

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 ages of those that passed. The table showing the results of individual schools has not been printed.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Absent.	Failed	Passed	Per Cent. of Passes on		Average Age of those that passed.
						Number presented	Number examined.	
Above Standard VI.	114	...	...	...	...	...	...	Yrs. mos.
Standard VI.	472	458	14	50	408	86·4	89·1	14 6
" V.	823	799	24	204	595	72·3	74·5	13 5
" IV.	1,380	1,301	79	260	1,041	75·4	80·0	12 7
" III.	1,509	1,453	56	255	1,198	79·4	82·4	11 6
" II.	1,353	1,311	42	77	1,234	91·2	94·1	10 3
" I.	1,366	1,336	30	41	1,295	94·8	96·9	9 1
Preparatory	3,159	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	10,176	6,658	245	887	5,771	83·6	86·7	11 11 (Mean.)

All the schools open for the full twelve months, with the exception of Brunswick, were examined in standards. On the days appointed for the examination in standards there were 10,176 pupils (5,282 boys and 4,894 girls) on the school-rolls. Of these, 6,903 were in Standards I. to VI., 3,159 were in the preparatory classes below Standard I., and 114 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 the calculation) is 68·6. This is the highest percentage yet reached in this district, and is 0·4 higher than in 1897. There were 563 children in the preparatory classes who were over eight years of age and were not presented in Standard I. Of these 55 were Maoris, and 328 had not been two years at school. The total number presented in the six standards is 254 higher than in the previous year. In Standard II. there is a decrease of 68, and in Standard III. a decrease of 5; but all the other standards show substantial increases. Standard III. shows the highest number presented—viz., 1,509.

Of the 6,903 pupils presented in the six standards, 6,658, or 96·5 per cent., attended and were examined, and 245 were absent. The prevalence of measles during the last quarter of the year prevented several children from attending the examination. The number of absentees was, as usual, highest in Standard IV. At thirty-nine schools all pupils were present, and at thirty-six schools all pupils but one. In the three schools at Palmerston North, out of 726 pupils presented in standards only ten were absent.

Of the 6,658 pupils examined, 887 failed, and 5,771 satisfied the requirements and were promoted. The number passed is considerably higher than in any former year (483 higher than in 1897), while the number failed is considerably lower (252 lower than in 1897). We do not calculate percentages of passes for individual schools, for they serve no good purpose, and are more often than not misleading to outsiders. The percentages of passes for the district in the various standards, however, are useful for purposes of comparison, and are interesting and instructive; and on comparing those in the foregoing table with similar calculations for the previous year we find a decrease in Standard V. of 0·7, but increases as follows in all the other standards: Standard VI., 12·7; Standard IV., 8·9; Standard III., 3·9; Standard II., 2·7; Standard I., 3·4. That Standard VI. should obtain such a high percentage as 89·1 is very creditable, especially as ninety-five schools were represented, and many of these were staffed by only sole-teachers. Standard V. this year, with a percentage of 74·5, took the lowest place, a position usually occupied hitherto by Standard IV. The percentage of passes for all standards, 86·7, is the highest yet reached in the district, and is 4·4 higher than that of the previous year, which then was the highest. The percentage of passes for the colony in 1897 was 84·6.

It should be mentioned that the pupils in Standard I. and Standard II. were classified by the teachers. In Standards III. to VI., of the 4,011 pupils examined by us we were able to promote 3,242, or 80·8 per cent., an improvement of 5·3 for the year.

The percentage of passes on the total roll-number (inclusive of the 3,159 in the preparatory classes below Standard I.) is 57·4.

The average ages of those pupils passing each standard are very nearly the same as in the previous year. We should state that they are likely to give an incorrect impression of the average ages at the majority of schools, owing to their being raised out of all proportion by the abnormally high ages at a few bush schools.

Instruction.—Little new can be written under this heading; still, a few remarks upon some of the subjects will not be out of place.

Reading, we think, continues to improve slowly, and altogether it is generally as good as can be expected. Certainly "comprehension" has of late been treated more effectively.

The following faults in the treatment of reading have been pointed out at one time or another in former annual reports and at our inspection visits, but, as we still occasionally find them at some schools, it may be well now to draw attention to them again: (1.) Putting on pupils in large classes to read in turn as they stand, and to read paragraph about. This must inevitably cause inattention. Every pupil in the class should feel that he may be called upon at any moment to read. The value of the paragraph cannot well be known if each child reads only one. (2.) Putting on pupils