

1901.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:
REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.—1B, 1900.]

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Auckland, 2nd March, 1901.

I have the honour to submit the usual annual report for the year 1900. At the close of the year there were 381 schools in operation, being three more than at the close of last year. Several small schools have been discontinued in the course of the year. All those in operation throughout the year have been examined. Three opened after the examination of the neighbouring schools, and situated in remote parts of the district, were not examined. The inspection has been almost completely overtaken. Two schools that were visited (one of them twice) were found closed, and three remote newly opened schools were not inspected.

In addition to the public schools, twenty-four Roman Catholic diocesan schools were inspected and examined, and the two industrial schools, as well as the Parnell Orphan Home, were examined.

The usual pupil-teacher and scholarship examinations were also conducted. Owing to the growing number of examinees these examinations take up a large amount of time year by year.

The following table shows in summary the examination results of the public schools for the past year. With very few exceptions, the passes in Standards I. to V. were determined by the head teachers, whilst those in Standard VI. were determined by the Inspectors :—

Classes.	Roll Number.	Examined.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	390	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	1,687	1,645	1,173	14 1
" V. ...	2,552	2,475	2,112	13 2
" IV. ...	3,679	3,568	3,034	12 0
" III. ...	3,936	3,811	3,337	10 9
" II. ...	3,493	3,409	3,098	10 0
" I. ...	3,292	3,228	3,039	9 1
Preparatory ...	9,671	...	...	...
Totals ...	28,700	18,136	15,793	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

At the Roman Catholic diocesan schools the roll-number was 1,855; 1,176 were examined, and 538 passed in one or other of the Standards.

The public schools show for the year an increase of 129 in the roll-number, of 400 in the number examined, and of 1,297 in the number of pupils who passed one or other of the Standards.

Approximately 87 per cent. of the pupils examined in Standards passed or secured promotion into a higher class. In Standards I. to V. the passing is somewhat easier under the new regulations than under the old, while in Standard VI. it has become more difficult.

The average age at which Standard VI. has been passed has risen two months, but even then it is only eleven months above the age at which Standard V. was passed last year. In Standards IV., III., and II. the average age of passing has gone down three months, five months, and two months respectively. In Standard I. there has been a rise of two months, an advance that was inevitable, as last year no fewer than 2,115 pupils in the preparatory classes were over

eight years of age. A large number of our pupils enter school at so late an age that it is impossible that they could pass Standard I. before they are nine. This is not, in my opinion, a very serious matter, as the age at which Standard VI. is passed is already low enough for entering on the duties of a life's career.

The existing regulations for the inspection and examination of the public schools came into force at the beginning of 1900. Under them head teachers enjoy almost complete freedom in the classification and promotion of their pupils, but their arrangements in these respects are subject to the criticism and in extreme cases to the correction of the Inspectors. In very few cases has it been thought necessary for the Inspectors to determine passes and promotions, this course having been adopted mainly in schools taught by teachers not yet possessed of full certificates. On the whole, head teachers have shown themselves worthy of the trust now reposed in them, and have determined the passes and promotions in the classes below Standard VI. with a careful judgment and an honesty of purpose that promise well for the future. In some few country schools a proficiency in reading below what the regulations regard as indispensable for promotion has been accepted, and writing has here and there been too leniently judged, but in the overwhelming majority of cases the promotions granted have been fully deserved.

Throughout the year the Inspectors have encouraged head teachers to take account, as far as possible, of their periodical examinations in determining promotions. Every pupil should be made to understand that satisfactory progress during each quarter is necessary for passing on into a higher class. By laying stress on the need of steady progress, and its concomitant—regular attendance—head teachers should now be able to apply a constant and powerful stimulus to good attendance and steady application. With wise management this incentive may easily be made an important aid to progress.

The general improvement in the school work noted in last year's report has been maintained during the present year. The condition of the great majority of the public schools is at least satisfactory, and in something like half their number it is creditable. A good many of the larger schools are in a high state of efficiency.

An annual stock-taking discloses tendencies in the matter of progress rather than pronounced results, for the clear recognition of which a wider survey is necessary. Such a survey is, in a large measure, presented in Mr. Purdie's report to me, from which I make a few extracts. "On the whole," he says, "I was favourably impressed with the quality of the work done in the schools (of the northern district), and with the zeal of the teachers. Notwithstanding sundry grave disadvantages" (which Mr. Purdie enumerates) "a great majority of the schools were in a satisfactory condition. Indeed, in many directions considerable improvement has, in my opinion, taken place in recent years. Composition, spelling, reading, geography, science, and drawing seem to me to be both better taught and better learned than they were fifteen or sixteen years ago, when I was in charge of a small country school in the north. The teaching of the preparatory classes is incomparably better. On the other hand, arithmetic and grammar seem to me somewhat deteriorated; the deterioration is possibly more apparent than real, since it must be remembered that the average age at which pupils pass their standards has steadily decreased for some years past. In addition to the schools of the northern district, I examined most of the pass-subjects in the Auckland City schools this year. If a somewhat lengthy experience in two of these schools several years ago qualifies me to institute a comparison, I should say that they are very much improved in almost all directions, but particularly in discipline and in drill, and in the teaching of the preparatory classes." These impressions of Mr. Purdie's are well worthy of record, and his long and varied experience as a teacher lends no small weight to his opinions.

In last year's report I indicated certain specific causes that appeared to me to be retarding progress. The causes mentioned are not peculiar to the Auckland District, nor to New Zealand, but are perhaps equally active in more advanced countries, as every one who studies the evidence of specialists in the education of to-day is aware. The Inspectors have for years recognised their gravity, and have been endeavouring to combat them as far as lies in their power. The low ideal of education that was complained of can be best removed by teachers seeing and coming into intimate contact with a better type of teaching. For affording this experience we have at present few, indeed almost no facilities. The provision of a good model school of small size, to which inexperienced and backward teachers could resort for improvement and inspiration, would alone do much to remove this defect. In most directions the establishment of a training-college for young teachers should do more. Such an institution is one of our urgent needs, and its provision cannot be too forcibly urged on the notice of the Minister. For the cost of this institution should be met by the Education Department, and should not be a tax on the Board's income from capitation payments, which were designed to meet nothing more than the charge of salaries and current expenses of maintenance.

As regards methods of teaching, much may be learned from the study of the newer and fuller text-books on school method that are finding their way into the hands of all teachers who are anxious to march with the times. Such *vade mecum*s as Gladman's and Farnie's little works on school method may suffice to push a teacher through the E certificate examination, but they will give him little idea of the methods and aims of the most advanced and thoughtful teachers of our time. It is impossible that books planned on so small a scale could do so. The Departmental examinations in school method and management should do more to secure improvement in this direction than they now do. They lay far too much stress on time-tables, registration, and such mechanical arrangements. To have high aims in teaching, to adapt their methods to the attainment of these aims, and to have a good knowledge of the principles on which class-government reposes are the chief things we should demand of young teachers. Some practical experience of teaching will soon make them so familiar with the conditions of their sphere of work that the

preparation of time-tables suitable to their circumstances will be no difficult task. If the Department instituted a higher or honours diploma for school method and management it would provide a great stimulus to improvement. As things now stand, no teacher can offer evidence of anything but the lowest equipment in this direction.

The teacher's neglect of adequate preparation for treating the lessons of the day, and of the free use of the blackboard for enforcing explanations and illustrations, and for securing necessary revision, is a matter that can be remedied mainly by pointing out the need and value of these aids to efficient teaching. Their utility is becoming more generally recognised, and only those wedded to a routine, or to some degree indifferent to the best training of their pupils, seriously undervalue them. Too much stress cannot be laid on the need and value of a skilful training in oral answering. Our largest schools have not succeeded in making any very notable improvement in this direction, and one doubts whether their head teachers are sufficiently in earnest about this important matter. A much more satisfactory training is given in a number of the smaller schools. Mr. Grierson, who takes a keen interest in this subject, says, "In the majority of the country schools steady improvement has been made in the quality of the oral answering, and it is now a rare occurrence to find a school in which the pupils have to be exhorted to 'speak out.' In these two points marked and most pleasing advance has been made during the past few years, and is still going on. In the larger suburban schools" (several of which Mr. Grierson examined in the orally answered subjects) "oral answers received from pupils in Standard IV. and upwards were wanting in fullness. Short answers to questions on minute points were readily forthcoming, but full and thoughtful answers showing a grasp of the subject in hand were seldom given." The other Inspectors do not touch upon this topic, which I consider one of the most important that can come under an Inspector's review.

In the larger schools in all parts of the district reading is in general satisfactorily and in some cases well taught. My colleagues show considerable divergence of opinion as to the success with which this and some other subjects of instruction are taught in the rural schools. Of those in the north central district Mr. Mulgan says, "The greater number of the schools I examined failed to show a satisfactory record in this subject." Mr. Grierson (southern and Wairoa districts) finds it "satisfactory on the whole; generally ready, fluent, and accurate." Of the northern district Mr. Purdie says, "In most schools reading ranged from fair to good; in very few cases was it unsatisfactory." In the south-eastern district Mr. Goodwin was "on the whole satisfied with the reading of classes S1 to S4. In Standard V. and Standard VI., though in most cases passable, it was hardly as ready and fluent as it might have been." "In about a third of the schools" examined by Mr. Crowe (south central district), he "found the reading not satisfactory in one or more classes." I have myself seen fewer of the smaller schools than my colleagues, but in those I examined reading was always fair, usually satisfactory, and in some cases good. In most of these small schools some of the pupils of most of the classes were backward, but few classes were destitute of satisfactory or good readers.

The rarity of expressive reading is noted by most of the Inspectors, and this is no doubt a prevalent, though hardly a very weighty, defect. Rhetorical reading appears to many of the young artificial and affected, and much of the difficulty in cultivating a finer style is due to the prevalence and force of this sentiment. Mr. Grierson attributes the want of expression in reading "to the very large amount of unnecessary pattern reading given by most teachers, which not only destroys all originality, but wastes a large part of the already inadequate time available for reading-lessons." He even suggests the forbidding of the simultaneous imitation of pattern reading. Simultaneous reading after a pattern, like any other method, may be badly used, and may also be used when it is out of place. But where well handled I consider it a valuable method for correcting a sing-song or other confirmed bad style in reading, as well as wherever facility of utterance (speech-training) and readiness in recognising the words of the text (eye-training) have to be specially cultivated. Outside these two spheres this method is of little service, and should be sparingly used. It is certainly of little use in refining the sensibility of the ear, which plays the chief rôle in the acquisition of an expressive style of reading.

The pupils of Standard VI. were all tested in the reading of a suitable passage not previously seen, and met the test for the most part with satisfactory success. This ordeal revealed a defect, of which teachers should take note: I refer to a considerable uncertainty in recognising the syllables of and pronouncing words quite new to the pupils. In such circumstances the misplacing of an accent is excusable enough, but there should be no difficulty in recognising the syllables, and giving the grouped letters their normal sounds. The intelligent teaching of the new words met with in the daily recurring new lessons should impart a more thorough training in this.

The comprehension of the language and matter of the reading-lessons receives increasing attention, and continues to improve. In dealing with this the older pupils should be called on to put forth systematically native and original effort. They should be trained to use dictionaries, as well as to undertake careful preparatory study of all new reading-lessons, either at home or at school. The daily brief but effective scrutiny of this preparatory study does not as yet receive the universal attention it deserves and would repay.

Spelling and dictation are, on the whole, well taught, serious weakness being confined to the smaller schools, at which irregular attendance is prevalent. Outside the special dictation exercises, mistakes in the spelling of what ought to be familiar words are still more frequent than seems consistent with the high quality of the special tests. Much of this blundering must be set down to carelessness, but it does not speak well for the habitual checking and correction of ordinary written exercises that such carelessness should be noted by the Inspectors year after year. One seldom sees "grammer," but mistakes in the placing of possessive apostrophes and in the spelling of familiar grammatical terms are by no means unusual. More effective ways of correcting such blunders need to be applied.

In the larger schools writing is in general much better than in the smaller, and in the former it is usually satisfactory, though not often good. "The writing in the south-east district," Mr. Goodwin says, "was certainly better than what I have reported on in previous years. The use of the new copy-books will have a good effect if pains is taken to have the head-lines carefully imitated." Mr. Crowe states that improvement is not as rapid as he had expected. Teachers, he says, do not insist on sufficiently close imitation of the copy, being satisfied if the work is neat; moreover, they are too indifferent to the position in which pupils sit when writing. In most of his schools Mr. Purdie finds the writing at least very fair. Mr. Grierson found it good in a large number of schools, and satisfactory in most; and he adds, "I never meet with poor writing in a well-taught school." Mr. Mulgan thinks "better work can be done in this subject," and that the way to secure it is "to insist on good writing in all the written work submitted, and not in the copy-books alone"—which is most true. In most schools, he thinks, we must look for improvement to more efficient correction and better discipline. The need for firmer discipline as a condition of general improvement in writing is really the crux of the matter. In many cases directions for holding the pen and for sitting in a proper position are given and reiterated, but they are not carried out. And I am convinced that many teachers have no real faith in the value and importance of such directions. On their value all special teachers of writing are, I believe, agreed; and persons who are not specialists may very well accept what the specialists recommend, and carry out their directions heartily and thoroughly. Much of the copy-book writing we see is too slow. In the smaller schools at least there is no very urgent reason for keeping all writing the same exercise at the same time. The better writers should be encouraged to write more than they do now. In few schools are more than two copy-books filled in a year. This seems to me to afford insufficient practice, even when other forms of careful writing are taken into account. I am of opinion that the writing in the copy-books now in use is too large.*

The teaching of drawing is in general very satisfactory, except the geometrical problems set for Standards IV. and V. In many of the larger schools the drawing on slates was good.

In arithmetic the tests applied in the higher classes were somewhat easier than heretofore, especially in Standard VI., and they were generally better answered. In the larger schools a great deal of good work was met with. In Mr. Goodwin's district "the instruction in this subject has much improved; it is more intelligent, more scientific, and less empirical than formerly." Mr. Crowe noticed weakness in Standard V., some improvement in Standard VI., and good work elsewhere. "In most of the schools" (in Mr. Mulgan's district) "arithmetic was well done—indeed, in none was it poor; weakness appeared most frequently in Standard V. and Standard VI." He observes that greater power in dealing with problems needs to be cultivated; these form the best if not the only test of intelligent teaching. The setting out of the work has not always satisfied him. Mr. Grierson found the subject generally satisfactory, and nearly always carefully set out. Mr. Purdie's experience is different, as might be expected from the circumstances of the northern district; he finds that "in most of the schools the pupils did their arithmetic very fairly." Mental arithmetic I have generally found to be satisfactory, and often good, but several of the Inspectors consider it a weak subject in their country schools.

The treatment of composition by the pupils continues to show improvement. "In most schools," Mr. Purdie observes, "composition was much better than I had expected to find it. The pupils, on the whole, seemed able to deal with the subjects in a clear and comprehensive manner. Most of the errors noticed by me were to some extent avoidable, and even careless. Omissions of stops and misspelling of easy words were the faults most frequently met with." Mr. Crowe does not find any noticeable improvement here. Mr. Goodwin "has not had to record many failures in composition, and thinks that, on the whole, better work is now being done." Exercises otherwise creditable showed, however, but little command of language. He finds the best exercises come from pupils who read at home for their amusement. "This habit should be encouraged; nothing else will, in my opinion, so surely give freedom of style and an enlarged vocabulary." Mr. Mulgan says, "A good deal of creditable work was done in this subject, especially in Standards IV. and V. The exercises of Standard VI. were not so satisfactory as those from the next lower class." Mr. Grierson points out that too large a proportion of the composition exercises are done on slates, and consequently imperfectly corrected. This is an arrangement that one has frequent occasion to complain of. In most schools it is absolutely necessary to correct all the longer composition exercises outside school hours if good results are to be obtained. It is highly desirable that one composition exercise a week should be written in an exercise-book or on sheets of paper, which should be kept in the school. Mr. Grierson would even like to see this made compulsory. In the higher classes pupils should be trained to produce longer exercises. In my experience, more pupils in Standard VI. fail from poverty of matter and thought than from all other causes combined. In writing about familiar subjects there is a tendency to pass over obvious or commonplace considerations that might appropriately form the bulk of the exercise.

Geography is now a pass-subject only in Standard VI. In that class the political geography prescribed was satisfactorily known, but the mathematical and physical sections have not, as a rule, been efficiently taught. It is, however, very difficult for young persons to give clear explanations of the causes of the seasons, and such phenomena, owing to their complicated nature, and I believe that the teaching here is not so barren as written answers would lead us to suppose. As to the subject generally, the best work was found in some of the smaller schools. In the larger ones the use, for the first time, of an oral examination in Standards III. to V. has placed the pupils at some disadvantage. While the positions of places on the map were for the most part readily shown, there was difficulty in getting the children to tell where they were and what they had

* Where the Archimedean pen-holders are in use shoulder-nibs should be rejected. They cause the point of the pen to be too far in front of the point where the holder is grasped in the hand.

learned about them. Exercises of this kind should form an important part of class-teaching, and they will no doubt be better dealt with in future. In the lower classes an effort is being made to foster a fuller and more realistic study of the features of the district familiar to the children as a basis for map-interpretation; also to get the schools provided with an illustrated school geography as a work of reference, the instructive relief maps of which should greatly aid in realising the dominant physical features of the continents (Herbertson and Frye's "Illustrated School Geography").

Little, if any, improvement can be recorded in the teaching of grammar. The work of Standards III. and IV. is still better than that of Standards V. and VI., being both more thorough and more intelligent. The inflections prescribed for Standard IV. are, however, often poorly known. Mr. Goodwin speaks favourably of the work of Standard V., but in both Standard V. and Standard VI. the Inspectors generally are greatly disappointed with the state of the teaching. Many pupils—perhaps a fourth of the whole—blunder grossly in the parts of speech. In Standards VI. analysis is rarely well taught, and is often unsatisfactory. The functions of the clauses are frequently ignored, and when specified are too often incorrectly described. The work, however, is extraordinarily unequal, and good exercises are regularly received from a few pupils when the great majority of their class-fellows give in moderate or inferior ones. Too much dependence seems to be placed on oral teaching in this subject. Written exercises would be more serviceable; they are comparatively easy of correction by the pupils; and they would throw a much clearer light on the work of the pupils and teachers. No doubt the failure to teach this subject more efficiently is partly due to want of time, but I think the flaccid discipline, referred to in connection with writing, is largely accountable for the condition of the instruction. Only a small number of the pupils are got to apply themselves to the study. Most dislike it and neglect it. Government by coaxing is not strong enough to counterbalance the distaste for this very precise and valuable vehicle of mental discipline.

"The work done in history," says Mr. Goodwin, "continues to be much the same as I have found it in former years. In too many cases the pupils have a dim and unintelligent idea of the meaning and scope of the lessons they have received. There are exceptions to this, but I am convinced that history as it is now presented to the children is of little use to them." Mr. Purdie says, "In most of the schools (northern district) history is only fairly known, and gives evidence of having been very meagre in scope and wanting in comprehensiveness. Dates and bare facts were well known, but the dependence of one event upon another was not sufficiently recognised." Mr. Mulgan finds the teaching most efficient in Standard III., with a falling-off as you go higher. In the larger schools, however, history is more broadly and more successfully taught than would appear from these estimates, founded mainly on experience of rural and smaller schools. Most of our pupils are too immature to be able to derive much profit from the study of history. Purely oral teaching, too, is not a very effective way of dealing with it; it is difficult to impart a sufficiently thorough knowledge in this way. On the whole, I think the time devoted to the lessons on it is not badly spent, though of accurate knowledge little may be gained. We should remember, too, that Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Purdie expect more than teachers are required to give, for they are told in the regulations that "pupils will not be expected to trace the remote causes, or even to remember the proximate causes, of great events." Fortunately most teachers do more than is here laid down. A grave fault in the teaching is inaccuracy as to the chronological order of events, and even in dates. Half-learned dates are merely a mental encumbrance.

The teaching of elementary science shows very fair improvement. A large number of schools have now a sufficient provision of apparatus, and it is generally turned to satisfactory account in the teaching. In several of the larger schools good work is being done in this subject, the pupils being usually able to describe the more important experiments shown, often to sketch the apparatus on the blackboard, and to explain the changes observed. Where apparatus is wanting or deficient the value of the work is small. Recognising the unprofitable nature of dogmatic teaching of science, Mr. Mulgan wisely advises those who have no adequate provision of purchased apparatus to take up mainly topics that lend themselves to simple experiment or demonstration, and to teach these thoroughly. The educative result would in this way be enhanced. He adds that very few schools now take the course of agricultural science. This is to be regretted. In the larger centres and villages the general science course seems more suitable, but in the most rural schools the agricultural course is to be preferred.

Several of the Inspectors consider that object-lessons are still treated too much as information lessons. To remedy this old-standing failing I have asked all teachers to provide themselves with Murche's "Object-lessons in Elementary Science," one of the best existing text-books on object-lessons. As regards both aims and methods, these books mark a decided advance, and their influence may be expected to check the temptation "to stray along the alluring path of lecturing on the wonderful," to which, Mr. Mulgan finds, many teachers succumb.

Recitation is seldom well taught, though it is generally satisfactory. I do not consider the teaching of sewing very efficient; the pupils are too often unprovided with thimbles and with needles of suitable sizes, and are allowed to work in improper ways. I have found many older girls, who have been taught sewing for years, pushing the needle into the cloth without any use of the thimble. The finished samples submitted at examination are usually well worked, in spite of these faults of method, which have sprung up through lack of proper supervision by the teachers in charge. Owing to the large size of the classes they find it difficult to move round regularly among the workers, and allow themselves to be too closely occupied with fixing work at isolated tables. Most of this fixing should be done by the pupils themselves, as the regulations direct.

Class singing is good in a number of the larger schools, and fair in most of those where it is taught. But ability to read simple passages, even in the tonic sol-fa notation, is rare, and is too

little cultivated. I do not think that a much better training in singing can be secured unless more time is available for the teaching of it. At present the time needed cannot be found. Teachers would get much help in dealing with this subject from Curwen's "Code Tests in Singing," which costs a few pence. It is a pity that the song-books in use by classes do not show the melodies in both notations. Outside infant departments, singing is rarely heard, except when the singing-lesson is due. Its effect in brightening school life, and in affording a welcome relief from severer studies, is little appreciated in our schools.

The new regulations of January, 1900, have made no change in the too heavy course of study now prescribed for the public schools. A decided lightening of it must be made before we can look for any great improvement in such subjects as science, grammar, geography, and singing. There is, I am happy to say, much likelihood of such relief being afforded soon.

By the flaccid discipline, to which reference has been made above, I mean the want of a sufficiently strong hold on the inclinations and application of the pupils. The exercise of this control is a refined point in discipline, but it is one of the first importance. This failing is partly traceable to the pupil-teacher system, which, in spite of the willing and worthy service most pupil-teachers render, has inevitable disadvantages in this and other directions. In the broader and more common sense of the term, the discipline of the schools is almost uniformly satisfactory, and is often good, and the order is nearly always good.

In many schools daily home-written exercises are still prescribed. These might very well be confined to one composition exercise a week. On the average the writing of work done at home is distinctly below the level of similar work done in school. There is no need for setting arithmetic exercises as home-work, and I should be glad to see the practice abolished. Home preparation can best deal with spelling, the study of the reading-lesson, recitation, geography, and the preparation of matter for on-coming composition exercises. I should like to see more specimens of the work done in school entered in exercise-books in such subjects as dictation and spelling, explanation of difficult words and phrases, composition, &c.

The need of preparation by teachers for the smart, economical, and intelligent handling of lessons has been referred to above. More system in dealing with this would save them a great deal of time and trouble. Suitable series of subjects for composition exercises could easily be made out, that with occasional revisal or enlargement would serve for years. Of equal and permanent service would be a series of simple exercises on the spelling of possessive cases, irregular plurals, and such words as "there," "their," "to," "too," "were," "where," &c., in all of which even senior pupils continue to make blunders. If entered in a note-book, these exercises could be dictated by a pupil or read out by the teacher frequently in the course of the year, and the systematic practice in dealing with such pitfalls could not fail to be beneficial. The spelling of the names of familiar objects and of things connected with the household, the garden, and every-day life, words which may not occur in ordinary reading-books, might well be taught from lists entered in a note-book for this purpose. Such words as "bouquet," "onion," "mattress," "rhubarb," "mignonette," "mantelpiece," "chandelier," and many more might be so treated.

In teaching composition similar arrangements of the highest utility could be easily made. In a MS. book could be entered under suitable headings numerous good instances, gathered from the work of the pupils, of such matters as—(a) Improper division of sentences, (b) mistakes in the syntax of agreement, (c) mistakes in the syntax of government, (d) errors in the reference of pronouns, (e) confusion of statement, (f) sprawling sentences surcharged with "and," "as," "so." In this way a teacher could soon accumulate splendid material for special detailed lessons on any of these points. Such full and detailed study of each type of mistake or defect would be vastly more profitable than the disconnected and casual notice taken of them during the correction of the varied errors that crop up in an ordinary composition exercise. Sets of sentences suitable for parsing and for analysis at the various stages of progress, and sets of short sentences fitted for combination into longer ones or for transformations, might also be got ready in a permanent form for use in school, either by entering them in a note-book or by having them marked off in a helpful text-book.

Systematic preparations of the kinds just described would not only be of great service in making the teaching more efficient, but would economize the teacher's time, and in the end save him a great deal of trouble. When I have inquired for evidence of preparation of this sort I have very rarely found anything of the kind, and I believe that many teachers pick out passages for parsing, for analysis, and so on, almost at random and on the spur of the moment. So long as this continues, a very considerable leakage of efficiency must result.

Though, as I think, many of our teachers are justly liable to the strictures here passed, the Inspectors can yet say, with Mr. Mulgan, that a great majority of the teachers in the service of the Board are hardworking and capable, and are animated by an earnest desire to do justice to the positions they fill, and faithfully to discharge their responsible and onerous duties.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Auckland Education Board.

D. PETRIE, M.A., Chief Inspector.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Board of Education, New Plymouth, 5th April, 1901.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ending 31st December, 1900.

At the close of the year sixty-five schools were open, all of which, with the exception of the newly opened schools at Tahora and Pohokura, were examined.

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

Classes.				Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	
							Yrs.	mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	37	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	148	146	113	14	4
" V.	...	...	...	315	302	220	13	7
" IV.	...	...	...	535	506	389	12	7
" III.	...	...	...	592	571	452	11	8
" II.	...	...	...	597	579	459	10	4
" I.	...	...	...	536	515	440	9	2
Preparatory	...	...	...	1,357	...	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	4,117	2,619	2,073	11	11*

* Mean of average age.

These figures do not vary to any great extent from those of last year. In the average ages, however, there is a marked decrease, and the mean of the average age is lower by two months. The number of absentees is large. It is desirable that all pupils on the roll should be present, for even if they have not been long at the school the Inspector desires to ascertain that satisfactory progress has been made. I consider that a large number of absentees without apparent satisfactory cause does not redound to the credit of a school.

I regret that, as in the previous year, owing to lack of time, all schools were not inspected, though some of those not formally reported upon were visited, and some schools were visited more than once. This is to be regretted, for at inspection effective direction and assistance can be given more readily than at the examination.

In my previous reports I have fully discussed the subjects of the syllabus, and have little of a general character to add to what has been already written. I find it much more productive of good results to issue circulars dealing with the several subjects in greater detail than is advisable or convenient in a general report. These contain notes and suggestions on methods, and, while not intended to cramp or limit individuality in instruction, are found beneficial by many teachers. To some of the subjects, however, I desire to draw brief attention.

Reading is now a subject in which the pupil must pass to obtain the standard certificate, and this has induced teachers to study the subject more closely, and to give more attention to the principles and essentials of good reading. As a consequence, there has been a steady improvement in the quality, and, except in a few schools where the reading has always been inferior, one seldom finds it necessary to fail a child for reading only. On the whole, therefore, this apparently severe regulation has borne good fruit. One sometimes finds that the correct pronunciation of words is still considered the chief essential of reading, and that during the lessons the only errors corrected are those in pronunciation. This, however, is only one essential of reading, and, while it must not be neglected, in a sense it may be termed mechanical, for it can be found from a dictionary even after the pupils leave school; whereas correct modulation, inflexion, phrasing, and so on, being not readily acquired after school-life, must be taught, and must become in a measure matters of habit. I see no reason why the terms "modulation," "phrasing," &c., should not be known and understood by the pupils. The teacher could then indicate the *character* of the error made, and the pupil should endeavour to make the correction without further assistance. This is in accordance with one of the first principles of teaching, that "the pupil should be told only so much as will lead him to discover the truth for himself." This method also leads to a more intelligent comprehension of the passage, for to correct the error the pupil must endeavour to discover the writer's meaning, and in some measure must enter into his feelings. The wider course of reading now prescribed, and the Board's encouragement of school libraries, will do much to elevate the reading, to foster a taste for literature, and to increase the knowledge and intelligence of the pupils. Though not generally tried, my last year's suggestion—that during the reading-lessons the best readers should be allowed to read silently some selected work—has been adopted in a few instances, and I have noticed a marked improvement in the intelligence of the general reading. It should be noted that only the best readers should be allowed to bring books; this would encourage the weaker pupils to improve, and thus join the more favoured friends.

Very often the foundation of bad reading is laid in the preparatory classes. While the experienced teacher of a large school places one of the best of his staff in charge of the infant department, the inexperienced teacher looks upon it as "only the preparatory classes," and does not take the trouble to see that the work, though elementary, proceeds upon the best lines. Indeed, it is because of the inefficient instruction of the lower infants that the work in Standards I. and II. is made laborious. So strongly endowed with the imitative faculty are the infants, and so greatly interested are they in their work, that their ideas become deeply rooted. If they are allowed to read monotonously, monotony is to them essential to reading, and this idea once implanted is difficult to eradicate. Much to the surprise of a teacher who has asked me to test the reading in Standards I. and II., as it did not appear satisfactory, I have required

a lesson to be taught to the upper infants, and in nine cases out of ten here would be found the source of the trouble.

Spelling in the special tests is, as a rule, satisfactory, but in composition, geography, &c., continues to be poor. This points to neglect of good methods of instruction, and to neglect of the blackboard and recapitulation when new words are being taught in the general work. Lack of thoroughness in correcting the written work tends to produce the same result. To the complaint that pupils cannot learn spelling I give little credence, for I think that the percentage of children who cannot learn spelling is little, if at all, greater than the percentage of children who are blind or who are deaf. Correct spelling is acquired by visual impressions, or by what may be termed the visual memory, and unless this be deficient there is no reason why, under proper methods of instruction, it cannot be developed in the same way as the faculties. Indeed, incapable teaching rather than visual deficiency should be charged with the responsibility for the inferior spelling.

Writing is generally satisfactory, and the habits of neatness and tidy arrangement of work acquired by most pupils constitute an invaluable training which should be of the greatest use. In some schools the letters are taught as a whole, and not by means of their elements. This is, I think, a mistake, for there can be no doubt that, whichever be the system of writing adopted, the Mulhauser method of teaching, in a more or less modified form, should be employed.

In arithmetic the methods show steady improvement. Accuracy, as tested by the cards, is much the same as in previous years. Mental arithmetic, however, is far from satisfactory. When taking oral lessons I frequently find that pupils in, say Standard III. are quite unable mentally to reduce pence to shillings, shillings to pounds, and so on, and when doing written work perform such operations laboriously on the slates. Much time is thus wasted, and dexterity in dealing with quantities is not acquired. Special lessons on short methods are necessary, but facility in mental calculation should be acquired chiefly in the ordinary school work. Many valuable exercises might be framed on the work of the Standard, or of a lower Standard, to enable the various kinds of problems and processes to be rapidly tested or recapitulated.

Composition, though showing progress, is probably the "pass" subject that leaves the greatest room for improvement, and, though teachers are giving greater attention and care to it, improvement is but slow. As I have previously stated, it is a subject beset with the greatest difficulties. The generally satisfactory character of the oral work eradicates the simpler colloquial errors before composition becomes a subject for examination, and consequently more time can be given to the study of the structure of sentences. Composition is becoming less subordinate to grammar, the tendency being to teach only so much grammar as will serve to explain the principles of composition, for committing to memory rules of syntax is not found to be a royal road to a knowledge of the structure of sentences.

Science gives less satisfaction than any other subject, and practically no progress is being made, the teaching being only an approximation to what it should be. The knowledge acquired is of an empirical character, observation and experiment being displaced by "telling" and "learning-off," thus rendering science unscientific, and reducing to drudgery what can be made one of the most fascinating and educative subjects of the school course. Two causes tend to produce this result—(1) Lack of knowledge on the part of the teachers, and (2) absence of apparatus in schools. The establishment of classes under qualified instructors would overcome the first difficulty, and I see no insuperable obstacle in the way. The best results could be obtained only by lectures combined with practice in a laboratory provided with simple but suitable appliances and conveniences. Indeed, the laboratory work is the more important, for to be able to instruct others the student must perform the experiments himself. Such work could be made part of a general scheme for technical education, for the appliances could be used for "school classes" and "continuation classes," in addition to classes for teachers. I am satisfied a workable scheme could be devised, and, with the grants and allowances under "The Manual and Technical Instruction Act, 1900," would cost a sum not beyond the hopes of attainment. Remove the lack of knowledge on the part of the teacher and the second obstacle to successful work is to a great extent removed, for, if the teachers only know how, there are many ways of making cheap rough-and-ready appliances to demonstrate experiments. Small grants similar to those made to Committees for school libraries would, I believe, offer sufficient encouragement to school authorities to bestir themselves to get sets of appliances for their schools.

Object-lessons are much more satisfactorily taught than is science, though between them and science a close relationship exists, both leading the pupil to acquire knowledge through observation and experiment. A scheme of object-lessons in which most of the lessons are not, and possibly cannot be, illustrated by actual objects cannot be considered satisfactory. As far as possible these objects should be kept in the school for reference, for revisal, and so on, and could be made the nuclei of school museums such as I have referred to in former reports, and are so prominent a feature in the schools of the Old Country. These objects would provide material for object-lessons properly so called; but there are other lessons which are valuable, and should be included—i.e., lessons of information illustrated by pictures, models, diagrams, &c. Here, again, the faculty of observation would be brought into play. The methods by which the lessons are taught show steady improvement, though one sometimes finds a teacher beginning by *telling* about the object instead of requiring the pupils to make an examination by means of the senses. Its form, size, properties, should be elicited, and from these its uses deduced. I should like to point out that inexperienced teachers are not always to blame for inferior methods, for the object-lesson books one sometimes sees are utterly pernicious in the way the method is shown. The matter may be good, but the methods violate every principle of teaching. Such books, however, are not so common as formerly, and teachers are taking their lessons from the text-books of more thoughtful writers.

Efforts have been made to introduce kindergarten work, but have met with little success. The best work has been done at the Kaianai School, and its excellence indicates the interest and intelligence displayed by the pupils. At Stratford also it has been introduced, and the high attendance on days when previously the attendance would have been low shows how it appeals to the pupils. As the department now makes grants to schools where kindergarten work is taught to the lower classes, and where allied but more advanced work is taught to the higher classes, greater attention may be induced. But something more is needed, and I consider that in the larger centres of population kindergarten schools for pupils under our present school-age should be established. In the older countries, where the value of kindergarten work has been long recognised, much of it is undertaken with pupils at an age lower than that at which they may be entered on our rolls, and at an age when the training is most beneficial. Pupils would "learn in play," and would come to our preparatory classes equipped with knowledge and training acquired by methods conformable to child nature, and there would be no necessity for "unlearning," as is often the case with pupils who have received unskilled instruction. Moreover, the children would be more favourably disposed towards school-work, by no means an unimportant item so far as progress is concerned. Such special schools as I have referred to could be established only in the larger towns, but in centres where the attendance at the school is over a certain number—say, 150—children between the ages of four and five might be admitted and an extra pupil-teacher appointed. Much might be done by the Boards, but it would be better for the Department to recognise and acknowledge the need, and provide such financial assistance as may be necessary to equip a kindergarten department and to carry it on efficiently.

A charge often levelled at our education is that it is a system of cram. Even if this low estimate of our aims as educationists be not justified, many writers—including Spencer, Lyon Playfair, and Matthew Arnold—have indicated dangers it would be unwise to ignore. Even such is the testimony of a "fair unimpassioned judge," Sir John Lubbock, who says, "Our great danger in education is, as it seems to me, the worship of book-learning—the confusion of instruction with education. We strain the memory instead of cultivating the mind. Too often, moreover, the acquirement of knowledge is put forward in a form so irksome and fatiguing that all desire for information is choked, or even crushed out, so that our schools, in fact, become places for the discouragement of learning, and thus produce the very opposite effect from that at which we aim." Here naturally arises a question: "How far are these charges true in the case of our schools?" Well, it certainly is untrue if the aims of the highest educational authorities are carried out; and, as regards the instruction imparted, no general answer can be given, for good teachers do not cram, while bad ones do. At one time when books were few and ignorance was prevalent a *quasi*-cram system may have been excusable, but the old order has passed away, though, unfortunately, cram methods have lingered after the need for them has ceased. Of late years there has been an educational revolution, and the method of acquisition rather than the knowledge acquired is considered of paramount importance. The methods by which a child acquires its knowledge are observed, and upon the results of the observations, combined with the teachings of experience, are based the methods of education. Any method which warps the mind or checks the development of the reasoning powers must be discarded. The memory, if it be improved at all by such methods, is surcharged with a heterogeneous mass of ill-assorted facts, while the intellect suffers from mental indigestion. By thus defining a bad method I have indicated also the characteristics of a good method, which imperatively demands that the pupils must be led to observe and reason, and it is only by studying "child nature, child need, and child capacity" that we can obtain an intelligent insight into the true scope of education and of the methods by which it can be obtained. From such a study certain principles are enunciated, and to these a good method must conform. How many lessons would be condemned by teachers themselves if before being given they were tested by what may be termed the "method gauge"? A lesson should not violate the following principles, though for any lesson some more than others may be applicable: Teach from the simple to the complex, from the particular to the general, from the concrete to the abstract, from the indefinite to the definite, from the empirical to the rational, from the outline to the details, from the physical to the mental, from the near to the remote, and generally from the known to the unknown. The bald statement of the principles may convey little information to one not a student of educational methods, but most, if not all, of the defects in our work may be traced to violations of one or more. Take, for instance, one example. I have previously pointed out how in the geography of Standard II. the pupils cannot give local illustrations of the definitions they learn, "an island or a peninsula being to them merely a string of words they are required to commit to memory" (Report, 1895). The same defect is referred to by Inspectors in the Home-country under the head of "absence of local colouring." Now, if the instruction proceeded "from the known to the unknown," or "from the near to the remote," or "from the physical to the mental," such a result would be impossible. "The teacher should begin by drawing attention to the physical features with which the pupils are familiar. Creeks, gullies, mountains, &c., should be pointed out and studied. . . . as far as possible each geographical term should be associated with its corresponding local feature, and should call up a mental picture of that feature. This being done, it is easy to proceed 'from the known to the unknown,' for the geographical features of the world are in the main merely a reproduction of the school district on a larger and grander scale" (Report, 1895). Examples such as this may be multiplied *ad lib.* A teacher who does not consciously or unconsciously thus test his lessons cannot hope to succeed in carrying out the true aims of education. A method that is not founded on principle is a mere accident, making failure or success equally uncontrollable, and is "at best a mere combination of expedients, with no consciousness of purpose and

only right by chance." No doubt practice gives increased skill, or, rather, affords the opportunity for acquiring increased skill; but practice alone will not make a skilful teacher: the training must be there, and this can be best controlled during apprenticeship. The ordeal through which the pupil-teachers have to pass in this practical work is a very trying one, but with their training as a foundation, and with increasing experience and the constant reading of the educational literature of the day, the quality of education should be improved. But I am afraid few read such literature after their training ceases, and that most discontinue educational study, though not literary study, after the certificate examination has been passed. In some cases, at any rate, I am satisfied they would continue it had they the opportunity, but to teachers with small salaries the cost is a great consideration even if they know what books to procure. If, however, the Teachers' Institute, with the assistance of the Board, established at the Board's office a small library of the best works on education, some earnest teachers would avail themselves of the privilege of reading the results of the labour, thought, and experience of great educators.

But to return to the subject of cram. I think that one fact alone tends to redeem us from a general charge, and that is the uniform excellence of the oral answering, or the skill with which the whole of the instruction is made to partake of the nature of conversation lessons between the teacher and the pupils. The pupil talks with his teacher instead of briefly answering questions. Hurried and superficial work is avoided, for to answer fully the pupil must understand the question. A solid foundation is laid, and many of the benefits referred to in previous reports follow. This I consider one of the best features in our schools, and the brightness and eagerness displayed by the pupils in answering in the oral work is, as a rule, favourably reported upon as "alacrity in oral work."

It has been often remarked that in dairying districts children of the tenderest years are required to undergo fatigue far beyond their strength. Epithets such as "white slavery" have been freely used, but if we take a less superficial view of present conditions, and recognise that a certain amount of hardship is inseparable from a pioneer life, I doubt if the prospect is not brighter than a casual glance reveals. Indeed, dairying has displaced a greater evil—poverty with its sordid attendants. Before it was well developed and established as a permanent industry the children had to work quite as hard for a less return. The small farmer's struggle for existence was of the keenest, the efforts of the whole family providing scarcely the barest necessities of life, and the children, being required during the day, were unable to attend school regularly. Now, in winter little milking is done, but in summer-time the children get up early and go to bed early, they go to school more regularly, and greatly participate in the results of their labours. They are better nourished and better clad, their homes are larger and more comfortable, and the general conditions under which they live are vastly improved. Again, labour is employed more than formerly, for parents are not now so dependent upon their children. I am not maintaining that all parents are influenced by the highest motives for the welfare of their offspring, nor is it fair to assume, as some appear to do, that all are utterly neglectful. The dispositions of the parents rather than the conditions of life are responsible for excessive hardship, and this is equally true for all classes of the community. We are, I believe, now experiencing a phase of transition leading to the time when, through the further development of machinery and of the industry generally, child-labour, or that necessity for child-labour in its worst form which all deplore, will be a thing of the past. Indeed, the examination statistics tend to support, though they may not conclusively prove, what I assert. Yearly more and more pupils reach the highest standards, and while there attend more regularly. In the last six years the number of pupils who have passed Standard VI. has increased 270 per cent., and the number passing Standard V. has increased 220 per cent. These figures rather startle one, and, though the increase may be the resultant of a number of factors, I believe that the improved conditions have induced on the part of parents a greater interest in the welfare of their children, and have enabled them to give effect to it. In the interests of the children, as well as in the interests of public health, legislation should, however, insure that the milking is carried on under proper sanitary conditions, and that the surroundings of the children are less degrading than are sometimes found. The yards should be properly constructed, and shelter sufficient for the milkers during inclement weather should be provided, for this is where the real hardship occurs.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc.,
Inspector of Schools.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Board of Education Office, Wanganui, 1st February, 1901.

I have the honour to submit the report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending 31st December, 1900. Owing to the resignation of Mr. Vereker-Bindon, the Chief Inspector, who left the Board's service towards the close of the year, my remarks on the several topics will necessarily be brief.

Pupil-teachers.—The examination of pupil-teachers was held in Wanganui during the mid-winter holidays. The following is a summary of the results: First class (third year)—examined, 18; passed, 17; failed, 1. Second class (second year)—examined, 20; passed, 15; failed, 5. Third class (first year)—examined, 21; passed, 16; failed, 5.

The number examined, when compared with that of the previous year, shows a decrease of twenty-two. The appointments to the office of pupil-teacher have during the past year been fewer than formerly, owing to the large number at present in the Board's service who have completed

their time, and passed successfully the examinations at the end of each year of their course. These are ranked as first-class pupil-teachers, and they await promotion to junior assistantships or to the charge of small schools.

Scholarships.—For the senior scholarships thirty-four candidates (eighteen boys and sixteen girls) and for the junior scholarships thirty-eight candidates (twenty-two boys and sixteen girls) were examined. In the senior class thirteen candidates and in the junior class ten candidates qualified for scholarships—that is, obtained at least 65 per cent. of the total possible marks, and at least 25 per cent. of the possible marks in each subject. The funds admitted of three scholarships being granted to the senior class, and four to the junior class. The other candidates who qualified for scholarships are entitled to free tuition—in the case of boys at the Wanganui Collegiate School, and in the case of girls at the Wanganui Girls' College. Of the thirteen successful senior candidates, only two were from primary schools; all the others were from either the Wanganui Girls' College or the Wanganui Collegiate School. Nine of the unsuccessful candidates obtained over 60 per cent. of the possible marks; this added to the thirteen who qualified shows that twenty-two candidates, or 61 per cent. of those who sat, obtained over 60 per cent., which must be considered a very satisfactory result.

Number of Schools.—The number of schools open at the close of the school year was 144, which, compared with that at the close of the previous year, shows an increase of ten. The new schools opened during the year were at Hautapu, Lismore, Paengaroa, Tiriraukawa, Livingstone, Kerewarewa, Opaku, Motoroa, Punehu, Long Acre, and Table Flat. The school at Table Flat, a district in the Upper Oroua basin, was closed after it had been open for three months. Mangahoe, which had been closed for nearly a year, was reopened.

Within the last five years eleven new schools have been opened in that bush part of the district through which the main road from Pipiriki on the Wanganui River to Mangaweka on the Rangitikei passes. Eighteen miles from Pipiriki on this road is Raetihi, where our first school is passed; the next, Ohakune, is six miles farther on; then not till forty miles have been passed over is the next school, Taihape, reached. Taihape is the centre for the district in which nearly all these recently opened schools are situated. This school has now a roll-number of eighty-three. The distance from Taihape to Mangaweka is fifteen miles.

Inspection.—115 schools were inspected—five more than in the previous year. For the first time since they were opened, the schools in the back district between the Wanganui and the Rangitikei Rivers were visited for inspection. Hitherto it had been found almost impossible to visit these schools twice in one year. Last year, however, we managed to visit them for inspection about the beginning of February, and for examination towards the end of March. We were generally able to report in favourable terms on what we saw of the work of the schools at our inspection visits.

Examination of Schools.—The following table summarises the examination results for each Standard, and for all the Standards, in the district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Absent.	Failed	Passed	Per Cent. of Passes on		Average Age of those that passed.
						Number presented.	Number examined.	
Above Standard VI. ...	145	...	...	...	...	...	...	Yrs. mos.
Standard VI. ...	573	552	21	91	461	80.4	83.5	14 3
" V. ...	980	942	38	134	808	82.4	85.7	13 2
" IV. ...	1,317	1,263	54	155	1,108	84.1	87.7	12 6
" III. ...	1,486	1,443	43	200	1,243	83.6	86.1	11 2
" II. ...	1,357	1,320	37	91	1,229	90.5	93.1	10 1
" I. ...	1,277	1,238	39	111	1,127	88.2	91.0	8 10
Preparatory ...	3,226	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	10,361	6,758	232	782	5,976	83.7	88.4	11 8*

* Mean of average age.

The following are the total examination results of the three Roman Catholic schools—Marist Brothers', Wanganui; St. Joseph's, Wanganui; and St. Joseph's, Hawera: Number on roll, 282; presented, 189; present, 174; failed, 22; passed, 152. The school at Palmerston, at the request of the teachers, was not examined this year.

All the schools open for twelve months, with the exception of Halcombe, were examined during the course of the year. Halcombe School was closed at the date fixed for examination owing to an epidemic prevalent in the district. We propose to examine this school early in the present year. The number of schools examined was 129, the same number as that of the previous year.

The total number on the rolls on the days of examination continues to increase, though at a slow rate. The increase for the past year was thirty-one. The numbers in the various classes, compared with those of the previous year, show increases in Standards VI., Standard III., and the preparatory classes, but decreases in all the other classes. In Standard VI. the increase was sixty-seven. It is pleasing to note that the proportion between the number presented in Standards and the total number on the school rolls steadily increases. For the past year this

proportion expressed as a percentage was 68·8. Of the 3,226 in the preparatory classes, 571 were above eight years old. The chief causes given by the teachers for the non-presentation of these pupils were: "Under two years at school" and "Very irregular attendance." In parts of this district the children have to go long distances to school, and over roads at times almost impassable. Owing to this the school life of many does not begin until the age of seven or eight years has been reached, and then for some time their attendance is generally very irregular.

The average ages still continue somewhat high; the mean, however, is one month lower than for 1899, and for the first time in the history of the district the average for Standard I. is under nine years.

In accordance with the new regulations the passes in Standards I. to V. were, with few exceptions, the results of the teachers' examinations. The exceptions were in cases where teachers had failed to carry out correctly the regulations with regard to filling in the examination schedules, where teachers had taken charge of schools a very short time before the date of the Inspector's visit, or where—but this happened only in one or two cases—the Inspector's results were substituted for the teacher's. We examined very nearly as fully as we had been accustomed to do under the old regulations, and our results in the majority of the schools practically agreed with those of the teachers' examinations. The standard according to which passes were granted varied considerably in the different schools. Some teachers took full advantage of the regulation with regard to the limit for a pass—"work equal to the requirements of the next lower Standard *may* be accepted in any two of the subjects," &c. (the subjects here noted include all except reading)—and awarded a pass to a pupil who might have failed, say, in arithmetic and composition; others refused to grant a pass for the Standard to pupils that failed to reach the pass-limit in more than one of the subjects. Again, some granted, and others refused, a pass for the Standard when the work in arithmetic was very bad; and, again, the standard with regard to the quality of the work in the individual subjects varied. This was very marked in composition, where the quality of the work in papers judged by one teacher "good enough for a pass" fell much below the standard required by another. Such want of uniformity was to be expected in the first year's experience under the new regulations. In our reports on the various schools, as well as in our intercourse with the teachers at examinations, we gave suggestions and directions with regard to the standard which should regulate the granting of passes, and I fully expect to find this year a much nearer approach to a uniform standard in the schools throughout the district. In concluding this matter, I may say that the teachers as a body showed due care and discrimination in their examinations, and that it was not very often that we had to comment adversely on the passes.

The following comparison of percentages of passes on the number examined as showing the results under the old and the new regulations is interesting:—

	1899.	1900.		1899.	1900.
Standard VI. ...	66	83	Standard III. ...	79	86
" V. ...	66	85	" II. ...	94	93
" IV. ...	76	87	" I. ...	94	91

A very considerable increase in the percentages is noticeable in the upper Standards. Two facts, if not altogether, at least to a very considerable extent, account for this. Under the new regulations the subjects for a pass are fewer, and the work is judged more leniently, than in former years. In Standards III. to V. drawing and geography no longer hold a place in the syllabus as pass-subjects, and, as already pointed out, failure in any two subjects except reading may not fail for the Standard. But as regards Standard VI., where the increase in the percentage of passes is as marked as in Standards III. to V., the conditions of examination were much the same as in 1899: geography and drawing were pass-subjects, and the passes were the Inspectors'. One fact, however, may have helped to increase the number of passes here. It had been our custom to refuse a pass when a pupil failed to reach the requirements of the Standard in *any* two of the subjects; in such a case, under the new regulations, a pass was granted provided one of the two subjects was geography or drawing.

I shall make only one or two remarks on the individual subjects. The work in arithmetic was very satisfactory, except that in Standard V., which was very poor indeed. It cannot reasonably be said that this inferior work was due to any difficulty in the cards, for I think the tests issued the past year by the Department were very fair. During the year, in accordance with your Board's resolution, the style of the writing was changed from the Vere Foster to the Collins's Graphic. In a few schools the change has produced good results: in many schools the promise of success has not yet been made evident. No doubt the getting out of the one style into the other has been attended with difficulties, both to pupils and teachers. Composition is not a strong subject in the majority of our schools. Very rarely did the papers give evidence of original work: often the essays or letters of the different pupils in the one class were nearly word for word alike. Probably our custom of taking the subjects from lists submitted to us by the teachers is accountable for this. In future an endeavour will be made to adopt tests which may tend to discourage such memory work.

Class-subjects.—The work, on the whole, in these subjects was very fair. Grammar showed a slight improvement in many of the schools, but too often it was our experience to examine very inferior work in this subject. Drawing and geography have not deteriorated since they became class-subjects. The appearance made in geography was often highly satisfactory. We examined this subject nearly altogether orally, and in this way, taking a class as a whole, a better opportunity was afforded of judging as to how the subject had been taught than when as a pass-subject the examination was individual, and the test written.

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

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

Standard VI. physiography is the best form of the subject, and it falls in well with the science instruction. In reporting on the latter subject (science) we find the teaching of chemistry still further advanced in several schools, and generally satisfactorily taught, and we are pleased to note that arrangements have been made whereby experiments can be performed by pupils individually. As this is the only true way in which science can be well taught, it is hoped the practice will become more general.

Our reports set little value on much of the grammar taught in the smaller and in some of the larger schools, inasmuch as the work is reported to be done unintelligently; but, as a matter of fact, it is a question whether, with such a full curriculum, the teaching of formal grammar should not give place to more useful work. Would it not be better to train children to speak readily, and to correct their common errors of speech? I notice in all the new Home schemes of instruction which have come under my notice that oral composition is the latest feature, and everywhere teachers are invited to correct errors of speech in children, and to encourage them to express their ideas in simple language correctly. Of the reported weakness in grammar and analysis, therefore, I do not think there is much to be sorry for, unless it is the waste of energy on the part of the teachers. There is also some misdirected energy in the teaching of history, with the poor result, in many schools, of a few disconnected facts being learned. It is now generally admitted that the intelligent use of a historical reader is satisfactory for primary instruction in the subject, and that the old-time memory work is valueless.

The infant-school work continues to make satisfactory progress, and this progress is marked in the Rintoul Street School, in which the extent and character of the kindergarten teaching now more nearly approach the work of the Mount Cook and Thorndon Schools. Brush-work, paper-flower making, and playground exercises, with suitable songs, are special features of the best schools.

In the eight Roman Catholic schools 1,112 children were presented for examination, of whom 659 were classed in standards, and of this number 558 were promoted. As compared with last year's returns for these schools, there is an increase of seventy-four on the rolls, and of twenty classed in standards; but there is a small decrease of eighteen in the number promoted. This is balanced by the classification of twenty-one in Standard VII., as compared with eleven last year. All the eight schools have made progress, some more marked than others, and they all evince a desire to come up to State requirements. Reading, writing, and spelling receive fairly due attention. Arithmetic is distinctly improved in several schools; sewing and singing are good features; but, for the most part, in science, geography, and subjects mostly taught orally, the class-work is in a backward condition. Kindergarten teaching is begun on satisfactory lines. Accommodation is improved in three schools, and further improvement is contemplated in others. Generally speaking, the schools are fully staffed, and the teachers are painstaking, diligent, and possessed of good control.

The financial difficulties which have overtaken the Board will have a far-reaching effect on the educational progress of the district, and I fear the present year will be marked by the complete or partial collapse of three important services lately introduced, which, under careful management, promised to become useful institutions.

I refer, in the first place, to the system of battalion drill, which was put into practical form by the late capable drill-instructor—Mr. McDonald. The first parade was held at the beginning of the year, when three hundred cadets attended from the city schools, some companies in full and others in partial uniform, all under their respective officers of different ranks, and accompanied by an organized cadet band. The drill was gone through in a creditable manner, and the scheme commended itself as an excellent disciplinary training in military exercises and rifle-practice—a training which, in the present order of things, may soon be demanded as an essential part of every man's early education, for the theory set up that such a training engenders in a nation an undesirable spirit of militarism is now quite exploded among educational authorities.

In the second place, I refer to the cookery classes, which also are of recent formation. Unfortunately they came into existence too hurriedly, and were launched on lines so expensive that the charge has become a serious one, and their existence is in danger. The instructors are not only good cooks, but also capable class-teachers, who have done excellent work. I think it quite possible to reorganize these classes on a much less expensive plan.

In the third place, I refer to the classes for the instruction of teachers in singing, held by Mr. R. Parker in the two chief centres of the district. The impress of an able specialist and class-teacher cannot fail to be of the highest value to school-work, and the loss of the instruction in and direction to the teaching of singing, in order to effect a saving of £100 a year, surely can only be warranted by very straitened finances.

I do not think any of these contemplated drastic measures are good or even necessary. They appear to me merely harsh expedients for tiding over a crisis. The way out of the financial difficulty will be best seen by looking at the way into it. The income of the Board is at all times a prescribed and known quantity; the salary and main expenditure is also a known quantity, prescribed by staff and salary scales, which are so constructed that the expenditure is allowed to increase only as the income rises, and it decreases also automatically with any fall in the income. Nothing but repeated departure from the working of these scales can involve the finances in difficulty, unless, of course, there is extravagance in other parts of the service. If, then, a retracing of steps be made to the old road, and adhesion to rules and regulations be insisted on, the financial equilibrium will right itself in time. It does not usually fall in my province to touch upon financial affairs; and, though I fear there is danger ahead unless some change is made in the administration, I can only hope the Board will see its way out of the present embarrassment without sacrificing the good work already done in drill, cookery, and singing.

For some time past I have been conscious of a disposition on the part of the Board to discharge functions hitherto left to its responsible officers. Some of them are of a purely technical character, requiring not only serious consideration, but much study and a wide knowledge of educational practice. I feel sure that the departure thus made will prove an unfortunate one, and that the Board will lose nothing of its rights and privileges by consulting its expert officers on important measures of reform.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Wellington Education Board.

ROBERT LEE.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	490	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	986	973	758	13 8
" V. ...	1,571	1,541	1,238	12 11
" IV. ...	1,823	1,781	1,446	11 10
" III. ...	2,052	2,006	1,625	10 11
" II. ...	1,836	1,807	1,610	9 9
" I. ...	1,672	1,650	1,554	8 8
Preparatory ...	4,781	...	...	...
Totals ...	15,211	9,758	8,231	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.
Above Standard VI. ...	21	...	...
Standard VI. ...	66	63	47
" V. ...	80	68	59
" IV. ...	109	100	86
" III. ...	153	139	115
" II. ...	154	137	116
" I. ...	160	152	135
Preparatory ...	369	...	...
Totals ...	1,112	659	558

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Inspector's Office, Napier, 21st February, 1901.

After so many years of waiting and watching for educational fruit, one's annual report brings forcibly to the mind the fact that if change is slow it is also sure. As year succeeds year, the accumulated changes seen in the schools of the district supply material for wide contrasts between things as they were twenty-two years ago and what passes muster in the school world of to-day. Over the whole of the extensive district that is controlled by the Board great changes have taken place in settlement, in means of transit, in the growth of population, and in the supply of school accommodation. The extent of the changes can hardly be understood except by those who knew something of the district when the Board began its work in the year 1878. New settlements called for the starting of aided schools, but as the settlements succeeded the schools grew in importance, and became centres from which younger settlements gained strength and encouragement. The twelve hundred children in the Board schools twenty-two years ago had increased to 8,021 at the time of my examinations last year, and these were exclusive of 848 children in the Catholic schools, who were examined in the same manner and under the same conditions as the children in the public schools.

The growth of the school population, though very marked, is likely to increase even at a greater rate during the next few years. There are many signs of increasing activity in some of the outlying districts, and several applications for schools may shortly be expected from new settlements in the Cook and Waipawa Counties.

During the year the small subsidised school at Waimate, in Cook County, was closed, but three other schools were opened—viz., Waipatiki, near Weber; Ngapaeruru, on the Dannevirke-Weber Road; and a side-school at Dannevirke. In the latter place only has there been a building

erected. Last year I deemed it necessary to point out that school buildings were urgently required at Port Awanui, Waipiro, Mohaka, and Puketitiri; but these by no means are the only places where schools are conducted in buildings that are not the property of the Board. At Whakaraui Nos. 1 and 2, Tokomaru, Morere, Tamumu, Makaretu South, Ngapaeruru, Waipatiki, and Ti-tree Point, schools are carried on in places that do duty as places of instruction, but the teaching is beset with many and trying difficulties. At Mohaka and Waipiro the children are largely composed of the Native race, and had the districts been under the control of the Central Department fully equipped buildings would long since have been provided. To me it appears a very strange thing that provision cannot be made for the children of settlers, when so much is done by the Government in the erection of Native schools. In my opinion, it would be far better for the Board to close the schools at Mohaka and Waipiro than carry on as at present. The responsibility of providing accommodation would then rest on the Department in Wellington, and perhaps there would soon be supplied what ought to have been supplied ten years ago for the benefit of the children in those settlements.

The districts where school accommodation is provided do not show any signs of crowding at present, except at Dannevirke, where further extension is called for. Most of the buildings are in good working order, but the depredations of the borer-beetle are becoming more serious in a number of the schools. It would be well, I think, to require teachers to inform the Board of the appearance of the "borer" whenever discovered, because a few shillings expended on turps and kerosene will certainly delay, if not destroy, the ravages of this dreaded enemy of white-pine.

The painting of the school buildings of one characteristic type is a great improvement, and certainly it may be said that for general neatness and appearance the public school sets an example to both town and district. I should like, however, to see some attention paid by teachers and Committees to tree-planting, particularly to the planting and naming of native trees and shrubs. It would be a good plan to have both native and imported trees for the instruction of the children, and Arbor Day might well be set aside for the furtherance of this suggestion, in places where nothing has yet been done.

Gardens are becoming very popular in a number of districts, but Ormond excels all others in this important aspect of school training. One hundred and thirty-five named varieties of plants and flowers were under cultivation by the children and I have seldom seen a prettier sight than the school gardens presented when visited by me in March. Gisborne, Patutahi, Woodville, Dannevirke, Makotuku, and Takapau present grounds of exceptional neatness, but there are far too many that supply evidence of much indifference on the part of teachers and Committees.

The changes in the teaching staff during the year have been more frequent than usual. In some of the middle-sized schools, where at present capable and highly classed men are at work, there is a feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction. Some of them complain that they do not receive the same chances of promotion as in the case of assistant teachers of much less experience in the larger schools. The objections they make appear to me as being reasonable, and it would be a very good thing for the larger schools if more heed were given by Committees to the selection of highly classed and successful teachers from the country. No men have more difficulties in the way of training children, and rare skill and tact are necessary to carry on with much success the working of a fairly large country school. The wide differences of salary paid to assistants in the principal schools, and the headmasters in the majority of country schools, where a wife and family have usually to be maintained, may in some measure account for the dissatisfaction that no doubt exists among country teachers; and I think that an amended salary scale, to come into operation as vacancies occur, might be adopted, such as would provide a better balance of salary for the classes of teachers named, and it would certainly tend to keep good men from seeking employment in other directions.

The scale regulations for the payment of pupil-teachers appear to foster the employment of females rather than males in the schools. The fewness of male pupil-teachers is striking, and yet there is an abundance of female teachers. My own opinion is, after an experience with pupil-teachers extending over thirty years, that it would be well for education were the so-called pupil-teacher system utterly abolished, and a more rational and efficient scheme adopted. In no other profession are men who are employed during the day called upon to instruct and prepare for examination their apprentices under compulsory conditions; and were an arrangement provided, as there ought to be, for the training of young people in the art of teaching before being sent into the schools to teach, as they now are, an important step would have been taken in improving the educational condition of the schools. A professor of pedagogy at a university college may be fashionable just now, but such a man is quite useless for the making of efficient teachers such as are wanted in this country, and until something is done in the way of training young teachers without the intermediate pupil-teacher course there appears to me but little hope of seeing a high average standard of efficiency reached in the schools. When one sees a sixth-class pupil suddenly transformed into a class-teacher it is little wonder that defects occur in the preparation of children. Reasonable intelligence, duly exercised on matters of every-day life, should suffice to show even the non-technical mind how little real progress is to be expected in the higher aspects of training when boys and girls whose own education is far from complete are appointed to train other children, and supply a foundation on which all after-conceptions have really to be based. The five hours of weekly instruction that the Board's regulations require to be given to the pupil-teachers are greatly extended by head teachers in many cases, and I am satisfied that no class of workers in the colony toil harder than do the pupil-teachers under the present system of training and instruction.

The school attendance has shown an improving tendency during the second half of the school year, but the "Premier's holidays," for Mafeking, &c., whilst exceedingly popular and highly

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

by the new regulations has been, on the whole, judiciously used. A balancing of conditions, and a constant watchfulness that promotions are made strictly according to the requirements, will be needed for some time to come; but under careful inspection there need be no fear that teachers will misuse their powers to the detriment of their pupils or to the lowering of education. Of course, there are weaknesses in the new plan of examination, particularly in the inequality of classification that must necessarily exist, as well in education districts as in school districts. Variations must be greater where there are a thousand examiners than where there are thirty; still, I am satisfied that the recent changes are in the right direction, for the increased trust reposed in teachers, if it does nothing else, will certainly result in the creation of a higher tone in the working of the schools, and this aspect of school training is worth striving for.

During the year I have watched the likely effect of the "free classification of pupils" upon the schools, and already there are signs that there will be special types of work in the different school districts. Men of strong individuality will impress their own particular tastes and characteristics upon the school, for the preparation of the children will partake of something more than a mere "get-up" for examination purposes. It has been so long the practice to estimate the condition of a school on the capacity shown by a teacher in the preparation of work set forth in the standard requirements that some time is wanted for the mind to grasp the freer conditions under which the work of a school may now be carried on. And many teachers need a reminder of this fact. They are not now free to complain of hide-bound conditions. The freedom allowed has not produced as yet any marked change in the mode of conducting the work of the schools, nor even in the methods of teaching. No doubt the teachers in a large measure are what syllabus and regulation have made them, and it can hardly be expected that new plans and methods will have so soon taken the place of the old drudgery ways that have done duty so long. But I look to the coming year with confidence, and my aim will be to afford every encouragement to the teachers to adapt themselves to the new conditions, and to so employ methods of training that nature will become easier to read and more pleasant to unfold than has been possible in the past.

Attention was called last year to the great need in the schools of dovetailing the teaching of a subject as children advance from the lower to the higher classes. The more this aspect of preparation is considered the more it becomes evident that the majority of children have a very varied experience, even in the preparation of subjects like arithmetic, writing, geography, and history. In some schools children are taught "tots" and can add with great rapidity; but when the same children are asked to work even a simple problem they cannot do it.

Still, there is a bright side in the educational work of the district, for, although defects are met with in school organization and in methods of instruction there are compensating qualities that go to prove how, even under an imperfect system, intelligent plans may be devised by teachers who aim at practical training. Ormond, as already pointed out, is distinguished for its flower-gardens. At Waerengaahika the children make hammocks, baskets, summer curtains, and a variety of other things, while grafting and budding are practically taught during the season to the senior boys and girls at Makuri School. At Kumeroa the children in the highest class keep each a diary for names of native flowers that open month by month, together with remarks on the changes that take place in the weather. Ormondville and Tolago Bay keep a daily "log" of the weather, including temperature, wind, kinds of clouds, and height of barometer; and other schools are moving in a similar direction. A rain-gauge, anemometer, and photometer might be encouraged for use in every country school, and a vast variety of valuable facts could be collected in this way. The problem of teaching cookery to the girls has been solved with commendable success by the mistress of the Waerengaahika School. One afternoon a week is set aside by the wife of the master of the school for instruction in practical cooking and household management. The girls meet at the teacher's residence, and they go through a course of training—scrubbing, polishing, baking, and cooking—such as will be of great value to them in the future. A similar plan of instruction has been commenced at Woodville, and if the new regulations of the Central Department are sufficiently elastic and practical to meet cases of this kind by special grants there will be little difficulty in teaching practical domestic economy to the girls of the district.

These are aspects of special training such as are to be found in the schools of the district, but there are yet other schools that are worthy of honourable mention for the admirable care bestowed on them by teachers. Gisborne, Patutahi, Maraetaha, Hastings, Napier Main, Napier Training, Waipawa, Woodville, Dannevirke (main), Makotuku, Taradale, and Port Ahuriri (main and side) excel in some aspect of school training and preparation; but most of the other schools are in very fair working order, and are merely kept back owing to the existence of conditions that make it difficult for the teachers to reach the standard of efficiency at which they certainly aim. In any case, one is assured that the large majority of teachers in the service of the Board have striven to do their work well during the past year.

It is doubtful whether the special grants that are offered under the new regulations in connection with the Manual and Technical Instruction Act of last year will prove of much advantage to the schools. Either the work that is being fostered by means of special grants is of more importance to the children and the country than the work that has hitherto been done, or it is not. If it is, then surely the old plans should be discontinued, the new ones adopted, and the grants that are offered might be well paid over to the Board for the purchase of the necessary apparatus and appliances. For years kindergarten has been industriously taught by a number of the younger and more ambitious lady teachers by means of appliances purchased out of their own hard-earned wage, and it is merely the want of appliances that has kept and is keeping this and cognate subjects from being generally taught in the schools throughout the district.

The question of holidays is one that must sooner or later receive the attention of the Board. The past year has perhaps been an unusual one, yet it must be evident that holidays are given too frequently, and quite a number of schools were opened last year less than four hundred times, or

fewer than forty weeks. Unless there is some special cause, as an epidemic, every school should be opened at least four hundred times in a year. The closing of schools at odd times leads to much irregularity, and a large part of the bad attendance must be set down to this tendency to close schools at times other than what are authorised by the Board. One exception to the ordinary closing must be made, although in reality it ought to be counted as a school attendance. I refer to the annual railway excursion, which has grown into popularity in some of the country districts. The effect of a railway trip upon school-children even in a subject like geography is very marked, and it seems to me that the utmost good would result to the country were the Government to offer a free railway trip for one day a year to every pupil making four hundred or more attendances at school during the year.

The advanced classes at the Gisborne District High School continue to maintain a high standard of efficiency. This is the only school under the Board where work beyond the standard requirements is taken, other than advanced drawing at Napier Main and Port Ahuriri, and Euclid and algebra at Makotuku. The new regulations that have recently been issued by the Government, with the view of fostering the establishment of district high schools, make it possible for districts like Hastings, Woodville, Wairoa, and Dannevirke to have each a school approved by the Minister of Education as a district high school. Perhaps the Committees concerned will make an effort to obtain for their respective districts the fullest advantages offered by the regulations. The grants are so generous that Gisborne might easily double the attendance of pupils in the advanced classes by granting free scholarships to pupils in the district who have passed the Sixth Standard.

The Training School is continuing to show signs of progress. The arrangements that have been made for the instruction of the students in drawing at the Technical School promise the best of results, and it would be well if other arrangements could be made for instructing them in drill and calisthenics. Whatever the teachers in training learn during their year of special preparation is really for the benefit of the whole of the education district. It is a form of educational investment that is sure to bring in a satisfactory return.

The proposal to hold a synchronous examination in drawing for Standards III., IV., V., and VI. at the end of June or immediately preceding the midwinter vacation has been duly intimated to teachers. Certificates will be issued to all pupils who pass the first-grade requirements on payment of a small fee. Mr. Anderson, the master of the Technical School, is rendering me effective help in this new scheme of examination.

Before closing this report I would like to suggest to the Board that the time has arrived when the question of establishing a Technical School for Hawke's Bay might well be considered. The Act passed last year, known as the Manual and Technical Instruction Act, provides, under certain conditions, for the payment of a grant by the Government sufficient to erect the necessary buildings. For many years I have urged that increased provision should be made for the fostering of adaptive education, and the opportunity has come at last. A Technical School for the furtherance of art and science is of the utmost importance to the future of the district, and if two schools could be supplied, one at Napier and one at Gisborne, an immense impetus would be given to the furtherance of that kind of training such as environment and local needs might suggest. It is useless to expect teachers in the country to give instruction in science until their own training has been considered, and this can easily be done if Technical Schools are provided as suggested.

The Catholic schools are working with like earnestness and diligence as the Board schools, and each year there are encouraging signs of progress in the lower aspects of school training. Eight hundred and seventy-eight children were present in the six schools examined. My visits to the schools have been less frequent than to the Board schools, but the examinations have been carried out in the same way, and I have issued certificates to all pupils who passed Standard VI. under the Departmental regulations.

The Chairman, Education Board, Napier.

I have, &c.,

H. HILL.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Blenheim, 11th March, 1901.

I have the honour to present my report on the public schools of the Education District of Marlborough for the year 1900, this being my tenth annual report.

The number of schools under the control of your Board at the end of the year 1900 was sixty-six. Two other small schools were open for a portion of the year, but, as unfortunately so frequently happens in those remote districts, they were closed through losing their teachers before the end of the year. Altogether there have been sixty-eight schools in operation during the year 1900. Last year there were sixty-one, showing an increase of seven.

The number of scholars on the rolls of the schools examined at the dates of the examinations was 2,125, an increase of twenty-six more than last year. Of this number, 609 were in preparatory classes, and seventy in Standard VII, leaving only 1,446 presented in Standards I. to VI. Of these, forty-four were absent at the date of the examination, leaving 1,402 who were present and examined. This is less by eleven than the number examined last year. The number of scholars who earned promotion this year was 1,254, or sixty-five more than the number passed in 1899. The percentage of passes for the district was therefore 89.3, which compares favourably with the percentage for the whole colony in 1899, which was 84.4.

Of the total number on the rolls, 59 per cent. passed Standards I. to VI. This also compares very well with the average for the whole colony as given in the Minister's twenty-third annual report (54.66). The failures amounted to 10.5 per cent. of the number examined, which may be regarded as highly satisfactory when compared with the results throughout the colony in 1899,

when the failures amounted to 15.58 per cent. of the number examined. Last year the failures amounted to 15.85 per cent. of the number examined, thus showing considerable improvement this year. The failures in the several Standards, compared with the same figures for last year, show: In Standard VI., 9 per cent. more; in Standard V., 14 per cent. less; in Standard IV., 11 per cent. less; in Standard III., 12 per cent. less; in Standard II., 5 per cent. more; and in Standard I., 5.5 per cent. more. The lower Standards were examined in pass-subjects, as in former years, by the head teachers only; and the figures given would seem to indicate that the teachers recognise the necessity for laying a good foundation in Standards I. and II., in view of the important alterations with regard to the examination for promotion.

The foregoing statistics, however, must be received with considerable caution, as the influence of the new regulations upon the results of the examination is at present an unknown quantity, and cannot be even approximately estimated. In conducting the examination in pass-subjects I followed the same course as heretofore, and examined every scholar myself. The teachers, in accordance with the new regulations, had previously examined all standards except the Sixth, and had entered their results on the schedules. Whenever my results differed from those obtained by the teacher I substituted my figures for his, sometimes raising and sometimes lowering the figures under the subjects, though the final result was in most cases unaffected. Owing to the peculiar leniency of the regulations, which permit a scholar to be promoted if he fail altogether in any two out of five subjects, providing that reading is not one of them, scholars can fail in, say, spelling and arithmetic, or spelling and composition, and yet be entitled to promotion. This was one of the subjects that was discussed at the recent conference, and perhaps some alteration may be the result.

The number of scholars in the whole district who passed at the teachers' examination, but failed under mine, was twenty-four; and, on the other hand, three who failed with the teachers were passed by me. In future, however, if teachers of the larger schools (following the instructions contained in the Standard Regulations) hold periodical examinations of their schools, and preserve the records of such examinations for my inspection, I shall not interfere with the teacher's verdict unless I shall feel called upon to do so in consequence of some manifest inconsistency being discovered as the result of my own examination.

The length of the school year—i.e., the number of times that the schools had been open since the previous examination—varied very considerably. Leaving out all schools that were not open during one quarter of the year, the average number of half-days was 395. The greatest number was 539, and the least 312. Allowing eight weeks for holidays, the full year contains about 440 half-days. Twenty-seven schools were open 400 times or more, while two were open 521 and 539 times respectively, owing to the date of their examinations being postponed.

Leaving out all schools having less than ten scholars, and adopting the same scale of marks that was employed last year, the remaining schools can be classified, as regards the result of my examination of Standards III., IV., V., and VI., as follows: Very good, 12 schools; good, 11; poor, 3; bad, 1. In this last case the present teacher is not responsible for the condition of the school, he having been recently appointed. The school had suffered from the illness and death of the previous teacher, who himself found it in a very backward and neglected condition.

At sixteen of the smaller schools all the scholars examined gained promotion, and nearly all the remainder produced very creditable results. On the whole, the character of the work done at these little schools, so liberally supported by the Board throughout the length and breadth of this district, is such as fully to justify their existence, since they furnish the means of a fairly good primary education to, in the aggregate, a large number of children who would otherwise be deprived of all the benefits of the Education Act.

Again I have the satisfaction of pointing to the excellent work done at some of the Board schools under a single teacher—in many cases a mistress—and I think the time has arrived when the Board should consider the question of amending the regulation which makes the salaries of mistresses in charge of schools 10 per cent. less than those of masters.

Pass-subjects.—This term, which I believe will soon be entirely disused, is still employed in the forms of the examination report furnished by the Department, and, in order to compare the work done this year with that of previous years, I subjoin, in Table 4 of this report, a summary of the results in the four upper standards at my examination. Comparing these results with those of last year, an improvement is to be observed in spelling, composition, and arithmetic, although the last-named subject still appears the weakest, a state of things which seems to be inevitable, and, considering the time usually occupied by it, almost inexplicable. The improvement in spelling is more satisfactory in view of the fact that the majority of the scholars were examined in the new reading-book for the first time.

Class and Additional Subjects.—In conformity with the requirements of the Government returns, the efficiency of the schools in these subjects is given in Table 5. Compared with the same table of last year, there is a fair improvement all round, and a few more schools have made praiseworthy attempts to introduce drill and singing.

I am still strongly impressed with the necessity for limiting the number of class-subjects to be undertaken in the smaller schools, and I am convinced that by such limitation a great improvement would result in the more thorough treatment of a few subjects of the teacher's own selection. I have for years past continually remarked upon the absurdity of expecting the sole teacher of a school to attempt to teach fifteen separate subjects in twenty-five hours a week, and, poor as some of the results in these subjects are, the only wonder is that they are no worse.

I hope, however, that better days are coming for teachers and children alike, when permission will be accorded them to select, say, two from a list of optional subjects corresponding to the present class-subjects. If this privilege were granted it would be possible for children to receive a fairly thorough grounding in the principles of the subjects chosen, and to retain an intelligent com-

prehension of them, in the place of the confused and useless smattering of half a dozen, which is about all that they can possibly retain under the present circumstances, at schools such as are here referred to.

Handwork has been recently added to the list of class-subjects, but, invaluable as that means of education would be if efficiently treated, something must be struck out of the syllabus before any great advantage can accrue from its introduction, which, moreover, would necessitate an expenditure in material and appliances that it will be difficult to provide for in the smaller districts without special assistance from the Department. For some years past the teachers of some of our smaller schools, as well as the mistress of the infant department in the Blenheim School, have made good use of the kindergarten material supplied to them, the latter being particularly zealous in the work; and I cannot refrain from once more urging upon the Board the completion of the infant-school by the erection of the eastern wing, and fitting it up as a proper kindergarten school. The furniture might be so arranged as to be easily removable, so as to allow of the room being used at certain hours for any classes in manual or technical instruction that may hereafter be established. It is high time that some movement in this direction should be made in Blenheim, where teachers of many branches of industrial art can be so easily found. On my visits to Wellington I have been struck with admiration, somewhat alloyed with a feeling approaching to envy, to see the abundant provision that has been made for this modern phase of popular education; and I feel sure that, at any rate, a small measure of assistance might reasonably be asked for towards the improvement of Marlborough in this direction.

The new regulations have now had a year's trial, and we shall no doubt soon hear from all parts of the colony to what extent the cause of education has benefited by them. With the view of ascertaining, as nearly as possible, the effect of these regulations upon the efficiency of the school work in this district, I took advantage of the provisions of clause 6, and examined exactly as heretofore the four upper standards myself; and, as stated above, I found in the whole district only twenty-four scholars passed that, in my opinion, were not quite fit to be promoted; and even this was partly due to the leniency of the regulations before referred to. I am decidedly of opinion that there is little danger of any less vigorous treatment of the subjects taught, or that any relaxation of the requirements of the examinations will follow from the granting of this liberty to the teachers. It may be some time before the general public will feel the same confidence, but that will come in time if the teachers continue to deserve the judgment which I unhesitatingly pronounce upon the general effect of the regulations in this district during the past year namely, that no depreciation, but rather some considerable improvement on the whole, has resulted from the adoption of the new system.

Scholarships.—In consequence of the establishment of a High School in Marlborough, it became necessary to abandon the old scholarship regulations, and fresh ones were prepared and submitted to the Department for the approval of the Minister. After considerable correspondence, and several alterations made to comply with the wishes of the authorities, the regulations were finally approved by the Minister. The chief change agreed upon was in the age-limit of candidates and in the subjects of the examination. There are now two classes of scholarships—namely, "town" and "country" scholarships; the former of the value of £10 and the latter £35 a year, both tenable for two years at the Marlborough High School. The age of candidates must not in future exceed thirteen years, and the basis of the examination will be the subjects prescribed for the Fifth Standard. Two scholarships awarded under the old regulations will continue to be held at Nelson College for the remainder of their term—that is, until December next, after which date no more scholarships will be held outside the district. In order to guard against any injustice to scholars who had been kept at school for a year or more in the hope of gaining a scholarship under the former regulations, the Minister was induced to sanction the retention, for this occasion only, of the former age-limit—namely, sixteen years. The number of scholarships that the Board was able to offer under the new conditions was five, three being town and two country scholarships. For these, nine schools sent up in all twenty candidates, with the result shown on Table 6. The father of the winner of one of the country scholarships, Mr. Charles White, with a generosity worthy of special remark, agreed to accept a town scholarship of £10 a year in place of a country one of £35, on condition that the Board would make up the amount thus set at liberty to £30, to afford three other pupils, who had qualified, to receive scholarships they could not otherwise have hoped for, as the age-limit would prevent their trying again next year.

It will be noticed that of the nine candidates who gained sufficient marks to qualify for a scholarship under the regulations—60 per cent. of the possible marks—as many as seven were sent up by the Blenheim Girls' School, the tenth on the list being also a pupil at the same school. This fact must be very gratifying to the teacher and to the Committee, while it must also be a matter of surprise and regret that the other large schools failed to secure even one of the eight scholarships actually awarded.

Moral Training.—It is a somewhat trite remark that the passing of children through the standards in the shortest possible time is not the sole or even the chief duty of the public school teacher; but, inasmuch as the system under which he works is secular, as well as free and compulsory, so much greater is the obligation resting upon him not only that the characters of his pupils should be influenced as far as possible by the inculcation of lessons having a sound moral application, but that his own character should be above reproach as much in the general tenor of his daily life as an ordinary member of society as in connection with the discharge of his duties inside the walls of the schoolroom. Happily, the day has gone by never to return when any person who had failed at other occupations was thought "good enough to teach a school," and when almost any kind of misconduct outside the school was regarded with indifference provided that the work of the school was not grossly neglected. I believe that the teachers in this district are fully

alive to the importance of this unspecified portion of their duties, and that as they realise the relief of escaping from the galling fetters of the standard pass they will have more heart, as well as more time, for what might then truly be called a "delightful task."

The old idea that the conduct of the children when outside the class-room is no business of the teachers has, I hope, quite disappeared; and I cannot call to mind a single instance of improper language or behaviour amongst the children in the playground or the immediate neighbourhood of the schools. The only weak spot that has come under my notice in connection with the management of our schools is that in a few cases an appearance of indifference and want of zeal in the service, which is crystallized in the old-fashioned expression "Come night, come ninepence," is produced when the teacher arrives at the school exactly at the hour of opening—sometimes a little later—and exhibits a corresponding alacrity in quitting the precincts directly the hour for closing arrives. Such conduct, although leaving no room for formal complaint, has nevertheless an unfavourable effect upon the school, as well as upon the general public, who are more observant of such matters than perhaps is generally supposed, and in such cases are apt to form opinions on the condition of the school more unfavourable than perhaps the circumstances really justify.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Blenheim.

JOHN SMITH, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	70	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	139	135	101	14 2
" V. ...	230	223	200	13 5
" IV. ...	266	255	227	12 4
" III. ...	291	280	252	11 1
" II. ...	273	268	249	9 8
" I. ...	247	241	225	8 6
Preparatory... ..	609	...	...	...
Totals	2,125	1,402	1,254	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

NELSON.

SIR,—

I have the honour to present the following report on the schools of the Nelson Educational District for the year 1900 :—

Owing to the illness of the junior Inspector during the examination time, and to the fact that the views expressed in the report are entirely my own, I have undertaken the sole responsibility of its drafting, though I am indebted to my colleague for most of the heavy labour of compiling the accompanying tables.

One hundred and twenty-four schools were at work during the last quarter of the year, and all but three small household schools have been examined. One of these had been recently established, and the children of a second were prevented by a flood from attending for examination at the nearest school. During the year household schools at Berlin's and Marahau have been closed, one at Wainui has been opened and closed, and three new ones—Tophouse, Oparara, and Aniseed Valley—have been opened, so that the total number is one higher than that recorded last year.

The total number of children in the schools of the district still continues to fall, as it has regularly done since 1897. This is a matter of grave concern, if viewed only in its financial aspect as directly affecting the revenue of the Board. A comparison of the returns for the same quarter of each of the two years in question shows that the decrease since 1897 represents a possible loss of £1,057 10s. in annual income. The average weekly number on the rolls for the September quarter of 1900 was 5,814, as against 5,934 in 1899. The two largest centres, Nelson and Westport, show decreases of twenty-four and thirty respectively, the totals for each being for this year 1,096 and 514.

It was pointed out last year that the average attendance in proportion to the roll-number had been slowly improving, the 81·1 per cent. for the year 1899 being the highest yet recorded here. I see by the report of the Minister of Education for that year that the slightly higher percentage here, combined with a falling-off elsewhere, enabled this district to take for regularity of attendance a rather higher place—the eighth among the thirteen educational districts of the colony; but I am by no means satisfied with the degree of regularity attained. It means merely that in this district at its best nineteen out of every hundred children are daily absent from school all the year round. The most regular attendances for the same year were recorded by Grey and Westland, with 87·2 and 85·7 per cent. respectively. When in this district, with its climatic advantages, such irregularity still prevails, one must perforce suspect the parents of much contributory negligence. For this year (1900) the percentage of average attendance is 81·2 per cent. In one of the appended tables I have again furnished a column showing the percentage that the average attendance at each

school throughout the year bears to its average weekly roll-number. I have of late years gone to the trouble of supplying this in the hope that teachers, who thus have the opportunity to compare their own with other schools in this respect, may be encouraged to put forth more effort to secure regular attendance. Last year six schools, as well as several household schools, returned over 90 per cent., and this time Win's Valley (96·4), Burnett's Face (91·5), Gibbstown (91·3), Pakawau (90·7), Ferntown (90·3), and Brighton (90·1) have each reached or exceeded that limit. River Terrace, Richmond Girls, Spring Grove, and Wakefield show marked improvement. The worst examples are Ngatimoti, still only 64 per cent., although greatly improved notwithstanding; Pangatatarā, also 64; Woodstock and Ranzau, each 66; Lower Moutere, Sarau, and Kaituna, each 67; Eighty-eight Valley and Fern Flat, each 69. Such a condition as these figures indicate should not be tolerated. Irregular attendance is the worst evil that teachers have to combat, and seldom do I hear of any strenuous efforts being made to overcome it, instances to the contrary, such as at Neudorf, being rare indeed.

Although we were requested to examine as usual certain private schools in the district, the illness of the junior Inspector prevented us from doing so except in the case of the Whakarewa Orphanage, and of the Sixth Standard children of St. Canice's, Westport, and Sacred Heart School, Reefton.

On the 31st December there were in the Board's employ 156 teachers, classified as follows:—Head teachers—certificated or licensed 39; assistant teachers—certificated or licensed 26, uncertificated 5; sole teachers—certificated or licensed 50, uncertificated 36. There were in addition forty-six pupil-teachers, as compared with fifty-four employed last year. Eight of these are licensed or fully certificated, and two others have passed the necessary examination. One of the Board's rules requires all teachers of aided schools who have not obtained a full certificate, or at least a partial one, to sit for the first- or second-year pupil-teachers' examination. Only one presented himself this year, several others being excused on the ground that, their appointments being recently made, they had had very little time for preparation. Under ordinary circumstances eight will be required to present themselves for the first-year examination in 1901. Half of our uncertificated teachers are employed in twenty-one very small household schools, the average number of children in each being slightly under five.

Fifty candidates presented themselves for the pupil-teachers' entrance examination in June last, and twenty-two of them succeeded in passing. With but one exception, all vacancies throughout the year have been filled by candidates who had been previously successful in this or a higher examination.

In the presence of the Inspectors criticism lessons for the benefit of the pupil-teachers were given in the two larger centres.

As usual, we attach a general summary of results for the whole district as extracted from the annual return:—

Classes.	Presented.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	170	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	463	445	320	13 11
" V. ...	653	641	425	12 11
" IV. ...	712	694	522	12 2
" III. ...	808	791	647	10 8
" II. ...	655	644	545	9 4
" I. ...	669	652	539	8 10
Preparatory ...	1,672	...	...	...
Totals ...	5,802	3,867	2,998	11 3½*
Totals for 1899 ...	5,907	3,886	2,980	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

The total is 105 lower than last year's, the falling-off being most noticeable in Standard IV. The proportion of passes is slightly higher, as also is the average age, the most marked difference in the latter case being in Standard I., of which class the average age is five months higher. Our children are still passing their respective standard examinations earlier than in most parts of the colony, the mean of the average age for the colony last year being 11·6, but for Otago and South Canterbury it was as low as 11·1.

The number present at the examinations was 5,444, but I cannot satisfactorily account for the fact of the absentees—356—being more numerous than in 1899. At thirty-seven schools every child whose name was on the roll was present.

It is a relief to find the number of schools in which the work was decidedly unsatisfactory reduced to ten. In four of these the poor results were probably due to the teachers' inexperience, all but one being uncertificated, and all having been appointed within a few months of the examination. In three other cases also the teachers were uncertificated.

By the regulations for the examination of schools issued in January, 1900, a new system, or, rather, a considerable alteration in the working of the standard pass system, was introduced. The chief feature of the new system is that the classification of the scholars in all standards from I. to V. is now in the hands of the head-teacher, who holds an examination for the sake of assigning certificates. The results of the examination may, however, not be indorsed by the Inspector if the

latter chooses to hold an individual examination. In any case the children are put into whatever classes the head-teacher directs. The important changes to note here are that the classification is no longer determined by examination, so that a child may be put back to a lower standard or retained in the same class, although he has passed the standard examination. Freedom to promote has always been granted, but now the head-teacher has almost absolute freedom of classification. By a further provision a child may take his English pass-subjects—reading, spelling, writing, and composition—with one class, and his arithmetic with another, the five subjects mentioned being all that are now required from Standards III., IV., V. To obtain a certificate for one or other of these classes a pass in reading is essential, but work equal to the requirements of the next lower standard may be accepted in two, but not more than two, of the other subjects. I may note here that when a child moves to another school it would be a help towards ready classification if his certificate were so framed as to show the subjects as well as the standard in which he had passed.

The examination basis on which a certificate is granted has, I consider, been placed too low. The system has not yet had a sufficiently long trial to enable one to fairly judge its merits. For some six years the examination of Standards I. and II. has been entirely in the hands of head-teachers, but with this difference: that their classification was final, and that certificates were granted on the strength of their examinations alone. In this district, abounding as it does in small schools—the last return shows forty-two having under fifteen pupils to each; that is the largest number recorded in any part of the colony, except in Auckland, which has forty-nine of this class in a district nearly five times as populous—the plan has not been a complete success. The inexperience of many young teachers renders them quite unfitted to classify their children well, and their conduct of those examinations has often been reluctantly undertaken, and consequently badly performed. Instead of maintaining a high standard of efficiency, the general tendency is to lower the examination to the intellectual level of the pupils presented, so that we have had continually to complain of children being allowed to pass the examination in Standards I. and II. too easily. This year in Standard I., of which the children, in all except the three large centres, were re-examined by us, we had to cancel the passes of thirty-six pupils, or 6 per cent. of the total number of passes, in spite of the fact that sample examination-papers had been previously supplied, and been very generally used. A comparison of the passes in the lower standards with those recorded last year bears out my contention, though I admit it does not prove it, as many other factors cannot here be taken into account. The passes in Standard I. as examined by Inspectors, are 12 per cent. lower than last year when examined by the teachers; those in Standard II., examined by the teachers as hitherto, but largely with sample examination-cards supplied by us, are 4 per cent. lower; but in Standard III., examined for the first time by the teachers, they are 10 per cent. higher. In the larger schools, where the head-teacher does not actually teach the classes that he has to examine, he has more of the character of an independent examiner, and in these I consider the system works more successfully. Clause 6 of the regulations already referred to gives power to the Inspector to re-examine individually, and at his discretion substitute his own results for the results shown on the class-lists presented by the head-teacher. Though such action on his part does not directly affect the classification, it may by keeping before the teachers a high standard of efficiency indirectly tend to check too hasty promotion. The share that head-teachers now take in the examination has, especially in the large schools, afforded me some relief; but the clerical work, which in this district has always been to us a heavy burden, has been somewhat increased this year by the necessity for entering or checking the entry of a figure to denote the pass in each subject, as well as that denoting the standard passed. This is perhaps a slight matter, though over nineteen thousand different entries in duplicate are here referred to. In spite of very plain directions, the varied methods of marking adopted by head-teachers, and of making the necessary entries, has been the chief source of trouble, and one which we hope will be diminished in the future.

The examination of Standard VI. pupils in pass-subjects is wisely left, as hitherto, in the hands of the Inspectors. I have, however, this year thought it advisable generally to examine in detail Standards IV., V., VI., as well as Standard I., in pass-subjects, and on this account head-teachers have usually refrained from previously testing the higher classes, though I should have much preferred them to do so. Reading and writing have as usual been well done, though in the latter subject the stricter requirements of which we gave notice two years ago have produced more failures. As a pass-subject, composition has this year shown a decided falling-off in the higher standards, and especially in Standard V., where a passage of poetry selected from the reading-book in use was not usually paraphrased better than one formerly taken at sight, but rather the reverse. This surely indicates insufficient training in the comprehension of the language and the matter of the reading-books. The failures in composition numbered one-fifth of the whole. Spelling showed a numerically worse result, though, except in Standard V., it was much better than last year. We propose next year to make the tests more comprehensive, especially in Standard III.

Arithmetic still is, as it has always been, the crucial subject, causing more labour, anxiety, and disappointment to both teachers and scholars than any other work. The power now granted to accept the work of a lower standard class in this subject should prove a boon to those who are not gifted with a strong faculty for computation. So far the liberty to classify according to subjects has been very rarely employed, but in the Inspector's marking a lower percentage has been treated as an equivalent to the work of a lower class in the same subject. The proportion of those who sent in unsatisfactory work in arithmetic was slightly lower this year—36 per cent.—the percentage of passes in this subject being as follows:—

			Standard VI.	Standard V.	Standard IV.	Standard III.
Year 1900	...	...	62	47	66	77
Year 1899	...	...	48	57	69	69

The work of the Sixth Standard children, though not yet good, was more satisfactory ; but it is probably owing to the department's tests being of a more uniform and straightforward character that so many were able to work them successfully, the percentage of passes being the highest for that standard that this district has yet recorded. Standard V. arithmetic is always a difficult subject, probably because the child's mind has here to deal largely with numbers in the abstract ; but the great falling-off in the results this year is unaccountable, and certainly not, I think, due to any special difficulty in the nature of the cards.

Drawing, like geography, has now been made a class-subject in all classes except Standard VI., and I would rather that no exception had been made. I regret that geography should have been made a class-subject at all, and hope that the greater number of failures in Standard VI. geography is not an indication that the subject is already beginning to suffer from neglect. The other class-subjects comprise grammar, history, science, and object-lessons, recitation, and handwork. An approved course in the last-named subject may be substituted for any other class-subject except drawing. Its introduction marks a further advance in the direction of technical education. Except in the case of the nine schools whose preparatory and junior classes are trained in kindergarten exercises, no advantage has yet been taken of this innovation in the syllabus.

Recitation continues to be well and universally taught, and grammar shows a much-needed improvement, being reported now as satisfactory in twenty schools.

The only additional subjects are singing, needlework, and drill, and, as needlework is generally compulsory, and all the class-subjects are still expected from every school, very little choice is left to the female teacher of a small school, who necessarily teaches all classes, and certainly to her has come no lightening of the burden of an overweighted syllabus. Singing is taught in thirty-six schools, and drill in forty-two. The needlework has as usual at each school been examined by a lady or a committee of ladies appointed for the purpose, but considerable inconvenience was caused this year in some cases because their reports were not available on the examination-day. In consequence some went astray, and eleven of them are not yet to hand. I hope that teachers concerned will be more prompt and businesslike in future. The sewing was described as "fair" in ten schools, "satisfactory" in forty-one, "good" in nineteen, and "excellent" in twenty-three.

The cadet corps formed at the three largest schools—Nelson Central, Westport High School, and Reefton—have been supplied by the Education Department with dummy rifles, and are being successfully carried on. Military drill is taught in several other schools too, and especially well in three of the Waimea schools, the teachers being in all cases active and efficient members of Volunteer corps. Outdoor drill, either as physical exercises or in some other form, is taught in forty-four schools in all, and the training given has been considered satisfactory in twenty-seven.

During the winter months cookery classes in connection with the Toi Toi Valley School were successfully conducted, the arrangements having been made by the Nelson School Committee.

The examination report on the secondary class of the Westport High School has already been laid before the Board, and the school may be congratulated upon the success that has marked the work of this department. I am also pleased to notice that a pupil from the primary classes of the same school, who passed the Sixth Standard examination in September last, has won a Queen's scholarship, taking a high place in the competition conducted by the Victoria College authorities. For the second time in succession a candidate from this school has attained this distinction.

The serious illness of my colleague almost at the opening of the examination campaign made it necessary to obtain other assistance, which was generously granted by the Board. Six of the leading teachers in various parts of the district acted at different times as Assistant Inspectors, thereby relieving me of the task of examining for the most part the smaller schools, a duty which they, under my direction, readily undertook, and discharged with zeal and ability.

Mr. Ladley desires to thank the teachers and Committees for many expressions of sympathy, and joins with me in especially thanking the teachers who displayed such willingness to help, and the Committees who kindly granted them the necessary leave, since by their co-operation with the Board we were enabled to accomplish the arduous duty of examining the schools in all parts of the district.

I have, &c.,

G. A. HARKNESS, M.A., Senior Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

GREY.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honour to submit my annual general report on the schools subject to inspection in this district for the year ending 31st December, 1900.

Thirty schools were in active operation at the end of the year : of these, all were examined, and twenty-nine were inspected, the other one—viz., Orwell Creek—not being open at the time of my inspection visit. I also inspected and examined the four Roman Catholic schools in the district.

One new school was opened during the year—viz., that at Poerua Settlement.

The Chairman of the Board visited most of the schools during the year for the purpose of ascertaining the requirements of the district with regard to buildings, general repairs, and improvements. It is a matter of regret that one school was entirely burnt down and another was seriously injured by fire during the year. In each case no means for extinguishing fire were at hand, other-

wise the damage would probably have been less. All schools should be furnished with a ladder and two or three buckets.

It was a matter of congratulation that this district should have gained the highest average percentage in attendance for the colony during last year, the figures being 87.2 per cent. of the average roll-number. The Minister, in his annual report, describes the high figures as being worthy of note. The weekly competitions instituted amongst the classes of the Greymouth District High School for possession of the flag, which are decided by the average attendance, have had a wonderful influence on the attendance there, and, as our annual average mainly depends on the attendance at this school, I fully anticipate seeing our district occupying the same post of honour this year. So far as the attendance at the examinations is concerned, it could not well be better: no matter what the weather is, the pupils are invariably present.

This year we have been working under new regulations, which came into force on the 1st January, 1900. Under these, principal teachers practically have freedom in regard to the classification of their pupils; they may arrange their pupils in different classes for different subjects, and any pupil must be examined in the class in which he has been taught. Teachers in this district have as yet taken little or no advantage of this freedom of classification; possibly they require a little time to get into new ways and to cut themselves adrift from the old ones. That there are cases in which the placing of pupils in different classes for different subjects would be an advantage there is no doubt, and in medium and small-sized schools I think a direct benefit would be gained by doing so, but in large schools I fear the interchanging of pupils from one class to another would, if carried to any extent, unduly disturb the main portion of the classes.

No great change has been made in the actual syllabus, except that geography and drawing have been transferred from the pass to the class group of subjects in Standards I., II., III., IV., and V., whilst they still remain in the pass group in Standard VI.

Handwork has also been in the group of class-subjects, not as an addition to the group, but as one which may be substituted for other subjects (see Regulation 29). This subject has as yet found no place in our schools, in most instances, no doubt, owing to the lack of funds with which to purchase necessary material. I might, however, mention that by regulations recently gazetted under "The Manual and Technical Instruction Act, 1900," provision is made for granting aid, by way of capitation to all classes in our primary schools for the special purpose of providing material for this class of work, so that I trust before long we shall see it introduced in many, if not all, of our schools.

As regards the annual examination, this, it would be as well to point out, is not an examination for the purpose of classification, though it will undoubtedly have a direct bearing on it, but an examination on which passes are based and certificates issued. This annual examination is, in the case of Standards I. to V. inclusive, to be held by the head-teacher, and in the case of Standard VI. by the Inspector. In our large schools the head-teachers examined Standards I. to V., and I examined portions of each class in the various subjects. In other schools, the head-teachers having previously held their examinations, I examined every pupil as usual, and conferred with them afterwards on the subject of passes in Standards I. to V. In some of our smaller schools the teachers did not care to undertake the responsibility of examining for certificates, and I therefore examined these at their request, the returns of their four quarterly examinations affording guidance as to what their own opinion was of the abilities of their pupils. I must here say that, on the whole, I was thoroughly satisfied with the results of the examinations as conducted by the teachers. Rather more care in filling up the class-lists might reasonably have been expected of many of our teachers; the class-lists were on a new form, it is true, but instructions were plainly printed on the back of each. In several cases I had to rewrite the whole of the class-lists.

In estimating the general efficiency of the schools the same method has been adopted as in previous years, the only difference being that the mean average percentage of marks has, in the case of our larger schools, been computed from the marks of a portion of a class instead of, as previously, from the marks of the whole class. In no case have the marks of the teachers been taken in obtaining the following. Summarising the results, I find that in the pass-subjects six schools gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—"very good"; seven schools gained a mean mark between 70 and 79 per cent.—"good"; fourteen schools gained a mean mark between 60 and 69 per cent.—"satisfactory"; three schools gained a mean mark between 50 and 59 per cent.—"fair." In the class-subjects one school gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—"very good"; seven schools gained a mean mark between 70 and 79 per cent.—"good"; fifteen schools gained a mean mark between 60 and 69 per cent.—"satisfactory"; five schools gained a mean mark between 50 and 59 per cent.—"fair"; one school gained a mean mark between 30 and 39 per cent.—"very weak." And in the additional subjects one school gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—"very good"; twenty-one schools gained a mean mark between 70 and 79 per cent.—"good"; four schools gained a mean mark between 60 and 69 per cent.—"satisfactory." In the class-subject group one school is not represented, this being a school recently opened, in which the teacher devoted the whole time to the pass-subjects.

The following gives a summary of results for this year: Number of schools in operation at close of year, 30; total presented for examination, including infants and pupils above Standard VI., 1,598; total presented in standards, 1,045; total present in standards, 1,028; total passed 946.

I have purposely refrained from giving similar returns for previous years, as these results, being obtained, some by the teachers and some by myself, are of no practical value for purposes of comparison.

The total number of infants is 492, and the total number of infants over eight years of age not presented for Standard I. is seventy-three. Similar figures for the previous year were 480 and eighty-eight respectively.

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

Classes.	Presented.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Averages of Passes for New Zealand in 1899.
Secondary class and class above Standard VI. ...	61	...	...	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Standard VI. ...	126	126	105	14 1	14 0
" V. ...	173	170	150	13 3	13 1
" IV. ...	210	203	202	12 9	12 2
" III. ...	193	192	172	11 1	11 0
" II. ...	169	166	161	9 8	9 11
" I. ...	174	171	156	8 7	8 9
Preparatory ...	492	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,598	1,028	946	11 7*	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

Without going further into details, I may state that in general our schools, so far as staff are concerned, are in good working order, and the subjects of instruction, for the most part, are fairly and intelligently treated. Many of our schools are, however, inadequately provided with the most necessary materials, such as maps, globes, charts, &c., while extra reading-books are scarcely found in any of them. Reading is by far the most important subject of instruction in our schools, and this view is brought prominently before us in the new regulations. Every pupil is now required to pass his standard in this subject (the only concession granted being a slight one to pupils of Standard VI.), and I think rightly so: if a child can read easily and intelligently he is then in a position to gain information for himself, and to increase his store of knowledge. But do our children read easily and intelligently? I am afraid the majority do not. No doubt most of them read their one wretched book fluently enough, but that is purely mechanical—they know it by heart. Give them a strange book of equal difficulty to read, and how do they acquit themselves? Why, they are simply at sea. The chief reason for this is that our children have not a sufficiently wide training in the subject. We go on year after year with one reading-book for each standard per year, and we expect that the getting through this one book is going to make intelligent readers of our children. It is simply absurd. Next year we have a new reading-book, and no doubt improvement will be effected, but the improvement will be of a temporary nature. To become permanent we must have more reading material. Is it reasonable to suppose that our children will do with about one-third of what is considered indispensable by almost every other district and country? Several other subjects, such as geography, drawing, &c., are suffering through lack of material. In writing I can record some improvement, the introduction of the correspondence style of the vertical system being mainly responsible for this. I do not propose to offer more remarks on the subjects taught in our schools. That our teachers do their work honestly and well, though sometimes working under adverse circumstances, of this I am satisfied. What I wish more especially to emphasize is the absolute necessity for giving them the materials to work with.

In the matter of drill, this is carried out with fair results wherever male teachers are employed. One cadet corps has been formed in the district, and has done excellent work.

Roman Catholic Schools.—Reports, &c., were prepared and furnished to these schools in every respect similar to those supplied to schools directly under the Board.

Classes.	Presented.	Present in Standards.	Passed.
Secondary class and class above Standard VI. ...	14	...	...
Standard VI. ...	16	15	15
" V. ...	30	30	30
" IV. ...	39	39	39
" III. ...	25	23	23
" II. ...	31	21	21
" I. ...	35	35	35
Preparatory ...	72	...	...
Totals ...	262	163	163

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM L. F. FETCH, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman and Members, Grey Education Board, Greymouth.

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Hokitika, 16th January, 1901.

I have the honour to present the following report on the primary schools of the district for the year 1900. All the schools were examined with the exception of two household schools in the southern part of the district. One of these, the Karangarua School, had been in operation during the previous year, and the other, that at Five-mile Beach, was on the occasion of my visit closed through sickness. Separate reports have been presented on the examination of the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School, and of the Catholic schools at Kumara, Hokitika, Kanieri, and Ross. The total number of schools was forty. The aided schools of South Westland and three others were not inspected. The inspection of the remaining schools was duly carried out.

The following tables give the general results of the examination of the various standard classes :—

EXAMINATION OF PASS-SUBJECTS.

Classes.				Presented.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1899.
							Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary class	...	...	...	27	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	60	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	94	90	78	13 11	14 0
" V.	...	...	...	144	142	125	13 0	13 1
" IV.	...	...	...	171	169	140	12 1	12 2
" III.	...	...	...	156	155	133	11 2	11 0
" II.	...	...	...	143	143	137	9 9	9 11
" I.	...	...	...	136	133	129	9 1	8 9
Preparatory	...	...	...	346	...	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	1,277	832	742	11 6*	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

The distribution of the number presented for examination in the various classes is expressed in the following percentages of the total roll-numbers: Standard VII., 4·8; Standard VI., 7·5; Standard V., 11·5; Standard IV., 13·7; Standard III., 12·5; Standard II., 11·4; Standard I., 10·9; Preparatory, 27·7. The continued operation of the newly adopted regulations relating to the promotion of the pupils will render a statement of classes more indefinite owing to the presence in each class of pupils working in other classes in certain subjects. During the first year, however, freedom of classification has not been generally exercised, being confined to the preparation of the arithmetic of a lower standard by seventeen pupils. The reason given for the retention in the preparatory classes of pupils over eight years of age is in general satisfactory.

The percentages of failures compared with the total roll-number in standards is 12·1. The proportion of passes in the various subjects that are on the pass group in all classes remains about the same as in the previous years, except in arithmetic, in which there is an increase of 6 per cent. The following brief remarks relate to these subjects :—

Reading: In all classes at least three reading-books are prepared. The Imperial Readers are purchased by the pupils, and another set is provided by the Board. The latter, not being required for the preparation of spelling, is used only at school. In addition the pupils from Standard III. to Standard VII. are provided by the Board, for use in school only, with history readers. A satisfactory amount of reading-matter is thus provided at little cost to the parents, and since this system was adopted a great improvement in the subject has been effected. Want of fluency is rarely met with, and, while insufficient expression of the meaning has sometimes to be recorded, it is seldom that intelligent presentation of the subject-matter is totally lacking. In the Hokitika School the instruction in reading is very successful.

Spelling: The test in this subject is confined to exercises from one reading-book, and is generally well answered. It too often happens, however, that the instruction is confined to the setting and examination of home-work. Intelligent instruction should include blackboard exercises, suitable to the standard, on the composition of words.

Writing: This subject has suffered by the adoption in a number of schools of semi-upright style. While the eventual result will in most cases no doubt be an improvement, the derangement caused by the change is evident. It is important in the upper classes to insist on the formation of a good running hand. One method of securing this is the insistence on neatness and correctness in all the writing connected with the school work.

Composition: The instruction in this subject is in general very efficient. Not only the ordinary exercises, but synthesis of sentences, paraphrasing, and correction of errors are also well prepared by the respective classes.

Arithmetic: In all schools the pupils were examined as in previous years, and the results recorded. The percentage of passes are as follows: All standards, 80; Standard VI., 76; Standard V., 81; Standard IV., 80; Standard III., 79. These results are very satisfactory, and are accompanied by commendable success in mental arithmetic.

It is important to note, however, that business-men frequently complain that in simple operations connected with commercial requirements boys who have passed through the school show a

deficiency of readiness or knowledge. This is a reasonable ground of complaint, and is due to the inclusion in the syllabus of too large a number of rules, whereby continual practice in ordinary commercial arithmetic cannot be maintained. A rearrangement and curtailment of the course of instruction in this subject is very necessary.

CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.

Subjects.	In Schools with more than One Teacher.						In Schools under the Charge of One Teacher.					
	Omitted or not required.	Inferior.	Moderate or Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.	Omitted or not required.	Inferior.	Moderate or Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.
Geography	...	...	1	5	3	...	..	4	13	6	2	...
Drawing	...	...	...	5	4	...	...	...	7	15	3	...
Grammar	1	2	...	4	2	...	...	3	10	11	1	...
History	1	...	3	2	2	1	1	1	10	11	2	...
Elementary science and object-lessons	...	...	...	5	3	1	...	3	13	8	1	...
Recitation	...	...	...	3	3	3	...	...	3	17	5	...
Handwork	9	...	...	...	...	...	25	...	...	...	...	...
Singing	3	...	...	1	3	2	23	...	...	1	1	...
Needlework	...	...	...	...	4	5	5	1	1	13	3	...
Drill and exercise ...	4	...	...	2	2	1	24	...	...	...	1	2

The general result in the class and additional subjects may be also expressed as follows :— Good—class-subjects 5, additional subjects 12; satisfactory—class-subjects 14, additional subjects 13; moderate or fair—class-subjects 14, additional subjects 7; inferior—class-subjects 1, additional subjects 1.

In the larger schools there has been a distinct improvement in the class and additional subjects. In very few cases has the instruction in these failed to secure a satisfactory record. It is to be noted that among schools with more than one teacher there are still three that omit singing, and four that find no place in the course of instruction for drill and physical exercise. The necessary material can be obtained from the Board, and no teacher should find any difficulty in becoming acquainted with at least a suitable course of free and wand exercises in physical drill.

In the schools in charge of one teacher the majority produced weak results in geography and grammar, and in elementary science and object-lessons. In these subjects teachers in schools of this grade may be excused if the course adopted is not as full as in larger schools, but there must be regular instruction, and the preparation of a definite amount. The results in drawing, history, recitation, and needlework are more satisfactory.

As I indicated in last year's report, the adoption of the new regulations has affected the amount of the Inspector's responsibility to a very small extent. In all the schools in charge of only one teacher the promotions were based on the result of my examination, and at the request of the head-teachers of four of the schools of the higher grade the same course was adopted in their cases. It is not, however, according to the spirit of the regulations that the head-teachers should shirk the responsibility, unless under special circumstances, especially as in cases of doubt the promotion can still be left for the Inspector's judgment.

Freedom of classification has so far been exercised only in the retention of a few pupils in a lower standard in arithmetic. The duty of classification of the pupils has been well carried out by the head-teachers of the larger schools. Most of these have recognised that an opportunity has been granted to maintain a higher standard of work, and that it is the interest of the school and of the weak pupils themselves to rigorously keep back those who would, if promoted, retard the progress of the various classes. The headmaster has to aid his judgment a knowledge of the ability and diligence of each child in addition to the results of the periodical examinations, and in cases of doubt has as a further test the Inspector's examinations. The occurrence of unwise promotions should, therefore, be very rare.

My examination of all schools was performed according to the same system of individual test as in previous years. As there are no very large schools, there is not the same necessity to save time and energy in examining the classes in sections. The fact, therefore, that a second estimate is provided will prove a guide to the head-teacher as to the average requirements of each standard.

As far as this district is concerned, the new system has affected the working of the schools to a very small extent. What is of greater urgency is a revision of the syllabus of instruction. This has been framed too much on the requirements of the largest schools with full and efficient staffs. It is agreed that the present syllabus lacks in adaptability to special conditions, and that too much is attempted. It is sufficient at present to indicate that in arithmetic, grammar, and geography the amount of work required should be lessened and rearranged, and that different schemes should be adopted for the different grades of schools.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Westland.

A. J. MORTON, B.A., Inspector.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Christchurch, 24th January, 1901.

We have the honour to present the statistical return for the year 1900 of the schools in the North Canterbury District as required by section 16 of the regulations for inspection and examination.

The return shows the number of pupils presented in the several classes, and purports to give 'the number present in each class at the time of the annual visit.' Both items are copied from the separate school reports, for which the forms are furnished by the Education Department; but it is necessary to point out in regard to the second of the two columns that, according to our instructions, the number reported as present in Standards V. to I. is the number present at the head-teacher's examination of the pupils, and not the number present at the annual visit of the Inspector. The difference so far is not great, for children rarely absent themselves on the day of the Inspector's visit if they can possibly attend, but time may see the difference greater as the importance to the individual of the examination diminishes in the minds of parent and pupil.

Some aided schools opened before the end of the year have not yet been visited, so that the number of schools examined remains the same (200) as in the previous year. In these 200 schools there were presented 20,018 children, of which number 18,732 were reported as present. For the previous year the numbers corresponding were 20,428 and 19,036. In the Sixth Standard 1,194 certificates have been granted, showing an increase of forty-one. The following are the average ages of pupils in the several standard classes: Standard VI., 13 years 9 months; Standard V., 12 years 10 months; Standard IV., 11 years 11 months; Standard III., 10 years 10 months; Standard II., 9 years 8 months; Standard I., 8 years 6 months.

During the year the periods devoted to inspection and examination respectively have not differed materially from the routine of former years. In the larger schools the newer conditions have relieved us of a good deal of night-work hitherto necessary for the valuation of papers, and in about a dozen of the largest there has been a substantial saving of time, which, however, the season of the year in which the saving was made did not allow us to utilise elsewhere to advantage. In all schools of smaller size the examination has taken up as much time as ever. In the future we hope to be able to do something more to meet the present prevailing view of the relative importance of method and result by adding a number of casual visits of short duration, on each of which some one or more points of discipline or method would receive attention.

The most important point on which our evidence of the past year's experience will be looked for is clearly the use the teachers have made of the recent extension of their duties and privileges in the classification of the pupils. In the larger schools the change has been welcomed as a manifest improvement, and the feeling is fully reciprocated by the Inspectors, apart from any relief afforded them in the discharge of an arduous duty. In the smaller schools the change is less appreciated. In these we have very commonly found a considerable reluctance on the part of the teacher to put himself in the position of the final arbiter of the pupil's status. In the great majority of cases the Inspector has been requested to modify the result in accordance with his own judgment, and generally we may say—that is, with comparatively few exceptions—the schedule of the small school in its final form is the result of a consultation.

In determining the status of pupils one great source of embarrassment—perhaps the chief source outside the large schools, where the teachers have boldly fixed their own standard, definitely and consistently declining to accept the narrower basis permitted—has been the great want of definiteness in the standard specified in the regulations. Whether a Fifth Standard certificate, for instance, is to be granted on the basis of a Fifth Standard qualification in three subjects only—say, in reading, spelling, and writing (two of them of minimum value as indicators of mental progress)—or is to represent a much wider qualification, including a Fifth Standard proficiency in composition or arithmetic, or in both, is, we are instructed, within the option given alike to both teacher and Inspector. So wide a field for varying interpretations places the teacher in an invidious position, which it can scarcely serve any useful purpose to ask him to occupy; while the Inspector, on his part, may well hesitate to disturb an arrangement proposed by the teacher within the limits of his option, though in the interests of the school it may not meet with approval. Regulations, however, we have to recollect, do not make a district. The making or marring has more to do with the character and capacity of the staff of teachers the district has collected or bred; in this respect we may feel sufficiently complacent, expecting to find in a common understanding a fairly efficient substitute for a more precise definition of guiding principles.

As to the standard of proficiency adopted by the teachers in individual subjects, we have considerable confidence that, whatever else it may have been in a few instances, it has been essentially honest, and in the main examination has shown it to be sound.

Reading: In this subject we are justified in saying that our schools are making progress, the progress being chiefly in the direction of wider range and increased facility in the lower standards, and of more frequent evidences of intelligent appreciation in the upper. On reading as a vocal art much stress has not been laid, in the upper stages at least, nor do we consider this feature of nearly so much importance as range and intelligence. In such a view the class practice, however valuable in itself, must be regarded as subordinate to the cultivation of a reading habit, and wherever teachers, by the formation of school libraries, or by the use of supplementary class-books of standard fiction, have done something in this direction their efforts have been amply rewarded.

Writing: Complaints are sometimes heard from outside sources that the writing of boys leaving school for trade employments leaves much to be desired. No doubt it does; but even at the Sixth Standard stage, with boys of thirteen or fourteen years of age, much more than a crude school-boy hand, falling far short of a passable commercial standard, can scarcely be expected from the average pupil when we consider the time available for special practice amid the claims of a variety of subjects. We are satisfied if the principles on which the writing has been taught and the

proficiency attained are such as to develop with the maturity of coming years something more worthy of the name of good penmanship. We often have reason to direct the teacher's attention to the necessity of enforcing much more strictly the well-understood rules of posture and finger-position; beyond this we have no criticism to make, and generally we believe that our schools treat the subject on the right lines, and with a substantial measure of success.

Composition: The practice in this subject usually occupies three half-hours weekly, and in method and result varies much according to the skill and natural bent of the teacher. In the exercises of the individual pupils a further variation as fully pronounced coincides in a large measure with what may be termed the social status of the pupil and the habit of reading acquired. If the pupils read for themselves, or are happy enough to have in their homes an intelligent environment, the teaching of composition is a pleasant and easy task; otherwise it is anything but easy, and in many instances must find such satisfaction as it can in an attainment the merits of which consist mainly in the absence of gross technical blunders. In the larger schools, where in the main the methods of treatment adopted are best, we should in most cases like to see more done in the direction of leading up to written composition by oral exercises at the earlier stages, and in the co-ordination of the practice of the several standards, so as to secure a better gradation and a more systematic development.

Arithmetic: In arithmetic we find a greater divergence between the estimate formed by the head-teacher and the actual performance of the pupil in the presence of the Inspector than is met with in other subjects. For arithmetic the school time-table generally provides at least six hours and a half weekly—more than double the time spent in reading—and we have considerable doubt whether the result in the educational benefit to the children is commensurate with the sacrifice thus made on its behalf. Five hours weekly would probably be ample to give the necessary oral practice and fix principles in the minds of the pupils, provided that the limits of the work required in the three upper classes were set out with more precise indications of the range of practice.

Among class-subjects geography and drawing, which are now transferred to this group, retain nearly everywhere the characteristics they acquired as pass-subjects. The time given to them has been just the same, the nature of the instruction has not differed, and the result is practically identical. In merit—of the kind produced by the special line adopted—they stand first in the class group, and we hope they will continue to occupy no less prominent a position in the minds of the teachers. In geography, however, it is clear that both the programme and the method of treatment require substantial amendments to secure fully the benefits expected to be gained from the release of the subject from pass conditions, and in drawing a variety of development, having a closer bearing on nature-knowledge and marking more distinctly the teacher's individualities of taste and aptitude, would be welcomed.

On grammar we have already given our views pretty fully, and we have now nothing to add beyond the expression of a desire to see during the coming year a material improvement in the prescribed arrangements.

Under the head of science and object-lessons, we may again recommend to the notice of teachers the very great importance of co-ordinating the work of the classes to a greater extent than is at present the rule, and the paramount value of an intimate connection of the lessons with the realm of nature-knowledge within the possible experience of the children.

In handwork our larger schools have already (as for some years past) much to show of an attractive kind in a variety of infant occupations of unquestionably good educational value; occupations of a similar character are also in most cases extended to the First Standard classes, and in some supply useful practice in the Second. For work in the upper standards two or three of our country schools, in which the masters have a special taste and skill in this direction, furnish good examples. In the city the woodwork classes of the Normal School, and the cookery lessons of the School of Domestic Instruction, now attended by a large number of girls belonging to the upper classes of town and suburban schools, provide so far the chief opportunities our children have of practical instruction.

We have, &c.,

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

The Chairman, North Canterbury Education Board.

Classes.			Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Ages of Pupils in each Class.
						Yrs. mos.
Standard VII.	...	...	311	210	...	...
" VI.	...	...	1,529	1,458	1,194	13 9
" V.	...	...	2,203	2,121	1,621	12 10
" IV.	...	...	2,682	2,575	2,063	11 11
" III.	...	...	2,806	2,713	2,133	10 10
" II.	...	...	2,391	2,342	2,099	9 8
" I....	...	...	2,170	2,133	2,022	8 6
Preparatory...	...	...	5,926	5,180	...	...
Totals	...	...	20,018	18,732	11,132	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 26th March, 1901.

We have the honour to present the following report for the year 1900 :—

Sixty-seven schools were in operation throughout the year, and all were examined between July and December. In the earlier part of the year visits of inspection were paid to all the schools except one of the smallest. In the month of May we examined the five Roman Catholic schools, which together have a roll-number of 704. The annual examination of pupil-teachers was conducted as usual in June, and the scholarship examination in December. The secondary work of the district high schools was taken at the time of our annual visit to these schools. The Board has had reports of all our work read at the regular meetings; and we have to thank the members for the attention they have given to the consideration of these reports, while the pressure of other business has been steadily increasing and making greater demands on their time. The intimate knowledge the Board thus acquires of every school and its work is a source of satisfaction to us; and it should be an encouragement to teachers to know that the quality of their teaching and the successful accomplishment of the work assigned to them, so far as we are able to form an estimate of these things and to express our judgment on them, are matters that come under the notice of every member of the Board. In respect of closeness of touch between Boards, Inspectors, and teachers, we think the smaller education districts have had a decided advantage over the larger districts, though at the same time we are well aware that, so far as teachers' salaries are concerned, the smaller districts have in the past laboured under serious disadvantages that are probably soon to be removed by the adoption of a colonial scale of salaries.

It is usual to give in tabular form the examination results of the Board's schools for the whole district. In submitting this table we wish to point out that, except in Standard VI., the passes are those awarded by the teachers, who under the regulations in force during the year determined the passes in Standards I. to V., leaving the results in Standard VI. to be determined by the Inspector. The following is the table :—

Classes.				Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	156	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	391	380	262	13 8
" V.	...	...	...	618	577	481	12 9
" IV.	...	...	...	690	656	575	11 11
" III.	...	...	...	717	693	627	10 8
" II.	...	...	...	616	593	560	9 7
" I.	...	...	...	540	527	495	8 6
Preparatory	...	...	...	1,431	...	...	...
Totals for 1900	...	...	...	5,159	3,426	3,000	11 2*
Totals for 1899	...	...	...	5,102	3,445	2,988	11 1*

* Mean of average age.

The table shows an increase in the number on the roll from 5,102 to 5,159. Since 1896, when the roll-number reached 5,291, there has been a yearly decrease to record; and, though we are still 132 short of the highest point reached, the closer settlement that is taking place in many parts of the district should in a few years bring a considerable increase. The number of pupils present at our examinations and examined in Standard I. to VI. is 3,426 out of a roll-number in these classes of 3,572. As there was no change in the form of examination report, in which were to be recorded the numbers of children presented, present, and passed, we counted as present only those that were present at our examinations, and marked as absent those that absented themselves at the time of our visit, though they had been present and had passed the teachers' examinations. We have since learned that it was intended that those that passed the teachers' examinations should have been recorded as present on the examination-report form. Our way of marking, though perhaps not quite in order, reveals a state of matters that might otherwise have escaped notice: we refer to the large increase in the number of those that absented themselves from the Inspectors' examinations. This number has gone up from ninety-nine in all standards last year to 146 this year. Some of these were absent from the teachers' examinations as well as from ours, but of the others a very large proportion were those that the teachers were not prepared to promote to the next higher class. The hope of promotion being thus taken away, the information that they had not passed having been conveyed to them before our visit, they felt they might as well stay away from our examination, and they did so. Like many others, they thought the pass was all they went to school for. We have all along contended that it was a mistake to require the teacher to hold a pass examination immediately preceding our visit; the estimate formed of his pupils by periodical testing and by his daily intercourse with them should have been sufficiently definite to enable him to say who should be promoted and who should not. Even though the teacher might not directly communicate to the pupils the results of his examination, very few children would have doubts as to their success or failure. We do not know from what point of view the pass examination by the teacher was not objectionable, but that it should prove the means of preventing some children from attending school at our annual visit is an objection that we did not anticipate.

As the basis of promotion in standards is not the same as last year, and as it has fallen to the teachers to award the passes in Standards I. to V., a comparison of this year's results with last year's would serve no useful purpose. We note, however, with some degree of satisfaction, that the passes in Standards I. and II., which since 1894 have been determined by the teachers, have fallen to 94 per cent. of those examined, as against 98 per cent. last year. We do not consider the figures to denote a less degree of proficiency on the part of the pupils; we have grounds for hoping that in this lower percentage we have some assurance of a higher standard of attainment being demanded from the younger pupils, which will insure stronger going on their part as they proceed on their course. In Standards III., IV., and V. the new regulations permitted teachers to grant a pass on easier terms than we had been accustomed to exact under previous regulations. Taking advantage of the minimum requirements, a few teachers, some from inexperience, others from motives of various kinds, have awarded passes which in our judgment would have been much better withheld, if, as most people naturally expect them to do, "pass" and "promotion" are to mean the same thing. Most of our teachers, concerning themselves only with what they considered best in the interest of their pupils, have awarded passes with the understanding that they were classifying their pupils for the work of a new session, and this duty they have discharged with admirable discretion. In our largest schools, with masters skilled in all matters of school management, we all expected this; but even in our smaller schools, in the face of difficulties that hardly affect the large schools, the duty of promoting their own pupils has been carried out by the teachers with faithfulness and excellent judgment. In a few instances, not many in proportion to the numbers dealt with, the teachers left the decision of doubtful cases to our judgment. At a conference with teachers, held some time before the examinations commenced, we pointed out that, the privilege of classifying their pupils having been granted to them, we should consider it a sign of weakness if, unless under most exceptional circumstances, the responsibilities attaching to the privilege were to be shifted to our shoulders. Better boldly risk a few mistakes than timidly let out of their grasp the right they had just won. This was the spirit in which we wished them to face their new task, and they did not disappoint us.

Standard VI. was the only class in which we had to examine the pupils individually for a pass. The subjects were the same as last year—namely, reading, spelling, and dictation, writing, composition, arithmetic, geography, and drawing. The conditions under which a pass was to be awarded were somewhat altered: work equal to the next lower standard might be accepted in not more than one of the first five subjects, and in not more than two of the seven subjects. Thus a pupil whose work was equal to that of Standard V. in arithmetic and in composition, and satisfied the requirements for Standard VI. in the other subjects, must fail. Another whose work was equal to that of Standard V. in arithmetic and in geography, and satisfied the requirements for Standard VI. in the remaining subjects, might pass. We had some difficulty in arriving at a fair mode of settling the terms for a pass in arithmetic. A pupil might fail badly in Standard VI. arithmetic, and yet it was an open question whether, had he been given a Standard V. test, he would not have proved himself capable of satisfying the requirements of that standard in that subject. To give him this second chance would have encroached so much on the time for other subjects that in schools where the examination lasted only one day it was impossible to allow this concession. In all schools our practice was to give credit for equalling the requirements of Standard V. if two sums out of the five set in Standard VI. work were correct, or if there was such evidence of skill in computation and of knowledge of method as in our judgment entitled the pupil to be credited with two-fifths of the value of the paper. If a pupil did not earn two-fifths of the value of the card set in Standard VI. arithmetic, though fully satisfying the requirements in the six other subjects, he was not awarded a pass in Standard VI. On the whole, we may say that it was more difficult to obtain a pass this year in Standard VI. than it was last year. Of 380 examined, 262 passed—a percentage of almost 69, as against 77 for last year. As always happens, many that failed were separated by only a few marks from those that passed. If in their case failure meant another year's schooling, some day these pupils may come to think it was a good thing they did fail. The average age of the pupils examined in Standard VI. is only 13 years 8 months, and every one will allow that for boys and girls of that age another year or two at school would be most advantageous, both as regards their mental equipment and their physical fitness for the duties of life.

According to the rearrangement of subjects, the following come under the head of class-subjects: namely, Drawing, history, grammar, geography, science, and object-lessons, recitation, and handwork. As a general rule, we find the schools that do well in standard work are those that do well in class-subjects. A summary of the degree of proficiency shown in class-subjects is as follows: Good, 9; satisfactory, 40; fair, 16; moderate, 2. When it is stated that "good" implies at least 80 per cent. of the marks given, and "satisfactory" at least 60 per cent., and when the wide range of subjects is taken into account, it will be understood that the schools marked "good" are in a highly creditable state of efficiency, and that those marked "satisfactory" have had this term applied to them as designating a higher degree of efficiency in teaching than is usually associated with the term. But for the inclusion of grammar, the treatment of which in most of our schools still leaves much to be desired, the marks for class-subjects would have been generally higher.

The additional subjects have been reduced to include only drill, singing, and sewing. Early in the year a circular was issued by the Board containing directions for the instruction of all pupils in drill and physical exercises, and a copy of McDonald's "Drill Manual for Schools" was forwarded to every school. This action of the Board, synchronising with the military enthusiasm evoked by the stirring events of the year, has brought about a marked improvement in the teaching of drill and physical exercises. Singing, if it has not gained in sweetness, has, at all events, lost nothing in swing and heartiness from the introduction of many popular patriotic songs. The

school walls have been ringing with the lusty vigour thrown into the older favourites, "Rule Britannia" and "Red, White, and Blue"; and young hearts have given vocal expression to their martial aspirations in the vigorous rendering of the newer favourites, "Sons of the Empire," "Sons of the Sea," and "Soldiers of the Queen."

Sewing continues to be well taught. In some schools the mark "excellent" has been awarded, and in all but a very few the mark has been "good." A summary of the results in additional subjects is as follows: Good, 18; satisfactory, 31; fair, 15; moderate 2; inferior, 1.

In our reports on each school we have dealt fully with the quality of the standard subjects, neither glossing over defects nor withholding the praise due to merit. We have no direct means of knowing whether in reading, spelling, arithmetic, and composition, or in the class and additional subjects, our schools are better or worse than those of other educational districts. Indirectly through various channels we gather from time to time such information as gives us good grounds for believing that our standard of work as a whole will bear comparison with that reached by our neighbours. In writing and freehand drawing there have been opportunities for comparison; in the former our schools hold their own, in the latter they do not. In general our freehand figures are on too small a scale, and are laboured in execution, lacking in smoothness and freedom of outline. It is good for us to know wherein we fall short of what others have accomplished; with the knowledge comes the resolution to succeed as others have succeeded. We have frequently advised our teachers to seize any chance they have of visiting other schools which have a good reputation. A keen observer will always profit by such a visit. Following on the same lines, we should like to see an arrangement made by which the Inspector of one district might accompany the Inspector of another district on his annual visit to two or three schools.

We have much pleasure in reporting favourably on the order and discipline of the schools, and on the manners and general behaviour of the scholars.

We have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A.,
ALEC. BELL, M.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, South Canterbury Education Board.

EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	15	...	...	...
Standard VI.	41	40	27	14 1
" V.	71	67	60	13 4
" IV.	96	87	77	12 9
" III.	93	89	76	11 5
" II.	86	81	70	10 2
" I.	88	80	75	8 11
Preparatory	214	...	...	...
Totals	704	444	385	11 9*

* Mean of average age.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Education Office, 28th February, 1901.

We have the honour to present the following general report for the year 1900:—

Nearly all the schools were inspected, and all except one were examined: a snow-storm on the Carrick Range rendered it inadvisable for the Inspector to attempt reaching the Nevis School. It will be examined and inspected in March, and until further notice Nevis and Makarora Schools will be examined in February or March. In addition to examining and inspecting the public schools, we examined ten Catholic schools, 133 competitors for the Board's scholarships, sixty-one pupil-teachers, and seventy candidates for pupil-teacherships.

On the 1st January new regulations for the inspection and examination of schools came into force. Many of their provisions being professedly tentative, to secure a fair trial for them Inspectors and teachers discussed them in conference at various centres throughout the district, as well as privately during the inspection visits.

The new regulations were designed to give to teachers a large extent of freedom in the classification of their pupils. The examination for passes, except in the Sixth Standard, were placed wholly in the hands of the head-teachers. The regulations clearly imply, if they do not prescribe, that the examinations are to be held periodically throughout the year, and that promotion is to depend not solely on the results of one final examination, but, as we urged in conference, on the average results of these periodical examinations. In almost all cases these examinations will

show whether the child is or is not prepared for the work of the higher standard. Even though a pupil fail under examination to demonstrate fitness for promotion, if the head-teacher is convinced that he has capacity, physical and intellectual, for advanced work, it is clearly his duty to promote him; but in such a case, in fairness to the assistant teacher under whom he is placed, or to the school to which he may be removed, it is as clearly the head-teacher's duty to withhold the certificate that the pupil has passed the lower standard. This freedom of classification extends not merely to the standards, but to the subjects of the standards, with this restriction: that a pupil must be placed in the same class for reading, spelling and dictation, writing, and composition—that is to say, a pupil may be placed in the Fifth Standard class for the English pass-subjects, and in the Fourth or Sixth for arithmetic. Still further to secure freedom of classification, every pupil examined by the Inspector is to be examined in the class in which he has been taught—that is to say, in whatever standard class a pupil has been taught, in that standard work must he be examined by the Inspector, even although, a twelvemonth before, he was reported to have passed that standard. The promotion of the pupil now depends not on the results of one examination held by a comparative stranger, but on the average results of several examinations held by one of the pupil's own teachers. These seem liberal concessions, well designed to secure to head-teachers the most desiderated freedom of classification, to class-teachers highly advantageous working-conditions, and to pupils relief from that pressure under which they are said to have hitherto pursued their school course.

In every well-conducted school periodical examinations by the head-teacher, or by the head-teacher and assistants, have always been regarded as essential to discipline and progress. The new regulations take these for granted, and instruct the head-teachers to utilise them for determining promotion. In some schools these examinations seem to have been instituted for the first time under the new regulations, and their institution has been regarded as a hardship. In other schools promotion and pass seem to have been determined solely by an examination held immediately before the annual examination by the Inspector, and the new regulations have been credited with increasing rather than lessening the pressure. This course we regard as radically wrong, and in order to check it we shall ask for the papers and results of the periodical examinations.

With the pass examinations in the head-teachers' hands, we expected a marked diminution in the standard-pass percentage. Under the old *régime*, to do justice to the individual pupil we doubtless gave passes which did injustice to the class and to the teacher. Passes were given to pupils who just touched the minimum standard of requirement, and even to those whose position was doubtful, if their teacher reported them much better than they seemed; and probably we sometimes gave passes which a better acquaintance with the recipients would have led us to withhold. We fain would have disciplined irregular attenders by withholding the pass, but had not the power to do so if they reached the level of attainment required in the pass-subjects. It was the promotion of such imperfectly equipped pupils that brought pressure upon their classes, worry to their teachers, and hindrance to all. In several schools these pupils were most judiciously dealt with: passes were withheld, but the more promising pupils received tentative promotion, and the others were retained on probation in the lower class. In the majority of schools, however, passes were given and the pupils were promoted as under the old *régime*. We confess to a little disappointment with this result, but we cannot well blame the teachers. In many cases it is with great reluctance that we record "failure" against the names of pupils who are strangers to us; with still greater reluctance must our teachers do it in the case of pupils who are their friends. We have not parents and members of School Committees to whom to render account, but our teachers have; and, unfortunately, notwithstanding all that has been said and done, public opinion is still strongly in favour of "a good pass." As we have again and again demonstrated, the standard pass is nearly worthless as a gauge of proficiency.

In 1899 we reported that, so far as we could judge from the condition of the Otago District, freedom of classification might with advantage be granted to the teachers of New Zealand. The regulations conferring this freedom came into force in January, 1900. We have carefully watched their operation, and are convinced by the results that our report has been justified. The regulations have worked well. There has been little or no friction between Inspectors and teachers; and, even where the head-teacher has to the full exercised his power of classification, there has been little or no complaint from parents or School Committees. It is true that many of our teachers have not fully realised the value of the freedom conferred upon them, or, realising it, have not ventured fully on its exercise. Situated as many of them are, we cannot hold them blameworthy. We now advocate on their behalf, and on behalf of their pupils, a measure of freedom almost revolutionary—the total abolition of the pass. Even the name should disappear from school records: pupils should be promoted, and Sixth Standard pupils should receive leaving or merit certificates.

We are fully aware that in such relaxing of the firm grasp given by the standard pass there is risk of injustice to individual pupils, and of deterioration to individual schools; but the existence of such evil would be of but short duration, and ought not to be urged against a measure which makes for general welfare. In introducing similar reforms the Home Education Department anticipated such a risk. Teachers and Education Boards were warned that the measures were tentative, and that their permanence would depend on the faithful discharge of duty by all concerned. The following passage is quoted from the instructions to Inspectors: "My Lords cannot hide from themselves certain dangers which may obviously result from the present relaxation against which it may be necessary to guard. Amongst these is a tendency to specious rather than to sound and thorough work, the neglect of backward scholars, and the want of that stimulus to individual exertion, and that sense of individual responsibility, which rested upon each scholar, and frequently exercised a very salutary influence. My Lords must now trust largely to the local managers, who, they hope, will be anxious to discourage slipshod work, to counteract these tendencies; but it will

be necessary for those to whom the distribution of the public grant is intrusted to be on the watch for any such symptom, and they will look to you to draw attention to its existence, and to keep it in view in the rate of grant which you recommend." The teachers in the Old Country have proved themselves worthy of the trust reposed in them, and we feel assured that in this district we have a school staff as capable and as faithful as can be found anywhere. Should such breaches of trust occur, the Inspectors have ample opportunity to discover them, and the Board can effectively deal with them.

TABLE A.—SHOWING EFFICIENCY IN TERMS OF STANDARD PASSES.

Classes.	Presented.		Present.		Passed.		Percentage of Passes.		Average Age of those that passed.	
	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.	1899.	1900.
Above Standard VI.	565	483	...	...	...	...	...	...	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Standard VI. ...	1,508	1,474	1,462	1,422	1,291	1,030	88·3	72·4	13 7	13 7
" V. ...	2,167	2,039	2,105	1,986	1,688	1,650	80·2	83·0	12 5	12 10
" IV. ...	2,562	2,633	2,470	2,588	2,000	2,252	80·9	87·0	12 0	11 10
" III. ...	2,784	2,691	2,676	2,635	2,241	2,277	83·7	86·4	10 3	10 11
" II. ...	2,492	2,531	2,443	2,491	2,367	2,280	96·9	91·5	9 6	9 6
" I. ...	2,336	2,215	2,266	2,193	2,252	2,117	99·4	96·5	8 6	8 8
Preparatory ...	6,279	6,440	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	20,693	20,506	13,422	13,315	11,839	11,606	88·2*	86·0*	11 0·5†	11 2†

* Mean percentage. † Mean of average ages.

For the purpose of comparison we have placed in parallel columns the statistics relating to standard passes in 1899 and 1900—the one set under the old regulations, the other under the new. Except in Standards III. and V., there is but little difference in the average age of those who passed. In Standard VI. there is apparently a serious fall in efficiency. The decline, however, is only apparent, the difference between the results being due to difference in examination conditions. Under the old regulations, a pupil might fail entirely in one subject and yet receive a pass certificate; under the new, failure in one subject entailed failure to pass the standard. On the other hand, if in five of the seven pass-subjects a pupil met the Sixth Standard test, and in the other two the Fifth Standard test, he received a Sixth Standard pass certificate. The greater number of those who failed to pass failed in Sixth Standard arithmetic; they were then examined in Fifth Standard arithmetic, but most of them failed in this also. Had these pupils been taught Fifth Standard arithmetic, as provided for by regulations, they probably would have passed. This re-examination of pupils is not specified by the regulations, but it may be implied, and unless forbidden we shall again do it in the examinations of 1901. Our efficiency-marks show that the Sixth Standard has fully maintained the status of 1899.

The results in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Standards indicate that the difficulty of the test has been diminished. By the exclusion of geography and drawing the pass-subjects were reduced from seven to five. Weakness in reading, including comprehension of the matter read, was not allowed; but, on the other hand, a pupil passed his standard if he met the test of the lower standard in two out of the four other pass-subjects. Permission to pass a pupil in a standard which he had already passed still further raised the pass percentage. In the First and Second Standards the difficulty of the test has been increased. "Failure" was not allowed in any of the pass-subjects, and weakness was not allowed in reading; but a pupil, though weak in one of the three other pass-subjects, was not allowed to pass. In both stands the pass percentage was brought down.

TABLE B.—SHOWING EFFICIENCY-MARKS IN SUBJECTS.

Pass-subjects.

Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.	Mean Result.
Satisfactory.	Good.	Good.	Good.	Satisfactory.	Fair.	Fair.	Satisfactory.

Class-subjects.

Grammar.	History.	Object-lessons and Science.	Recitation of Poetry.	Mean Result.
Fair.	Satisfactory.	Satisfactory.	Satisfactory.	Satisfactory.

Additional Subjects.

Drill and Exercises.	Singing.	Needlework.	Mean Result.	Mean Result of all Subjects.
Good.	Satisfactory.	Very good.	Good.	Satisfactory.

TABLE C.—SHOWING THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO EFFICIENCY.

—	Weak.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Very good.
Number of schools ...	2	25	97	97	1

The average efficiency of the schools is much more accurately shown by the results in Tables B and C than by the percentage column of Table A. To be classed as “satisfactory” a subject or a school must have received at least 60 per cent. of the possible marks. The mean percentage of all the subjects is 64·5, and is nearer “good” than “satisfactory.” This shows conclusively that the schools of the district are in an efficient condition. At one time we anticipated a higher result ; but the schools, especially in the large centres, had a year of unrest and distraction, and the continuity of the work was frequently broken by holidays, which in some instances absorbed one-fourth of the whole year. At the evening study-table, and even at the school-desk, the newspaper with its war cables and commentaries took the place of the history-book ; its maps, pictures, and descriptive paragraphs took the place of the geography-book. Teachers seized the opportunity to give to history and geography a realism which, in the school course, they have seldom possessed. New Zealand boys, whose names are in the school registers, and who had learned their first drill in the school playgrounds, were continuing the work of Clive and Wolfe. They had gone to meet “foemen worthy of their steel,” who, if not “sons of the sea,” were sons of the seamen and burghers who gave to the mighty Spanish Empire the first of the shocks which have brought her to her present living death, and who, but for Blake and his gallant crews, would have checkmated England herself in her almost unconscious movements towards expansion. South Africa, with its settlement, climate, and resources ; its ports, roads, and railways ; its mountains, rivers, kopjes, and veldts, was studied as a country other than our own is rarely studied. But this was not always syllabus-work, and under a rigid syllabus such treatment of a subject does not always secure adequate examination value. Could we have given value for that work, and added value for the lessons in loyalty and patriotism taught inside and outside the school walls, the efficiency-mark of the schools would have been a higher one.

We think the time has come for a thorough revision of the syllabus. Its provisions beyond those dealing with the fundamental subjects should be made reasonably elastic, giving scope to the individuality of the teacher, and permitting adaptation to the circumstances of his district. The burden of arithmetic should be reduced. Some of our most capable teachers hold that a fifth of the school time is absolutely necessary to compass the work prescribed ; the disciplinary value of the subject does not warrant this expenditure of time, still less does the economic. There might well be less of formal and more of applied grammar, grammar bearing immediately on reading and composition. We would treat history-books and geography-books as reading-books, and in the higher standards reduce the memorising of facts and dates to the minimum. Geography should be excluded from the pass-subjects of the Sixth Standard, as it has been from those of the other standards.

The Lawrence District High School has to the full maintained its good position ; but the three other schools have fallen short of a good standard. The teachers of these schools are, we should remark, to a large extent dependent for success on the character of the work done by their pupils while in the standard classes—especially the Sixth Standard—and their pupils are drawn from schools of varied efficiency. With a mixed multitude in Standard VII., nothing short of whole-hearted enthusiasm in the teacher can beget enthusiasm in the pupils and command success, and we can imagine cases in which even that will fail.

Reference to the Board’s regulations will show that for Standard VII. in the primary schools a fairly advanced though elastic syllabus of work is prescribed, and the following table shows that satisfactory results have been attained :—

TABLE E.—SHOWING THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE STANDARD VII. CLASSES ACCORDING TO THEIR GENERAL EFFICIENCY-MARK.

—	Weak.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good and Very good.
Number of schools ...	11	19	22	22

In reporting for 1899 we felt impelled to plead for more liberal treatment of Standard VII. We urged that our Education Department should, like the Home department, at least double the capitation grant for pupils in Standard VII. doing satisfactory work. We are pleased that this

has been done—that a grant even more liberal than what we asked for has been made. But we pleaded not merely for Standard VII. pupils in district high schools, on whose account the grant has been made, but for Standard VII. pupils and Standard VII. teachers irrespective of the class of school. In the district high schools an average attendance of twelve Standard VII. pupils will secure, on account of the secondary work, a grant sufficient to maintain an extra teacher. To city and suburban schools with even a larger attendance of Standard VII. pupils, and to the ordinary country schools, no grant is made, although in many of them secondary work is well done. In 1899, on the district high schools staff there were six teachers classed C and upwards, on the primary schools staff there were sixty-five so classed, and many of the D certificated teachers have shown themselves capable of teaching up to the Civil Service and Matriculation standards. In the largest schools the head-teacher is not directly responsible for the work of a standard class, and with the aid of an advanced pupil-teacher or an assistant teacher he does the work of Standard VII. within school hours; but in schools with one or two teachers much of Standard VII. instruction is given in overtime. During the school hours the pupils are directed in their studies, and for the time and attention they receive they in many cases give a full equivalent in the shape of monitorial work. It has been said that the introduction of secondary subjects into small primary schools would place the primary subjects at a disadvantage. It has not done so in this district. The presence of Standard VII. pupils places a higher ideal before parents and pupils, and tends to prolong school attendance, and to improve school tone and discipline. We do not see how, in equity, a grant for secondary subjects efficiently taught can be withheld from any schools having teachers capable of teaching, and pupils willing to be taught. Nor do we see how, in a sparsely peopled country like New Zealand, adequate provision is to be made for the higher teaching of the thousands of children who live remote from district high schools, and are dependent upon the local schools for whatever measure of higher education they may desire to obtain, except by making provision for the teaching of advanced work in every school in the land. In no other way can the needs of country settlement be met.

The grants for secondary subjects in the district high schools practically make secondary education in these schools free. We have advocated the extension of the boon to all schools, whether town or country; but where high schools already provide for secondary education an equivalent provision might well be made for pupils desirous of following other lines of study. Under the district high schools memorandum of 8th January, and the manual and technical regulations of 18th January, it now seems possible to gather Standard VII. pupils into a central school, with a liberal curriculum giving scope to the personality of teacher, and a discipline, physical, intellectual, and moral, bearing directly on the life-work of the pupil. The centralisation of Standard VII. pupils, besides placing them under highly advantageous working-conditions, would set head-teachers free for the important duties of supervision and classification imposed upon them by the new regulations.

The beginning of 1900 saw the introduction to our schools of freedom of classification, the beginning of 1901 has seen the introduction of special grants for special subjects; the latter, especially in connection with manual and technical instruction, we consider of no less importance than the former. From the day the child enters the school till the day he leaves it he will be led through a course of manual exercises devised to foster habits of industry, to cultivate artistic taste, and to train hand and eye accurately to obey the direction of the will. To the exercises specially designed to develop manual dexterity may be added, in the higher standards, subjects which make for domestic comfort, the maintenance of health, and the saving of life. The cost of the necessary buildings, furniture, apparatus, and to a certain extent materials will be borne by the department. In some subjects the cost of special teachers may be met by the grants, but the greater part of the work must be done by the ordinary school staff. Such subjects as laundry-work, dairy-work, cookery, and the higher woodwork and work in iron must at first be taught by specialists, but to make manual exercises thoroughly educative they must be conducted by the trained teacher. As comparatively few of our teachers are prepared for even the simplest of the exercises, manual and technical training classes for them should be established—evening classes for pupil-teachers and teachers in city and suburbs, Saturday classes for those near railway-lines, summer-holiday classes for those who cannot avail themselves of the others.

In conclusion, we would say that in many cases we have been dissatisfied with the attention given to the regulations concerning such matters as time-tables, supervision of playground, holidays, and preservation of buildings, records, &c.

We have, &c.,

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

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 8th March, 1901.

We have the honour to present our report for the year ended 31st December, 1900.

All the schools were examined except Te Oneroa, and all except a very few were inspected.

So far as we have been able to judge, the teachers, almost without exception, have been entirely conscientious in the discharge of their duties, and, taking the impressions gathered during our visits to the schools as a gauge, we find ourselves in a position to say that during the year solid progress has been made in the work of primary education in this district.

The following is a summary of results for the whole district :—

Classes.				Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those presented.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	212	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	616	603	477	13 8
" V.	...	...	...	939	908	786	12 11
" IV.	...	...	...	1,202	1,170	1,031	11 11
" III.	...	...	...	1,300	1,259	1,111	10 10
" II.	...	...	...	1,217	1,184	1,093	9 8
" I.	...	...	...	1,043	1,024	966	8 8
Preparatory	...	...	...	2,903	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	9,432	6,148	5,464	11 3·6*

* Mean of average age.

Since the year 1895 head-teachers have examined their pupils for promotion in Standards I. and II. By the regulations of the year to which this report refers they were further charged with the examination of the pupils in Standards III., IV., and V. We found that the teachers as a whole performed this part of their functions in a thoroughly conscientious spirit, many of them being, if anything, more exacting than the Inspector would have been. In some few instances, however, the teachers, in promoting their pupils, showed that they lacked either sound judgment or backbone. In such cases the pupils were re-examined by the Inspector, whose classification was accordingly substituted for the teacher's. In whatever directions the syllabus may be modified, both teachers and Inspectors must rigorously set their faces against the evil of over-classification—an evil that leads to nothing but waste of energy and vexation of spirit. Referring further to the examinations of Standards III., IV., and V. by the teacher, we may observe that the percentage of passes in each class is higher for last examination than in either of the two previous examinations. This fact, we should imagine, is to be explained rather by the easier conditions on which a pass is now obtainable than by any relaxation of the standard on the part of the teachers.

We notice that relatively fewer pupils secured certificates in Standard VI. than in the years 1898 and 1899 respectively. This was perhaps to be expected. Feeling as we do that a certificate of proficiency should be the reward of effort and undoubted fitness on the pupil's part, and that the public has a right to look for capacity in the bearer of such certificate, we believe we were justified in demanding from pupils in this class a complete fulfilment of the requirements of the syllabus.

Though we make these remarks as to the manner in which the individual pass fared in the hands of the teacher and Inspector respectively, we shall not be sorry when this method of estimating the efficiency of a school has been finally consigned to oblivion. The method of individual examination, while compelling a certain amount of hard work and thoroughness, produces too much anxiety and too much stress to be recognised as a legitimate factor in the best forms of school work. This method has also served a useful purpose in bringing into clear relief the true educational standpoint; but, on the other hand, it has worked serious mischief in several directions. It has been the fertile source of hurry, cram, and superficiality—banes of genuine school work, each and all. It has set up a false standard in the minds of the people, many of whom have come to regard a standard pass as the hall-mark of educational proficiency. It has, moreover, produced a pernicious effect on the work of the teachers, inasmuch as it has continually set before their minds a false aim, greatly obscuring the true sphere of the teacher's labours, as well as the most desirable fruits of his labours. It is, of course, in the public interest that there should be something in the nature of a leaving examination, but if during a child's school course the teacher's methods are really educative, and his influence in other directions beneficial, this examination might very well be left to take care of itself.

The demand for reform in the method of examination has come chiefly from the teachers. Other reforms not less pressing are demanded by the circumstances of our colony and the economic conditions of our times. It is perfectly evident that we must within the next few years face a series of changes more or less radical in the subjects of instruction, and in the methods of teaching and inspection. It is therefore well that we should represent to ourselves some guiding principles as to the directions that the necessary reforms should take.

The position appears to us to be luminously stated in a recent address on the "Aims of Education" by Sir Henry Craik, Secretary of the Scotch Education Department. "The older methods," says Sir Henry, "were all very well in the earlier stages. They insured a modicum of thoroughness and efficient work, and provided against the neglect of individual pupils. They were capable of easy test. But they were admittedly only stepping-stones towards something better which should free the schools from tutelage, and should leave the schools more to local effort, to local initiative, and to local responsibility. This stage has been now reached. But do not let us mistake its aim and its meaning. It is not devised only to save trouble to the department or its Inspectors, or to make the task of the teachers easier. No greater mistake could be made than to interpret it in that light. The schools are there for the sake of the community and of the children, and whatever method is more certain in its efficiency and in its results for their benefit, that method

must be pursued, at whatever cost of labour and irksomeness to those engaged in it. The change of conditions is justified only if it produces better results, and by these results it must be gauged." Yes, that is the true standpoint. "The schools are for the community and the children," and whatever is done must be done for their benefit, not the benefit of the teachers and Inspectors.

But, after all, it may be asked, wherefore all this pother about elementary education, about primary teaching in our State schools? There is a tendency on the part of some to associate spurious or half-deprecatory ideas with the terms "elementary" and "primary." These terms, however, should in this connection always suggest another, and that is the term "fundamental." The education given in our primary schools is the fundamental education, and if that be not efficient all subsequent training will be as unstable and baseless as an inverted pyramid. To quote Sir Henry Craik again:—

"Elementary education used to be deemed a process for putting each child in possession of certain tools and instruments—the three Rs—which obtained among men, and which were necessary to them before they could learn anything. We have now got much further, and we mean by elementary education much more than this. We include within it the laying of the intellectual foundation upon which anything more which is to be built must rest. We mean by it the first steps in the cultivation of the faculties, the stimulating of observation, and the process by which the children may be made more awake to all their duties, more fit to enjoy the inheritance that is theirs as citizens of the Empire, more alert to use their opportunities, helping them to fill up their lives with more of interest."

To return to the starting-point of the paragraph. These are changes demanded, changes impending. We are even now in a transition stage. This is a condition of affairs not peculiar to our colony. It is common to the Empire. Almost every issue of every reputable magazine, periodical, or review attests the statement. It is well that teachers should be forewarned.

We sometimes hear the remark made that our pupils are not so well fitted for certain classes of employment as they might be. Business-men, for example, occasionally challenge our pupils' handwriting, or their proficiency in practical arithmetic. We believe that much good would be done if such bodies as chambers of commerce, manufacturers' associations, trades and labour councils, and similarly constituted bodies were to give free expression to their opinions on the educational matters in which they are immediately interested. In this way weak points could be strengthened, and to certain branches of instruction there could be given a practical turn that would prove of great use when pupils come to begin their life's work. Of course, the proper function of the school is to prepare pupils for life, not for any particular position; still, without any undue interference with this main function, teachers might do much by way of fitting pupils in certain districts for the kind of employment that will in all probability fall to their lot.

We do not propose on this occasion to deal with the subject of instruction in any exhaustive manner. We content ourselves with noting some of the effects produced on certain subjects by the regulations of last year.

There was considerable improvement in reading. We attribute this improvement not so much to the fact that proficiency in the subject is now a *sine quâ non* for a pass as to the fact that more time was devoted to the teaching and practice of it. In this supremely important branch of school work there is yet much to be done, and we feel confident that it will not receive the amount of attention due to it till three suggestions made at the recent Inspectors' Conference are carried into effect—viz., (1) The abolition of the standard pass; (2) fewer subjects for the smaller schools, and (3) less arithmetic in all schools. Passing to handwriting, we found it necessary at several schools to censure the teachers for the comparative neglect into which this subject has fallen. There are, no doubt, cases in which children are physically unable to write well, but these cases are extremely rare. We may be permitted to quote the following from Ian Maclaren, in essays on "Homely Virtues," as being well worth taking to heart. The virtue under consideration is "thoroughness."

"There is the man who writes so badly that he is convinced himself that he has a literary gift, in which case the profession of letters has the easiest condition of entrance and the largest number of members among all the departments of human activity. Illegible writing is a slovenly habit, for which no excuse can be offered except want of education, and its punishment falls on innocent people—on postmen, on clerks, on busy professional men, and on friends who cannot understand the news that has been sent. The school, large or small, which does not teach its boys to write should be marked inefficient, and the people who will not do their best to write legibly should be classed with the illiterate."

The inferior writing shown at some of our schools seemed to be due to the notion that, in accordance with a provision of the new regulations, work equal to that of the class next below would be sufficient for a pass. But in this subject what is bad in one class would be bad in another, and in every class the pupil's work should bear the impress of tidiness and carefulness.

The quality of the composition, has on the whole, been well maintained. There is, however, a tendency on the part of some teachers to rely too much on themselves, and too little on their pupils, for the supply of the matter of the exercises. The syllabus, it must be admitted, gives some countenance to this method of treatment, and, as might be expected, teachers sometimes follow the line of the least resistance. But the line of least resistance is not always the best route to a desired goal. There can be no doubt that in the teaching of this subject the surest way for the teacher to enable his pupils to put their thoughts into words is to teach principles, and to insist that the matter shall come from the pupils. If good models are wanted the pupils should be encouraged to commit to memory choice portions of prose literature.

Taking next the subject of arithmetic, we may mention that comparatively few of the teachers took advantage of the provision in the new regulations whereby pupils may be taught and presented for examination in this subject in a class lower than that in which they are placed for other subjects. There were some notable exceptions, pupils being turned into lower classes in a wholesale manner

at certain schools. Of course, such a proceeding was not contemplated by the regulations, which we understand to be intended to provide for exceptional cases only. If the subject were thoroughly taught from the beginning of a child's school course, there is no reason why any considerable proportion of a class should fall behind. Experience entirely favours this view. We may here express the hope that the recommendation of the Inspectors' Conference that the syllabus of arithmetic should be reduced may be carried into effect. Teachers would then find time to teach the subject as a science. As an art, the handling of the subject, in the great majority of our schools, leaves little to be desired.

With regard to the class-subjects, we have little to say beyond noting the fact that the quality of neither geography nor drawing deteriorated to any very appreciable extent through being transferred from the pass- to the class-list. The additional subjects have been taken up with great zest in the great majority of our schools. It is exceptional to find a school in which singing is not taught, and for the most part well taught. We embrace the opportunity of again recommending the Board to take steps to place the military drill of the town boys on the best possible footing.

We are, &c.,

The Secretary, Southland Education Board.

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

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