

Standard VII.—Fifty-two schools presented a Standard VII. The total number of pupils was 145. With four exceptions, the number presented by any one of the schools never exceeded three. College Street, Palmerston, presented the largest number—sixteen. For the first time a syllabus was prepared for this class, which, in addition to primary subjects, prescribed for the larger schools Latin, algebra, and Euclid. The work in these secondary subjects was somewhat disappointing: in only one or two schools could it be described as even fair. Evidently the teachers did not find sufficient time to give the special attention needed to make their teaching a success in this higher kind of work. A good appearance was made in the primary subjects.

Preparatory Classes.—The pupils in the preparatory classes of the large schools are well trained, and at the examinations they make a very fine appearance. The instruction, too, is satisfactory in the smaller schools, where the classes are in charge of a female teacher, either a junior assistant or an advanced pupil-teacher; but generally it is meagre in amount or of poor quality where the teacher is unaided, or helped by only a cadet or an inexperienced pupil-teacher. I must say, however, that some of the sole teachers do surprisingly good work with their primers when it is considered how little time they have at their disposal for giving special attention to them.

Kindergarten exercises have been introduced into the Hawera School with very marked success. Dr. Smyth, the newly appointed Chief Inspector, and I should much like to see this kind of work introduced into more of the schools, and we would strongly urge that teachers qualify themselves to give instruction in it. And there should be no difficulty in doing this. Books bearing on the subject could be studied, and facilities might be given to teachers to visit schools where it is taught. We know that many teachers, without the help of any special training in the methods, but simply by their own exertions, have been successful in making these exercises a highly educative factor of the work of their young pupils. The recent Manual and Technical Act provides grants to schools where kindergarten work is taught. This, in addition to the high educational value of the training itself, should be an incentive to teachers to give it a right place in the work of their schools.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the teachers as a body are earnest, faithful, and efficient, and they have done good work in the cause of education throughout the district during the past year.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MILNE, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Wanganui Education Board.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 28th February, 1901.

I have the honour to present my twenty-seventh annual report on the primary schools of the Wellington Education Board District for the year 1900.

During the past year my colleagues and I examined the whole of the 145 schools in operation, and overtook all the necessary work of inspection. We also examined and inspected eight Roman Catholic schools, and furnished the authorities in each case with a separate detailed report.

The increased work of the year included the visiting of nine newly opened schools—one at Island Bay, and eight very small ones in the more outlying parts of the Wairarapa and Forty-mile Bush—viz., Waione, Manuhara, Mangaramarama, Ihuraua, Wharau, Wainuioru, Te Mai, and Woodhurst. It is apparent that the number of small schools is still on the increase; and, although it must be allowed that it is desirable to extend the benefits of education as widely as possible, it must also be admitted that restriction should be put on any unnecessary increase in the number of small schools, each of which is a charge upon the funds available for maintaining the efficiency of larger ones, and each of which takes up at least one day of the Inspector's time. I am prepared to advise the consideration by the Board of the question of combining a few existing schools, which at present appear in too close proximity, not only with the view of lessening expenditure, but also with the object of increasing their efficiency.

The century closed with very little growth in the school population. The roll-number for 1900 was 15,211, an increase of only 238 for the year. The number presented in standards also shows little change—a total of 9,758, with an increase of 129. And, further, the numbers passed in the several standards do not vary in any considerable degree from the classification of the previous year. This may be seen from the following comparison:—

	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.	Above Standard VI.
1899	... 1,609	1,675	1,560	1,544	1,177	731	516
1900	... 1,554	1,610	1,625	1,446	1,238	758	490

From this it may be inferred that the newly introduced freedom of classification in Standards I. to V. by head teachers has led to no marked disturbance in the grading of the pupils, for the number promoted in these standards is about the same as the number passed the previous year at the Inspectors' examinations. Thus it is apparent that the teachers have not, as a body, been too anxious to put up their pupils. I say advisedly "as a body," because, while we have reason to be much pleased with the ideal of classification set up in the larger and more satisfactory schools, in which irregular attendance is severely reckoned with, we found cases in which the head teacher's judgment was warped, and in some instances we re-examined and reclassified the whole of the pupils. With careful supervision on the part of the Inspector, no danger need be feared to the education system from freedom of classification or from the abolition of the individual pass in