

The following tabulation contains the number of children in the schools of the district who were returned as attending school during the progress of my examinations. The old plan of recording progress is continued for the purpose of comparison, although "passes" under the present regulations is to be interpreted as meaning "promotions" from a lower to a higher class, as estimated by the tests of each principal teacher. Standards VI. and VII. are the only classes where promotions are made by an Inspector.

Classes.	Number on Roll.		Present at Annual Visit.		Absent.		Failed.		Passed.		Percentage of Passes in		Average Ages of Pupils in each Class.	
	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.	1903.	1902.
Standard VII.	114	111	106	96	8	15	...	...	...	...	...	...	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
" VI.	557	503	541	493	16	10	167	192	374	301	69.1	61.0	14 5	14 7
" V.	759	772	739	757	20	15	167	152	572	605	77.0	79.9	13 2	13 0
" IV.	1,045	928	1,015	901	30	27	192	150	823	751	81.0	83.3	12 3	12 1
" III.	1,030	1,145	1,002	1,109	28	36	188	156	814	953	81.2	85.9	11 1	10 10
" II.	1,119	1,024	1,084	987	35	37	149	104	935	883	86.2	89.4	9 11	9 9
" I.	1,069	1,075	1,008	1,044	61	31	121	91	887	953	88.0	91.2	8 9	8 7
Preparatory	2,682	2,672	2,254	2,364	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	7 7	...
	8,375	8,230	7,749	7,751	198	171	984	845	4,405	4,446	80.1	84.0	11 5*	11 10*

* Mean of average age.

In the six Catholic schools in the district that were examined there were 746 on the roll, 701 present at the time of the Inspector's visit, and 329 who passed in standard classes. The numbers for the year were 781, 526, and 356 respectively.

The above tabulation shows that the total number of pupils on the school rolls at the time of my annual visit was 8,375, or 145 more than were present in the previous year, but only 7,749 were present at the examination. This is two below the number that were present in 1902, when there were seven fewer schools in operation. Forms of sickness peculiar to children appeared in a number of districts, notably in Poverty Bay, where many pupils were absent from examination owing to this cause. Some complaints were made to me at the time of my annual visit about the irregularity of the senior pupils, who are kept at home in far too many instances to run messages or perform domestic duties that could be easily done before school-time by the exercise of a little foresight on the part of parents. The worst cases of irregularity are met with at Taradale and Wairoa, whilst Papakura and Patutahi represent schools of unusual regularity, there being a difference of nearly 20 per cent. in the regularity of children in these two widely different types of schools.

The examinations for promotion were conducted as in previous years. Teachers realise the importance of testing the work of their pupils in anticipation of the annual visit from the Inspector, but one finds a growing anxiety among many teachers at the risks they run at the instance of parents should it be found necessary to keep back several unprepared children. Over-anxiety of parents is a growing danger to thoroughness in the efficiency of the schools, as the idea is abroad that the secondary school and not the primary school is of chief importance in the training of children. No greater error could be made, for it is the primary school that must ever make or mar a people and a nation. The foundation of all knowledge is based on right concepts in the early training of children, and it is in the primary school where these should be obtained. The teachers in their examinations aim to do the work as set forth in the regulations, and it must be said, to their credit, that I have seldom had occasion to differ from them in the classification of their pupils. Some of the teachers, indeed, are men capable of being intrusted with the highest duties of school training, and their work would be just as well done were examinations and inspections to cease altogether. But as yet such teachers are the exception rather than the rule. "Teachers," says a great writer on education, "are a very artistic product. They do not grow like mustard and cress in a bottle by just sprinkling a few 'minutes of council,' by authority over the land. A teacher is a combination of heart, head, artistic training, and favouring circumstances. Like all other high arts, life must have free play in the exercise of teaching or teaching cannot be. Unfortunately, the feeling abroad is that examinations, and an abundance of them, are necessary in order to measure progress. But education and training are not to be measured like yards of tape; and yet there are many parents who think that the only test of a teacher's qualifications is the number of passes he can make in an examination. The term "pass" is, however, capable of wide interpretation; but a teacher is "an artificer of mind and noble life," and these products an examiner cannot test by ordinary methods.

The great defects most common in the schools to-day arise from what must be set down to the desire to compass too many subjects within the short school life of the children. It is to be regretted that better means are not taken to discover the actual length of schooling of all the children that attend school. Considering how brief the school period is, thoroughness in the preparation of essential subjects is barely possible when so much other preparation has to be done. Much weakness is to be found in the school-work of to-day. Variety of subjects may be useful, but it gives rise to superficiality in what was formerly considered the highest form of school preparation. The abolition of the "pass," and the freedom given to the teachers to classify their