

Standards I. to V. A heavier responsibility will be thrown on the Inspector, who must in future be satisfied that the work of any class is up to the requirements of the standard syllabus. If, however, thorough efficiency is to obtain, a graver responsibility will rest with the higher authorities in seeing that due effect is given to the reports of the Inspectors, for unless this is done inefficiency will go on unchecked and real merit unrecognised. Thus it happens that weak and unsatisfactory teachers become rooted to their ground, and good teachers are lost sight of when promotions are open. The Inspector can in part do justice to a successful teacher by an award of marks made annually to the Inspector-General, but this marking does not affect all teachers; and, although the Inspector has power to raise a certificate for good work, he has no power to lower it at a later date for any falling-off in the teacher's energies or capacity.

The school-space or building-accommodation afforded is fairly adequate to existing demands. At Hukanui, Kaitara, and Karori pressure begins to be felt; but, excepting the restoration of the Thorndon buildings, lately destroyed by fire, and the reconstruction of old buildings at Newtown, Lower Hutt, and Mount Cook Girls', which is already under consideration, there is no apparent pressing need for increased accommodation. The representations in the past two years of settlers at Island Bay, Pahau, Kaiwairi, Maungapakeha, and other places have been more or less delusive, and the result has been the erection in some cases of buildings in excess of requirements; and at the present time two buildings erected only two years ago are unoccupied. The buildings now in course of construction at Thorndon will give much improved accommodation not only in the conveniences of the class-rooms and in the facilities afforded by the large halls for grouping classes, but also in the extension and better arrangement of the playgrounds.

I have this year carefully gone through the detailed examination and inspection reports of the several schools, and classified them as to their condition on the plan adopted last year. This year's summary does not differ widely from that of last year; for in 1899 there were eighty-one schools classed as satisfactory, forty as fair, and fifteen as inferior, out of a total of 136; and in 1900 I find eighty-one satisfactory, fifty-one fair, and thirteen inferior, out of a total of 145. Of the eighty-one satisfactory schools, forty are working with results which may be pronounced distinctly good. But of the schools which are less satisfactory, thirty-five are so classed because the Inspector finds no fault with the teacher, who has been working at a disadvantage, generally with the serious drawback of irregular attendance. The teacher is doing his work, but the schools are not fulfilling their mission. A few cases of this kind may occur in any large district, but that so many as thirty-five schools must be excused for shortcomings on account of wretched attendance is deplorable. The closer settlement of the colony, the extension of the dairying industry, and the greater struggle for existence seem to be the causes operating in the direction of preventing parents from making sacrifices for their children's education which were more in evidence years ago. Many a cow-bail is now a factory, in which children work long hours outside their ordinary school hours, by which early factory work their energies for mental work are seriously impaired.

The commendable state of our largest schools is still the mainstay of the whole fabric. All of them are in an improving condition; and, had it not been for the retention of a few weak class-teachers, the improvement would have been still more marked in two of them. The schools of the district generally are doing fairly good and conscientious work; and, although from want of capacity or experience some teachers wholly or partially fail, it is seldom from inattention to duty. At the same time it is evident that an immense gain would accrue to the education system if the personal influence of the teachers were taken more into account in the making of appointments. I am pleased to find the Board is already recognising this by a late instruction to Inspectors to advise them in the selection of pupil-teacher candidates. Not only would any school be strengthened by the appointment of the best candidate for any vacancy, but nearly all our unpleasant work as Inspectors would be spared us. Trouble arises in dealing with the teacher who is deficient in instinct and tact, and not in advising one who quickly falls into harness, and is ever willing to put out his strength when a little direction is given him.

We are pleased to report favourably of much of the better form of class-work, the aim of which is to develop the intelligence rather than to crowd the memory of the pupil. We should like to see more use made of a second class-book in teaching reading, and we think all promotions should be made by tests from seen and unseen narrative.

The teaching of writing is not giving full satisfaction, for we still find an increased tendency on the part of pupils learning an upright or nearly vertical style to slope the letters to the left; and in other schools writing is reported on as the weakest subject taught. The style of handwriting in some city schools does not meet with the approval of the mercantile community, and it is apparently desirable, in the interests of business, to make some modification of existing styles. As the choice of copy-books is left to each headmaster, we shall be glad to confer with head teachers on this matter at our next visit.

Our inspection reports show that in certain schools too much time is allotted to arithmetic. In nearly all schools greater simplicity of treatment seems desirable; and, since teachers have a free hand in the sketching of a scheme of work, I feel sure that, by increasing the mental work and by curtailing the paper-work to useful processes by ready methods, and to the explanations of those methods, a far better course of instruction can be arrived at. In this subject above all others there still is room for real improvement in practical education and scope for originality of teaching. It is readiness and simplicity of method, and not multiplicity of rules and processes, which should be our aim, and this fact is much lost sight of even by able teachers.

Geography, as now taught in some schools, calls for a few remarks. There is too much dependence on the new text-books and too little description by the teacher. Geographical readers save the teacher much descriptive effort, and the illustrations make the instruction realistic. In