

who thirst for further details are referred to the record of the passes and failures of each child in each subject, a copy of which has been left at every school in the district.

More than one attempt has been made, both by the teachers and by a portion of the outside public, to muzzle Inspectors, either by causing detailed reports of each school, such as the foregoing, to be treated as confidential, or by suppressing them altogether. It would be interesting to inquire how some even of the best of the Marlborough teachers would fare if either of these notable reforms were adopted. The most cursory comparison of the foregoing pages with the tabulated statement will suffice to show how inaccurate and how damaging would be some of the conclusions formed by the public, if left with no better guide than the bare record of passes and failures. It is only by taking into account the extenuating circumstances—which I have carefully pointed out—such as irregularity of attendance, or the numerical weakness of the teaching staff, that several deserving teachers would escape condemnation.

Although, unfortunately, in a few instances, the publication of unpalatable truths must inflict pain, the balance of advantage from the publicity of detailed reports seems to me to be largely in favour of the schoolmaster.

I have, &c.,

W. C. HOBSON,

Inspector of Schools for the District of Marlborough.

The Chairman, Marlborough Education Board.

NELSON.

SIR,—

31st December, 1879.

I have the honor to lay before you my report on the public schools in the Nelson District for the year ending 31st December, 1879.

NUMBERS.—The number of schools in this district is now 60, three new schools—Waimangaroa, Black's Point, and Toi-Toi Valley—having been opened during the past year; four more—Brightwater, Rockville, Central Buller, and Stanley Brook—being ready for opening. The number on the rolls during the last quarter of 1878 was 3,525; during the corresponding quarter of 1879 it was 3,737, the working average for the same periods being 2,770 and 2,935 respectively.

INSPECTION AND EXAMINATION.—During the year all the schools, with one exception, have been examined twice, the first being only a preliminary examination, made with the object of familiarizing teachers and scholars with the work of the new standards. The results of the final examination are recorded in the tabular statement appended to this report.

RESULT OF EXAMINATION UNDER STANDARDS.—No good purpose would be served by the reiteration of my opinion as to the relative merits and demerits of the present as compared with the former system of examination. The matter is settled, for some time at least. Let it suffice to say that every requirement of the regulations, however minute, has been fulfilled by me, so far as I am aware, with an almost Chinese fidelity. In Standard I., for example, I have been careful not to exceed the regulation limit of three columns in setting addition sums; and in Standard III., while giving sums in compound long division, I have refrained (as admonished) from setting even the easiest sums in compound long multiplication; and so on throughout. Although the prescribed tests have been thus rigidly applied, the percentage of passes, 78, is satisfactory. Conclusions drawn from the tabulated record of passes will, however, be erroneous in many cases, for this reason, if for no other: that teachers have necessarily been allowed, at the outset of the new scheme, to determine what scholars shall be presented, and under what standards. Although sufficiently absurd inferences may always be drawn from a mere inspection of the lists of passes and failures, the margin of error will undoubtedly be lessened at next examination. As it is, several schools, that have succeeded in passing less than 60 per cent. of those presented, are notoriously better taught than some that show 90 to 100 per cent. For this result I do not hold myself in the least responsible. If the shoe frequently pinches, I did not manufacture it, my duty now being simply to apply it to all alike. The docility which the bulk of our teachers have adapted their style of instruction to the requirements of the standards should gratify the most ardent admirer of uniformity. The paring-down process is already almost completed; and the few teachers who have been imprudent enough to impart any instruction that does not tell directly on the standard work are not likely to repeat such an irregularity.

AGE OF SCHOLARS PRESENTED FOR THE LOWER STANDARDS.—It is impossible to pass unnoticed the startling fact that, a quarter of a century after the establishment of a system of free education in this district, a considerable proportion of the scholars presented for the First Standard are over nine, and not a few over eleven, years old. The requirements for a pass in this standard being merely the ability "to read common words of two syllables," and to work correctly three little sums in addition and multiplication—a task that has been accomplished with ease by hundreds of children of seven years old—the only possible conclusion is that a large section of the population is still practically untouched by our school system. The school-rolls fully acquit the teachers of all blame in the matter. Most of these overgrown laggards—the torment of the schoolmaster—have not entered a school, it will be found, until the last nine months. And they are relatively quite as numerous in our best as in our most backward schools—in the country as in the town. I found, for instance, in the second division of Bridge Street School, 33 children over nine and 9 over eleven years old presented for Standard I.; in Haven Road there were 37 over nine and 11 over eleven years. Motueka presented 25, Richmond Boys' 8, in the First Standard, all over nine. It is clear that few, if any, of these neglected children can now stay long enough at school to get an education of any real value.

DISCIPLINE AND MORAL TONE.—Frequent mention of these most important matters will be made in my detailed notice of each school, where, also, a general expression of approval will be found. In no respect, indeed, have our schools improved more during the last two or three years than in their discipline. Orders are now obeyed with far more promptitude than they were formerly; and, although the absolute silence for which the stricter sect of Inspectors and examiners stickles has not yet been attained, what noise is now heard is, for the most part, the noise of work. It is, moreover, very ques-