

As a last test of improvement, it is shown that, in 1879, 1,159 of 1,397, or 84·3 per cent., passed the standards in which they were presented; while, in 1880, 1,538 of 1,790, or 85·9 per cent., passed as presented.

In viewing this statement of results it must be remembered that twelve new schools were opened during the previous year, principally in thinly-populated districts, where no means of education previously existed. The results of the first examinations in these schools are necessarily low, and tend greatly to reduce the average attainments for the year. When, with this drawback, a perceptible improvement in average attainment can be recorded, I think the results of the year's work must be considered very satisfactory. The new schools have generally made better progress during the short time they have been at work than I could have been justified in expecting; and in the well-established schools steady improvement in the quality of the work produced is almost everywhere apparent.

Very little may be said on the regular subjects of instruction. I have made it a practice to enter upon the examination schedules my estimate of the several subjects, calling attention to causes of failure, and, where necessary, suggesting remedies for defects. Where the instruction in any subject appears inefficient, I have marked the subject as a class failure, and have required that it shall be brought to the necessary standard before any passes are registered. Subjects thus pointed out receive special attention; and it is seldom necessary to complain of the same defect at a subsequent examination. Grammar, geography, and history, in the extended form, taken in the upper standards, present more difficulties. There is an almost universal tendency to be satisfied with the rote-knowledge, which should form but the basis of the instruction. I have constantly to advocate greater attention to intelligent oral teaching and collective lessons; but I fear that much improvement in this direction can scarcely be expected from the majority of our untrained teachers until some provision is made to enable them to benefit by observation of similar instruction given by trained teachers.

The teaching of science, drawing, and music, when first introduced, presented almost insurmountable difficulties to those teachers who had no previous knowledge of the subjects. They were themselves unable to acquire the necessary knowledge, and it was useless to expect any uniform or systematic instruction in the schools. To meet the difficulty, the Board sanctioned the formation of teachers' Saturday lectures. The classes were conducted by myself, ably assisted by the Rev. J. Simmons, who took the vocal music. The course occupied twelve Saturdays, of two and a half hours each day, and consisted of six lectures in chemistry, six in physics, three in freehand drawing, three in model drawing, three in linear perspective, three in practical plane geometry, and twelve in vocal music. The teachers entered heartily into the scheme. Sixty-seven teachers attended the whole or part of the course, the average attendance being forty-nine. The time at our disposal would allow of the subjects being treated only in a cursory manner, but I believe that the lectures have been of the greatest practical benefit to the teachers, and that the effect will be immediately apparent in the systematic treatment of these subjects in the schools. The science apparatus, imported by the Board and used in the lectures, has since been distributed to the schools, and will be eminently useful to teachers in their work. The total expenditure for travelling expenses was £127 13s. 9d. Of this amount, £85 13s. 9d. was refunded by Government on account of railway fares, leaving the balance of £42 a charge on the Board's funds. The results of this experiment were so encouraging that I feel considerable good would accrue from another course to meet the difficulty I have pointed out above. Our teachers, holding the more responsible positions, are either fully trained with a normal school course, or have had such experience that they are in every way fitted for their work; but most of those engaged in the smaller schools have had no preliminary training, and inadequate experience. It may readily be supposed that, where their duties are earnestly pursued, the latter class will have little difficulty in perfecting the more mechanical school-work, but will sadly fail in intelligent oral instruction, or what may be correctly termed the art of teaching. If the Board could continue the work of the past year, and bear the necessary expense that would enable teachers to spend a few days in Timaru, a series of practical lectures in the art of teaching, and model lessons could be given, that I am sure would be of great value in their results.

The teachers' salaries have suffered considerably through the reduction in the grants to Boards; and, although the effect has not been so injurious as at first anticipated, I would submit that the salaries now given are not commensurate with the personal ability and professional work expected from our teachers. In the majority of cases the salary is barely sufficient for a living, and less than the same ability and energy displayed in most other callings would insure.

My visits of simple inspection have been very numerous, and have enabled me to gain much valuable insight into the real work and organization of the schools. The term "surprise visits," now so generally adopted, I find scarcely applicable, as it implies suspicion, which in this district I cannot say is warranted. In only one case have I found any neglect of work or registration. In most cases I have been able more fully to appreciate the ability and energy displayed by the teachers, and in some cases to give suggestions and information that may prove of service.

I have, &c.,

HENRY W. HAMMOND,
Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman of the Education Board.

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Hokitika, 20th January, 1881.

I have the honor to submit my general report for the year 1880. There are now thirty-four schools in operation in this district, and another is about to be opened at Kynnersley. New schools have been opened at Westbrook and Upper and Lower Kokatahi, and one has been reopened at the South Spit. The last three have not been examined this year. The schools in the southern part of the district were visited and examined during the year, and the results duly reported to the Board. The number of