

The average has thus increased by 345, while the percentage shows an improvement of 2.43 per cent. I think this is a very creditable result, and regret the circumstances which led to the temporary closing of so many schools as indicated in the footnote to the table.

Table No. 5 has this year been altered to bring it into conformity with that provided by the various Education Boards. There is an increase of 107 in the number of children mostly Maori in race, and this is the only remark that can be made by way of comparison with last year's table.

Table No. 6 shows the number of standard passes obtained during the year. It must be remembered that in the case of Native schools the individual pass examination is still in vogue. Indeed, I think it would be somewhat difficult to do away with a pass examination of some sort, as the parents would lose that keenness of interest which they now show, and which is very desirable in our schools. Fewer children passed Standard I this year, a very good indication that the teachers are promoting less rapidly, and that a better foundation is being laid. The other classes show a general increase on last year's number. In view of the allegations made in various places that the work done in Native schools does not extend beyond Standard IV, it is interesting to note that 130 children passed Standards V and VI. Some of these were granted certificates of proficiency in Standard VI.

Table No. 7 sets forth the results of inspection during the year. The schools have hitherto been inspected on the day of the examination. This will be altered as far as possible during 1906, and inspection visits will be made without notice. As is shown in the fourth column, there can be no doubt that the standard of efficiency is steadily rising. Teachers are becoming more efficient in methods, especially in regard to the instruction of the lowest classes.

Tables 8 and 9 show that there are more children in the preparatory class and Standard I than last year by 115. Standard II has decreased considerably; the other standards have all increased somewhat. The average age has somewhat decreased in the higher standards, while in Standard I, as the result of slower promotion, the age is higher.

Table No. 10 shows the number of children of Maori or mixed race attending schools under the jurisdiction of Education Boards. There is an increase of 218 in the number of pure Maoris, a decrease of 32 in the number of children of mixed race living as Maoris, and an increase of 154 in the number of children of mixed race living as Europeans—a total increase of 340. I have no hesitation, however, in stating that there are several schools which, from the fact that between 80 and 90 per cent. of the children are Maori, ought to be regarded as Native schools, and be conducted as such. Indeed, most Boards decline to assume direction of such schools.

Table 11 shows what is done in regard to the higher education of the Maori, and gives information as to scholarships held at secondary schools, University scholarships, industrial scholarships, and nursing scholarships. There are 289 children receiving education in some secondary school or other, three young Maoris studying at some University, seven boys apprenticed to various trades, and four girls being trained as nurses, of whom two are on the regular staff of some hospital. The higher education of European children attending Native schools is provided for by the regulations respecting free places in secondary schools, certificates of proficiency being issued to such children as qualify.

GENERAL.

In the following paragraphs are some remarks on the general efficiency of the Native schools in the various subjects of the curriculum, with suggestions for the assistance of teachers where necessary, and also some paragraphs dealing with various matters connected with Native schools.

Reading.—During the year a considerable amount of progress has been made in this subject, especially in the preparatory and lower standards. Teachers are beginning to realise now that it is of no use to promote a boy to Standard I before he has mastered the foundation. In very few schools now is the alphabetic method of teaching reading used, and the result has been a very great advance in reading. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that in the best of the schools to-day the children of the preparatory classes are able to read lessons that formerly were done more or less imperfectly by the classes of Standards I and II. There are still, however, some schools in which the old system dies very hard, and there are others in which the teachers, while anxious enough to adopt the recommendations made by the Inspector, have yet hesitated on account of their being uncertain as to the correctness of their own method of producing the sounds of the various consonants. These I would ask to avail themselves of the opportunity of an Inspector's visit to get a further explanation of any difficulties, but meanwhile to make every effort to help themselves by pronouncing to themselves the letters about whose function they are in doubt.

I have seen so much benefit derived from the thorough teaching of the sound-values of the consonants that I am more than ever convinced of its absolute necessity in Maori schools. And I would point out to teachers who may have come to regard it as a new fad that the Department has long since recognised its value, as may be seen from the instructions given to teachers in the supplement to the Native School Code, section xii. It is idle for teachers, or indeed for any one, to assert that the Maori child cannot pronounce the English letters. Unless he is suffering from some physical defect, as occasionally I have found, the Maori child, being provided with the same mechanism in his vocal organs, is able to do exactly the same as the European child. All that is necessary is for the teacher to show him how to set the mechanism in proper motion, and, in difficult letters such as *b*, *p*, *l*, *r*, &c., and in combinations such as *th*, *sh*, &c., this work *must* be done by the teacher before any progress can be made. But when once it has been thoroughly done the child can pronounce quite as clearly as the average European child; and, indeed, in some cases his pronunciation is clearer, inasmuch as his words are free from all impurities. I was particularly struck with the clearness of the pronunciation of the lowest classes at Te Houhi—a school remote from civilisation, on the border of Tuhoe-land. Indeed, this one instance would be sufficient to convert any person sceptical as to the success of the method, for at Te Houhi the children have had to depend entirely on their teacher for instruction in reading and pronunciation—they hear no