕr	for	there.
befō-ĕr	"	before.	borru	"	borrow.	hā-er	"	hair.
stō-ĕr	"	store.	bā-ĕr	"	bare.			

Many other examples were noted, but those quoted are sufficient to show how watchful we must be to maintain purity of utterance.

The class reading-book is generally read through in the first seven or eight months of the year. When every paragraph has been read through two or three times the book possesses no further interest for the children, and therefore should be dropped as a reading-book. To cause children to read and read a book until they are word-perfect in it makes the reading not what it ought to be, the most pleasant, but what it ought not to be, the most unpleasant exercise of the day. Nearly every one is alive to this, and most are agreed that something should be done to create in the children a sense of the pleasure to be got out of a book. This cannot be done by reiterated reading of one book. To do it we must have fresh matter, and fresh matter every day. What we

need for every class in every school is a set of readers for sight-reading during the last four or five months of the year. In each set there should be about half as many books as pupils in the class; they should be the property of the Committee, should never be taken out of the school, and should be simply read, the aim being to accustom the children to read readily, in new contexts, words they are already familiar with and, by showing what pleasure can be got out of a book, to create and foster a taste for reading. We are glad to be able to report that some Committees are already making provision for the introduction of such readers in their schools. For the two senior classes we recommend a good English classic, such as, say, "Westward Ho!" or "Ivanhoe," or Southey's "Life of Nelson," or another of the many well-executed cheap reprints recently issued by British publishing-houses.

The verses prepared for recital were generally said with verbal and phrasal accuracy, but not with much taste and spirit. Whether charged with galloping energy, or stormy passion, or tender pathos, they were too often recited with no expression of the thing infused into them by the mind of the poet. The repetition of poetry without the expression of its spirit is of little educational value. The bearing of recitation upon gesture and voice-modulation as means of expressing the emotions appears to us not to be kept sufficiently in view. Our experience has convinced us that recitation and reading receive too little prominence in the professional training of our teachers. We think the Board would do well to establish in Dunedin a Saturday elocution class for pupil-teachers and students in training, thus doing for elocution what it has already done for drawing and gymnastics. The expense of such a class would be a trifle in comparison with the good it would achieve.

There is next to no teaching of spelling, but it is clear from the efficiency marks that the spelling of the reading-books is well worked up by the children. It is, however, no uncommon thing for them to do well in the formal test and blunder badly in the spelling of their composition and geography. To teachers the remedy should be obvious.

During the year the work of which is under review penmanship was, from Standard III. to Standard VI. inclusive, judged from the writing of the dictation exercise, and the efficiency mark shows that the schools stood the test well.

Drawing was, for the most part, judged from work done in our presence. A fair proportion of it was excellent, and much of the rest was good. More practice in drawing from objects, say, from a leaf instead of from the figure of one, would greatly increase the usefulness and interest of this subject. Some teachers do not observe the rule that in freehand drawing no mechanical aids should be used.

So far as blackboard exposition goes, written arithmetic continues to be one of the most efficiently taught subjects. In the three senior classes, however, the examination results are frequently disappointing to all concerned. The failures are due to many causes, the chief being, in our opinion, the following: (1.) Many teachers do not make their pupils set out the logical steps of the work as they themselves set them out in the blackboard proofs. (2.) They do not, after proving general laws, make their pupils learn the words in which such laws are usually expressed; there is inadequate mastery of proofs and explanations, insufficient working-up of the language of arithmetic, reliance being placed on mere ciphering, the working of examples, no matter how, to fix in the minds of the children what is explained, generally well explained, by the teacher. This is analogous to teaching Euclid's elements without making the learners work up the proofs and memorise the general enunciation of the propositions! In every subject the parts of which have a logical connection there must be memorising of verbal statements of important principles or the learner never gets beyond vague general notions, can never give a clear accurate reason for the work he does. Formerly we had too much learning of rules without explanation and proof; now we have too much explanation and proof and too little learning of rules and explanations. The latter case is nearly as bad as the former. (3.) The children are not kept on their mettle. Teachers anticipate difficulties and explain them away without allowing their pupils to encounter them, struggle with them, and try to overcome them. They have a great deal of work to compass and they make undue haste to compass it, not realising that he makes most haste who makes haste slowly. Too much assistance is more harmful than too little, for the child that is helped over every difficulty and afforded no chance of testing his own power to overcome it will always remain a weakling, always collapse before a problem that differs in any way from those he has, with the assistance of his teacher, been accustomed to solve. (4.) It is assumed that it is the work of the lower standards to produce accuracy in the simple rules, and that the accuracy acquired in Standard I. to Standard II. requires little or no effort from the teachers of the middle and senior classes to make it a permanent mental possession. Hence their pupils frequently fail from inaccuracy in the simple rules, especially in addition. The remedy is frequent brief practice in long tots and other devices for securing and maintaining rapidity and accuracy. Five minutes a day devoted to this class of work would work wonders. Another cause operates in the case of the more capable children: their pace is too often regulated by that of the dullards, the aim being not to make every child master as thoroughly as he can the parts of the subject prescribed for him, but to qualify for a pass every member of the class. The weak are, the strong are not, made to do their best; there is levelling-up of the former, but levelling-down of the latter. Dull children need a good deal of explanation and assistance, bright children but little, and it is worse than waste of time to compel the latter to listen to all the explanations given to the former. Capable children would rather help themselves than be helped by others, and should therefore be allowed to work from their books while their less capable class-mates are receiving blackboard instruction. The bare level of a pass is as high as, perhaps higher than, a fair proportion of the children can reach even with the best teaching; but quite a large proportion are capable of working right through their books and of attaining to excellence in the work prescribed. It is better to work through a poor text-book than to work a little here and a little there of a good one with the view not of learning through and through the work prescribed, but simply of catching the examiner and

qualifying for the pass. Methods of working are not always wisely chosen, many teachers preferring those that are of easy application in simple cases to those that, though more difficult at first, are of much wider range and greater power. Invariably that method should be chosen that goes to the root of things, includes a wider range of work, and gives power.

In the lower classes the elements of number, though pretty thoroughly taught, are generally treated in too abstract a way. Too little use is made of eye and hand; the children are not made to see and make concrete representations of the components of the numbers they deal with. Hand and eye are all-powerful in education, and it is certain that we do not make sufficient use of them. Teachers of junior classes would do well to read Rix's "Pictorial Method of Teaching the First Steps in Arithmetic."

Tables of money and weights and measures are, with most children, pure abstractions. A few days' playing at shop-keeping, actual money passing from pupil to pupil, is the proper preliminary to money sums, and the proper preliminary to exercises in weights and measures is experiment with the actual weights and measures themselves. Here, again, hand and eye are not made to help the head. We proceed as if the child's experience were equal to our own, and wonder why what is so simple to us is a matter of such difficulty to him!

We are glad to note decided improvement in grammar, especially in that of Standard III. In the senior classes, especially in Standards V. and VI., the subject is often very weak, the children showing great ignorance, not only of the elements of sentence-structure, but even of inflexion and the "parts of speech." In these classes there is, in a large proportion of our schools, much room for improvement in the teaching of this very important branch of education, the study of the beautiful mechanism of the mother-tongue. Even in schools in which the technical parts of the subject are well learnt there is often but little known of the practical application of such parts to spoken and written speech. To the majority of pupils of these standards such questions as the following are a complete stone of stumbling: Correct the following and give reasons for your corrections: "In the corner of the room stands the boys' guns." "One of our best men were drowned in crossing the river." "We have done our best, father and me, but our best is not good." "Thou who art wise can advise me." "Let the man name the two gentlemen who he would like to break a spear with." "The author related the story of a lady's life and of the tragedy that ended it, with no little skill."

We give one such question to the senior classes of every school, but seldom receive correct answers. Even when the correction is made there is, in most cases, assigned for it either an incorrect reason or no reason at all. Our inference is that the parsing exercise is mechanical and not directed to what ought to be its chief aim—viz., the acquirement of a sound working knowledge of the rules of syntax. Again, children will analyse correctly a sentence of three or four members, but ignominously fail to build up a similar sentence of which the members and their relations are given to them. The truth seems to be that, from beginning to end of the study, analysis of sentences is taught rather for its own sake than for the purpose of discovering and learning the laws of phrase and clause arrangement. In the Senior Scholarship examination, for instance, the competitors gained 86 per cent. of the marks assigned for the analysis of a long sentence of nine clauses, but only 41 per cent. of those assigned for the synthesis of a sentence of only four clauses. To get into proper position some of the clauses of this sentence one of them had to be inverted, and a large proportion of the competitors, ignorant of this common device for bringing related parts together, simply wrote down the clauses in the order in which they were placed in the examination paper, an order perfectly consistent with the statement of a question in synthesis, but entirely at variance with the laws of clause arrangement. It cannot be too emphatically insisted on that the teaching of grammar in elementary schools should, from beginning to end, be made to bear on the requirements of composition, and that to this end the sentences selected for study should be selected for purposes not of furnishing *tours de force* in parsing and analysis, but of bringing before the minds of the children examples of good literary form, types of sentence-architecture impressed upon the language by a long line of masters in expression. The thought-content must, of course, be simple, but this condition is not inconsistent with good form. There is, in truth, no lack of suitable material. It abounds in the class-readers, but requires selection and classification by the teacher. Every example should tell something, and the sum total of all the examples studied during the school course should tell all that is necessary for a sound appreciation of the structural elements of the sentence and the paragraph. But the method of treating the material is of even greater importance than the material itself: the examples must be made to tell their own tale. There should be no dogmatising; what the example teaches, that the pupils must, under wise guidance, find in it. Placing two or three examples of a construction before his class, the teacher should train his pupils to learn by *observation* the principles of arrangement they exemplify, thereafter make them search their reading- or grammar-book for other instances of the same construction, and finally make them use the construction in sentences of their own making. The materials for such sentences should, at first, be given to the children in the form of sentences analysed into their clausal constituents, the relation of the clauses being indicated as in general analysis, and the children being required to solve the problem of placing them in their proper setting. Original sentences of the same type should follow. Analysis of sentences without this supplementary synthesis is of no practical use in training children to understand the mechanism of their mother-tongue and to speak and write it correctly, which should be the chief aim of grammar-teaching. The method we are recommending is both useful and interesting; it is, moreover, in entire accord with the methods of science, for it puts the children in the attitude of discoverers, substitutes the productive for the receptive attitude, and induces a most important habit of mind—viz., the habit of learning by *personal observation*. It is, we are glad to say, adopted wholly or in part by some of our best teachers of grammar, and naturally with good results on the composition exercises of their pupils. The method undoubtedly makes large demands on the teacher's knowledge of sentence-structure, but demands not larger than it is fair to exact from every teacher of

his mother-tongue. In Standard IV. inflexion is frequently postponed to the second half of the year, a serious blunder, for a knowledge of it is required as soon as the child begins to compose. It is the easiest part of grammar, and should, in our opinion, be begun even in Standard III.

In many of the larger schools the teachers of Standards V. and VI. have, owing to circumstances over which they have no control, but little opportunity of showing what they could do in grammar under the conditions contemplated by the syllabus. Children are promoted from Standard III. to Standard IV., and from Standard IV. to Standard V., with a very imperfect knowledge of the work prescribed for Standards III. and IV.; and the teacher of Standard V., having to spend most of his time in teaching what ought to have been taught in the classes below his, is unable to do justice to the work prescribed for his own standard, and finally his pupils are sent on to Standard VI. with so heavy an incubus of back work to overtake as to render impossible the acquisition of even a fair working knowledge of the work prescribed for this standard. The headmasters are, of course, to blame for this, for it is their duty to see that every teacher does thoroughly what is set him to do in every subject of his standard, and more especially in organic subjects like grammar, composition, and arithmetic. It is unfair to the teachers of the middle and senior standards that they should have to waste their time and energy in teaching what ought to have been taught in the lower standards. There is a great deal too much of this. The public estimating the progress of the children by standard passes, it is entirely natural that the class-teacher should regard the pass of his own class as the chief aim of his teaching. What should be the chief aim? To this question there can be but one answer: to induce faculty and lay the best possible foundation for future life and work; and so to co-ordinate the work of his school as to secure this result is one of the chief functions of the headmaster.

We are of opinion that the grammar syllabus should be recast and the work prescribed made to bear, from beginning to end, on the practical requirements of composition. We repeat what we have said before about grammar: it was a profound mistake to make it a class-subject. It is a part and parcel of composition, and the two should be made one pass-subject. The present divorce is most unnatural.

One other word we should like to say before passing to the next subject. There is an opinion abroad that in this and some other branches of study technical terms should be avoided. This opinion is founded upon the assumption that words are difficult and things easy. The assumption is entirely false: things are difficult, their names easy; and, when things are known, it is contrary to sound principles of education to denote them by lumbering periphrases instead of by their names.

Composition is improving. Last year's work was, we consider, the best we have had. The chief mistakes were in concord, in the use of relative pronouns and other connective words, and in arrangement, arrangement not only of the phrases and clauses of the sentences, but of the sentences themselves: related sentences were not kept together. Punctuation was, in the majority of cases, very faulty. Analysis of sentences might be made a powerful aid to phrase and clause punctuation, and for sentence punctuation and sentence arrangement nothing is better than the systematic study of the well-built paragraphs of some of the lessons of the reading-books. We recommend more attention to the correct use of "who" and "which." Even in the senior classes many of the children write "which" where they ought to write "who." "Got" is a much-abused word. It is no uncommon thing to find it used five or six times in a dozen lines of composition.

Most pupils succeed in earning in topographical geography sufficient marks (50 per cent.) to entitle them to a pass; but no inconsiderable number of them do it by dint of memorising their text-book. In many schools there is too little map-study and map-drawing, and too much mere grind at the text-books. Geography is, *par excellence*, the cram-subject of the syllabus; and, map-drawing not being prescribed for examination (except in connection with New Zealand), the written examination is powerless to break down the cramming process. This could, however, be done by an oral examination, but an oral examination is unsuitable in pass-subjects. Our experience has convinced us that we could secure much more intelligent and useful work in geography if it were relegated to the class-subjects. Half the matter the children learn is useless, and, worse still, it is too often learnt in the wrong way. The transference of geography from the pass to the class subjects would by some be objected to on the ground that a knowledge of the subject is of great practical use. Precisely, but only on the condition that the knowledge is useful and acquired in the right way. Physical geography is generally unsatisfactorily done.

Though the efficiency mark in science and object lessons is satisfactory, we are not satisfied with the method by means of which the knowledge was in many cases acquired. In these subjects a considerable proportion of our teachers are slaves to the text-books. To such an extent is this true that they frequently give their lessons with book in hand, every now and then consulting it for information that should have been gathered from personal observation of the object. It is a case of the blind leading the blind; for how can a man lead others to observe what he himself has never taken the trouble to see? It ought to be obvious that the thing is impossible. Nevertheless many teachers act as if it were both possible and rational; for they give object-lessons without objects and science-lessons without experiment! One of the chief aims of science, as of other teaching, is mental discipline. Such discipline lies in methods, and only those methods are disciplinary that compel personal observation, comparison, and inference. This is precisely what many of our so-called science and object lessons fail to do: they appeal only to the memory and are entirely devoid of the spirit of science. We are glad to say, however, that in many schools this department of work is conducted in a truly scientific manner.

We report with pleasure that several of our mistresses are now doing creditable kindergarten work in the infant department. We wish they would give more time to object-lessons and recitation. For the latter they will find "New Recitations for Infants," by Lois Bates, an excellent book.

In many schools the singing was wanting in taste. Not much work had been done, and insufficient attention had been given to voice-training. In some the subject had, we fear, been neglected during a considerable portion of the year. Of incidental singing—a verse or two of a song two or three times a day to relieve the monotony of the literary work—there had been very little, and a similar remark applies to physical exercises.

The needlework continues to reflect great credit upon the female teachers.

In the majority of the schools the discipline, tone, and manners were distinctly good.

We have, &c.,

P. GOYEN,
W. S. FITZGERALD,
C. R. RICHARDSON,
C. R. BOSSENCE,
Inspectors.

The Secretary, Education Board, Otago.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Invercargill, 31st January, 1898.

We have the honour to present our report on the primary schools of this district for the year ended the 31st December, 1897.

During the latter half of the year all the schools were examined, and during the earlier half, but for accidents of weather and other contingencies, all would also have been inspected. We believe that from end to end of the district the teachers are, with but few exceptions, doing their work heartily and well, and that, if a sufficient criterion be afforded by what we see during our visits of inspection and examination, there is in the schools generally a well-marked rise in the standard of efficiency. As is customary, we submit some remarks on the subjects of instruction.

Reading.—In our last year's report we had something to say of the place and function of reading in primary instruction. This matter, the Board will be pleased to know, is exercising the minds of teachers, several of whom have taken the initiative in the direction of improvement by introducing into their schools a much wider range of suitable literature than has hitherto been considered adequate. At the recent examination of the town schools members of two large classes were given an unseen test in reading, with surprisingly good results. On inquiry we found that the pupils had read at least twice as much as other pupils ostensibly at the same stage of advancement. Next to the school itself the most powerful agency for the dissemination of a love of reading is the school library, an institution that the Board might, by the grant of a small subsidy, very well take directly under its own wing.

Writing.—The upright system of handwriting has been adopted in several schools, but, except as to slate-writing in the lower classes, with no very promising result. The style most in favour conforms to the golden mean in the matter of slope, and is simple, clear, bold, and well proportioned. Such a style affords ample scope for the instillation of correct principles, and for the acquirement of those habits which should be second nature to the pupil when, in early manhood, he develops his characteristic "hand."

Spelling.—This subject is, on the whole, well taught. Much, however, remains to be done in the way of word-building in the lower classes. Young teachers especially can hardly pay too much heed to this phase of the teaching of reading and spelling. The word-building exercise produces in the minds of young children the idea of uniformity, and calls into requisition two qualifications eminently to be desired in the young teacher—readiness of resource, and freedom in the use of the blackboard.

Arithmetic.—Arithmetic continues to hold a high place in the estimation of the majority of the teachers, who appear thoroughly to realise its power as an instrument of mental discipline, and its serviceableness in the computations incident to every-day life. Absence of method in the setting-out of sums is happily becoming a thing of the past: where it remains, it is an indication that the teacher needs to reconsider the elements of his profession. The arithmetic test-cards supplied by the Education Department met with the general approval of the teachers, some of whom, however, thought the tests for Standard III. too easy. In these respects we are in entire agreement with the teachers.

Composition.—On the whole, we have reason to be satisfied with the teaching of this subject. The exercises done at the annual examinations were uniformly good, both as to matter and as to form. The fruits of the teachers' labour in the teaching of this subject were very apparent in the large number of excellent essays written at the recent scholarship examination. The function of composition in the school is twofold. Primarily taught as a means of enabling the pupils to put into intelligible shape their thoughts on any given subject, it becomes in the hands of a skilful teacher the means also of enabling them to gather up and put into harmonious relation portions of knowledge gained from many different sources. So far as the teacher is successful in systematizing and co-ordinating knowledge just so far will intelligence become a characteristic attribute of his pupils.

Drawing.—We have hitherto generally determined a pupil's claim to a pass in this subject by an inspection of his year's work so far as it has been embodied in his drawing-book. For the future, we propose to set at the annual examination a practical test for every class in the school.

Geography.—Manifest improvement has been made in the teaching of this subject, and in their methods of treating it many teachers leave little to be desired. To the mere number of places dealt with we do not attach much importance, but we hold it to be of vital moment that each place brought under the pupil's notice should be so studied and reviewed as to become a centre round which is aggregated a cluster of interesting facts and from which, through its environment, he can intelligently make his way to other regions of the world. It is difficult to understand the repugnance with which some teachers view this subject. Their aversion is perhaps the result of a pitifully wrong point of view; the view, namely, that the study of geography is a senseless

exercise of memory, and its choicest fruit a mere repertory of names without content. This, however, is but a miserable travesty of a subject which in itself is capable of affording an excellent training for every mental power.

Class and Additional Subjects.—These subjects continue to receive, on the whole, a satisfactory amount of attention. As a rule, where the standard work is well done there also is the work in the class and additional subjects well done. This concomitance can be due to no mere accident; it is the natural outcome of the teacher's force of character, and, to a large extent, the measure of his mental sympathies.

Infant Department.—The infant departments of the larger schools in the district are, on the whole, in a very efficient condition, the mistresses being sympathetic in manner, progressive in their methods, and unremitting in the discharge of their duties.

Class above Standard VI.—During the year much really good work was done in this class all over the district. In some schools the pupils under the guidance of the teacher employed themselves in preparing for different public examinations. In others they devoted themselves to the revision of the standard work and to the study of at least two of the subjects suggested by the Board's circular of the 23rd May, 1896. It must, however, be added that in several instances all the members of this class absented themselves from the annual examination, the inference being that they were merely nominal pupils. The school is no place for such, and it should be at once unburdened of the attendance of any pupil who declines to be subjected to a fixed course of study. It almost invariably happened that the pupils of this class did the best work in the schools in which the standard classes did well.

Moral Tone.—"The one and the whole work of education may be summed up in the concept—morality; and morality is the highest aim of humanity." In view of the fact that, normally, intellectual culture monopolises almost the whole of the educational field this announcement by Herbart, one of the greatest of all authorities in education, at the beginning of one of his best known works, may well cause some searching of heart. If the work of teaching in our schools does not produce in the pupils strength of will and a bias towards right conduct, if it does not tend to produce independence of spirit and moral fibre in the community, then it is a spurious article, unworthy of being a factor in the development of a free people. Our observation, so far as it goes, leads us to infer that moral aims are more or less distinctly recognised in all the schools. Young teachers, as indeed is natural, are sometimes so consumed with zeal for intellectual growth that they but dimly recognise formation of character in their pupils as an end in itself. From the moral standpoint it is seen that in the administration of their schools grave responsibility attaches to the headmasters. It is not enough to offer a mere passive resistance to wrong-doing, nor to combat evil tendencies as they arise. The entire economy of the school should be so ordered that during his school career a sufficiency of moral sense should be developed in the pupil to enable him to pronounce correct moral judgments on his thoughts and actions as naturally as to cast up correctly arithmetical sums.

The Secretary Education Board, Southland.

JAMES HENDRY,
GEO. D. BRAIK, } Inspectors.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	177	...	...	...
Standard VI.	559	547	499	13 10
" V.	915	898	732	13 0
" IV.	1,390	1,351	1,029	12 1
" III.	1,295	1,254	1,037	10 11
" II.	1,225	1,196	1,150	9 11
" I.	1,131	1,105	1,085	8 8
Preparatory	2,866	...	...	...
Totals	9,558	6,351	5,532	11 5*

* Mean of average age.

ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

School.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.
Invercargill Convent	157	103	96
Invercargill Boys'	95	90	88
Convent, East Gore	60	41	38
Convent, Queenstown	60	34	34
School, Arrow	26	21	12

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (3,000 copies), £42 16s. 0d.

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Price 1s. 3d.]

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