

that receiving almost general acceptance. But I do not wish to enlarge again upon a subject dealt with at some length in my last report.

The average age for Standard I. is the highest in the colony, the next being Auckland, with nine years one month. It has fallen by eight months since 1894, but seems to me to be still too high. The pupils in the country, owing to bad roads and long distances to be travelled, do not begin school life as young as they do in the towns, and this tends to raise the average ages. In some cases, however, pupils are kept in the preparatory classes longer than is necessary. This is seen from the examination schedules, which show, in the case of each pupil, the age and the time since admission. In the infant department the teacher has absolute freedom of classification, and in many cases is able to bring the highest infant class well up to the requirements of Standard I. Indeed, in arithmetic, spelling, and writing, work beyond the requirements of Standard I. is not infrequently presented. It may not be advisable at the examination to present such pupils for Standard I., but there is no apparent reason why, in the following year, such pupils should not omit Standard I. and prepare for Standard II. I am pleased to say that during the past year instances of such promotion have been more frequent than formerly, and the results have been very satisfactory.

During the last two years the head teacher of the school has examined pupils in Standards I. to V., and has submitted his results to the Inspector for approval. In Standard VI. the passes are determined by the Inspector. The teachers as a whole have exercised sound judgment, and have conscientiously examined their classes. Indeed, in a few cases a rather too high standard has been exacted. In some instances I have found it necessary to exercise the right to revise a teacher's results. In fact, I may say at once that repeated experience has taught me that not the slightest reliance can be placed upon the results of the examinations held by a few of the teachers, though the teachers as a body have not abused their privileges, and have proved themselves worthy of the confidence placed in them. I must say that I have been very pleased with the manner in which young teachers who have been a comparatively short time in sole charge of schools examined their classes. In the schools where the teachers have shown a lack of discrimination in examining the pupils in the pass-subjects, the class-subjects are invariably more or less unsatisfactory. Even where the teacher has satisfactorily examined in the pass-subjects I am not always satisfied with the instruction in the class-subjects, which are intended to train the intelligence rather than tax and overload the memory. The standard regulations state that in Standards III. to V. the pass depends, *inter alia*, upon the regularity of the instruction in the class-subjects, and in Standard VI. upon the regularity and sufficiency of the instruction of the class-subjects. If a pupil has been on the roll during the whole year, and has not attended regularly, his instruction in the class-subjects cannot have been regular, and consequently the teacher would be justified in refusing him a pass, and the Inspector would be justified in considering this irregularity if he found it necessary to revise the teacher's results. This, however, has not constituted an important factor in passing or failing pupils. If, however, the attendance has been satisfactory, the regularity of the instruction will be indicated in great measure by the quality of the work received. It is clear, therefore, that the teacher's neglect of the class-subjects in Standards III. to VI. entails liability to failure on the part of the pupils. Moreover, it will be noticed that in Standard VI. the instruction in the class-subjects must be sufficient. There are some teachers who render themselves liable to the operation of these conditions. As a matter of fact, I have never enforced the conditions, but for continued neglect I shall not hesitate to do so.

In determining the promotions in Standards I. to V. teachers should attach due weight to the results of the periodic examinations, and should not be guided only by the examination held immediately before the Inspector's visit, for in such case undue weight is given to adventitious and fortuitous circumstances, and too little to steady progress and persistent effort throughout the year. What I have indicated is not in accord with the wording of the regulations, but is quite in accord with their spirit. The Instruction-book, in which the work done during each fortnight is entered, serves, both to the teachers and to the Inspector, as an excellent guide to progress, and in great measure obviates the necessity for drawing up a scheme of work, for the teacher at any time in the year can readily compare his progress with that of former years. At the same time it is desirable that before commencing the work after an examination a teacher should take a survey of the work, and, dividing the year into at least four periods, should determine what under normal conditions might be reasonably undertaken during each period. This is what is expected by the "scheme of work" as indicated in the standard regulations. The periodic examinations should be held at least every three months, and as the annual examination approaches should be held more frequently.

The frequent changing of teachers militates to a great extent against the continuity of the work, and against the efficiency of the training of the pupils. Though in the Instruction-book is contained a complete record of the work done, the incoming teacher frequently considers that little responsibility attaches to him for the work of his predecessor. The instructions are perfectly clear on this point: Direction 6, "When a teacher resigns charge of a school, class, or division he must see that the entries are posted to the date of his leaving, so that the incoming teacher may take up the work exactly where it was left off." Direction 7, "When a teacher takes charge of a school, class, or division he should make himself conversant with the work undertaken by his predecessor. The incoming teacher will be expected to make such revision as time and circumstances permit, so that continuity of the work of the year may be interfered with as little as possible." Not infrequently, however, has the work of the previous teacher been ignored, and no revision of object-lessons, science, history, &c., undertaken. A change in the staff should not involve a great break in the work, for with the Instruction-book before him the incoming teacher should readily pick up the threads of instruction. Sometimes, however, it seems to me that the number of changes might be reduced by transferring or promoting teachers. When a teacher obtains another position or leaves the service, the incoming teacher can seldom take up the duties at once. During the interval a relieving