

is to some extent unavoidable where the scholars live at an excessive distance from the school and when the weather is very wet; but these two conditions are not more general in this district than in some others, and certainly cannot be admitted as an excuse for unpunctuality. The distance to be travelled requires a certain well-known time for its accomplishment, and it is only necessary to start so much earlier to insure punctual arrival at the school.”—(*Mr. Smith.*) “In this connection it should further be noted that, from the interest taken in the examinations by teachers and by the scholars themselves, the number presented for inspection is far above the average attendance, and as a natural consequence an undue proportion of irregular attendants comes under examination. The average attendance at the dates of examination was 2,728, while the number present at inspection was 3,016. It necessarily follows from these remarks that irregular attendance continues to be the great hindrance to progress in our schools, and any improvement in this respect would show a corresponding improvement in the percentage of passes. In the smaller district schools the attendance undoubtedly depends mainly on the teacher, for where his ability, personal influence, and popularity are acknowledged, there is seldom any necessity to resort to other means of securing regular attendance; but in the larger town schools, where, on account of the mixed staff, the personal influence of the teacher is less directly felt, uniformly good attendance cannot at present be secured without coercion, and it is incumbent on Committees to see that the compulsory clauses of the Act are systematically enforced. In the single instance where this has been done—that of Waimate—the improved attendance is most marked.”—(*Mr. Hammond.*) “But the gravest trouble with which our school system has to contend is the irregular attendance of the children, a circumstance that neutralizes every effort to produce good educational results; and the man who is going to make our machinery efficient must set himself to grapple with this evil somehow or other. I own that at present I am not clear in my mind as to the proper remedy for it, but I have been a good deal struck with the apathy of teachers on the subject, and the contentedness with which they tolerate the evil, and I should like to know whether teachers are as patient under it in countries where the system of payment by results obtains. In some educational districts in New Zealand teachers are supplied with printed forms which they send out to the parents whenever a child is absent, the parent being requested to state on the back of the notice whether the child was absent by permission or not. Might not something of the sort be done here?”—(*Mr. Gammell.*)

*Teacher and Parents.*—“There are disturbing or strengthening influences affecting school life other than those directly affecting the school work. Apart from the question of scholastic qualification, one teacher succeeds where another fails. It is sometimes accepted as an educational maxim that a good teacher can overcome all difficulties. Certainly a teacher who succeeds in winning the respect of the community amongst whom he labours exercises an outside influence strongly in favour of his school; whilst the teacher who seldom approaches those around him meets with many outside difficulties. In travelling from one district into another, the contrast which two adjacent districts present with regard to the interest taken in school matters is quite surprising. In one the interest shows itself in the regularity and punctuality of the attendance, in the energy of the School Committee, in the up-keep of the school, in the importance attached to the examinations, in the tidiness of the children, in their manners and brightness, and in a hundred little ways which an observant eye can readily detect; whilst in the other the want of general interest is conspicuous by the absence, more or less, of nearly all these good signs. In relation to a child, the teacher is the *alter ego* of the parent, and a good understanding should exist between them. Also the teacher, in order to understand and make due allowances for differences of circumstances, character, temperament, energy, and intelligence, must make himself acquainted with the homes of his pupils; for, by so doing, he will not only be guided in his work, but he will, from time to time, remove any misunderstandings which may arise in the minds of parents from the *ex parte* statements about school life brought home by the pupils.”—(*Mr. Lee.*)

*Appointment of Teachers.*—“In my last year’s report I wrote as follows: ‘I regret to say that a tendency has begun to show itself here which should not be allowed to grow into a practice. We have been happily free from it hitherto. In more than one case teachers have sought to obtain appointment or promotion by bringing outward pressure to bear. It is easy to see how pernicious may be the results of this tendency. Fitness may cease to be considered. Not the man who has most qualifications, but the man who has most friends, may be he who will get appointments. The possible disastrous results to pupils and parents may come to be left out of sight altogether. This is no vague apprehension. A Royal Commission is now sitting in Victoria to examine into, amongst other things, the causes of the unsatisfactory state of many of the Victorian schools. It has already been made plain enough that many of the schools are in a wretched condition, and it has also been made plain enough that this disastrous state of things has been brought about by patronage. Ministers of Education have repeatedly passed over teachers of whose fitness they were assured in favour of men whose chief qualifications were the good word of a Ministerial supporter. It is, of course, not very likely that things will come to this pass here; but the evil principle is the same when favour and not fitness is allowed to be made the road to appointments. All efficient teachers should resent this; all who have the good of education at heart should resist it.’ I wish I could say that this tendency has lessened; I know that it has increased and is increasing.”—(*Mr. O’Sullivan.*)

*The Frequent Changing of Teachers.*—“The constant changing of teachers from school to school—a growing evil—reached its height this year. At the beginning of almost every month a long list of advertisements for teachers has appeared; the Board and School Committees have been worried with the never-ending task of selection; and the efficiency of our best schools has been seriously impaired by the inevitable change of system that follows every change in the staff. The process of disintegration has been carried on with a monotonous regularity. A having left the district or the service, B, from a neighbouring school, steps into his place, leaving a vacancy to be filled up by C, also a fellow-teacher in the same district; and so on in a vicious circle, which if not peremptorily cut short by the Board might affect a dozen schools. If promotion were the object of these changes, something might be said in their favour, but pure restlessness is at the bottom of most of them, the emoluments of the post abandoned being usually nearly or quite on a par with those of the post sought. The Board, in self-defence, has been driven to make a rule that a year must elapse between the date of appointment to