

appreciated, had a marked effect upon the attendance, and the regularity suffered very much in the earlier months of the year. The disappearance of sickness from the schools is noticeable in the attendance during the third quarter, and I anticipate that marked improvement in the average regularity will take place during the present year. Regularity at school is closely connected with efficiency, and as the school conditions improve in outlying districts a higher degree of regularity may be expected. The parents who keep their children at home from selfishness, or mere indifference, are becoming fewer and fewer, for competition in every walk of life is teaching even the careless parents the value of a "bit of learning" for the children. Compared with the average roll for the year, the regularity shows that eighty-three out of every hundred children were present at school each time the schools were opened—in other words, seventeen out of every hundred children who nominally were attending the Board schools were absent throughout the year. In 1899 the regularity was 81·7 per cent. of the roll, and in 1898 it was 85 per cent. In England the regularity in 1899 was 81·66 per cent., but that of the standard children was 87·79 per cent. It would be a great convenience, as pointed out by me some years ago, if the Central Department were to arrange for keeping the returns of the preparatory classes separate from those of the Standards, as the attendance of young children in the country is necessarily low, and the regularity of the seniors appears worse than it actually is. The small school at Papakura has the best attendance in the district. Of forty-one pupils attending, nine made full attendances in 1898, and eleven last year, and eighteen others each made over four hundred attendances.

The number of children belonging to the schools at the end of the year, as shown on the quarterly returns of attendance, was 8,062, whilst 8,021 are shown on the schedules as belonging at the time of my examinations. The average weekly roll in the schools for the whole year was 8,013, or only eight below my own returns. This is a testimony in itself of the care bestowed by the teachers upon registration.

The new regulations dealing with school examinations came into operation at the beginning of last year, and the results, as shown in the accompanying tabulation of presentations and progress, are mainly those of the teachers themselves. In the examination of the schools I have made but little variation in my mode of testing the children, as it seemed to me of the highest moment, as well for the teachers as the children, that there should be no lowering of the requirements for promotion from one class to another. My aim was not to test for promotion, but rather to discover intelligence and power among the pupils. Processes and methods of instruction have been observed and tested, and it is on these aspects of school work that my judgment has been mainly based in estimating the progress of a school and the preparedness of the children for promotion. As a general rule, cards have been discontinued in setting tests for the pupils, and the method adopted has enabled me to test the knowledge of rules by applying them to the solution of the simplest requirements of every-day life. Geography, history, and grammar were tested orally and on paper, but in no two schools were similar tests given. The strong and weak aspects of preparation were discovered in this way, and it is encouraging to state that, on the whole, the results were good.

A new plan of testing composition has been adopted in Standard VI., and sometimes in Standard V. All pupils have attempted an original story, adventure, fairy-tale, or other; at the same time they had to work in and underline fifteen words selected by me at random from the reading-book in use. A test of this kind is of great importance to the children, as self-reliance is demanded, the imaginative faculty is strengthened, adaptation to taste is fostered, whilst it brings out the weak and strong characteristics of the mind of each pupil.

The following tabulation gives in summary form the complete returns of presentations, &c., for the year, and for comparison the results of the previous year are also added:—

Classes.	Presented.		Examined.		Absent.		Failed.		Passed.		Percentage of Passes in		Ages.	
	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.
Above Standard VI.	60	51	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	406	337	403	334	3	3	110	100	293	234	72·7	72·1	14·0	14·0
" V. ...	640	633	627	614	13	19	98	138	529	476	84·3	77·3	13·2	13·2
" IV. ...	947	875	928	832	22	43	121	143	804	689	86·9	82·3	12·3	12·4
" III. ...	1,121	1,081	1,064	1,054	57	31	150	138	914	912	85·9	87·2	11·2	11·3
" II. ...	1,067	1,090	1,017	1,070	50	20	101	77	916	993	90·0	92·7	10·2	10·1
" I. ...	1,061	1,115	997	1,109	74	6	86	92	911	1,017	92·3	92·2	8·9	8·11
Preparatory ...	2,719	2,501	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	8,021	7,683	5,033	5,009	219	122	666	688	4,376	4,321	86·9	86·5	11·7	11·11
Catholic schools ...	567	686	530	481	37	7	145	75	422	396	...	...	...	...
Preparatory ...	311													
	878													

With a single exception, I have accepted the pass promotions made by teachers in every school. Sometimes my examination has discovered a strong or a weak pupil not shown in the schedules, but it must be said to the credit of teachers that the increased responsibility thrown upon them