

OTAGO.

1. MR. PETRIE'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 7th February, 1883.

I have the honour to submit the following report for the year 1882 :—

During the year I paid one or more visits of inspection to forty-six schools, and examined seventy-two according to the regulations of the Department, besides taking part of the extra branches at the four district high schools. Mr. Taylor assisted me at nineteen of the largest schools.

At the beginning of the year it was decided to make an important change in the method of recording the results of the examinations, with the object of making the gross percentage of passes a more accurate estimate of the condition of a school. Any statement of the percentage of passes at a school is at best but a rough measure of its efficiency; but the percentage of passes in standards as formerly given fell far short of the accuracy which such a numerical estimate may possess. It labours under the radical defect of placing on a level all who fail to pass a standard, thus ignoring the varying degrees of merit attaching to those who fail in their standard. In the four highest standards a pupil can pass in seven subjects, and pupils who pass in seven or six of these subjects are reckoned to pass the standard for which they are entered; while those who pass in five subjects, or in fewer, are marked as failing in their standard. But of those who so fail some may have passed in five subjects, and come very near to the passing-point, while others may have passed in only one or two subjects. It is but just that a numerical estimate of a school's condition should take note of these minor differences, and allow them such weight as they are entitled to. To do this it was decided to substitute a return of the percentage of passes in subjects for the percentage of passes in standards. This percentage of passes in subjects, which has been made out for each school, at the cost of considerable additional trouble, may, for shortness' sake, be called the gross percentage. It will generally differ from the percentage of passes in standards, and will in nearly every case be higher. It affords, I believe, a fairly exact measure of a school's efficiency, and a just basis for comparing the condition of different schools. The change has been made solely in the interests of teachers, whose work it places before the public as accurately as the nature of the case permits. The adoption of the gross percentage above described as the numerical estimate of the efficiency of a school made it necessary to abandon the practice of reckoning half passes, and to record definitely for each subject a pass or failure. One consequence of the change has been a slight reduction in the percentage of passes in several of the standards. In effect, the requirements for the standard pass have been slightly raised; but, if fewer passes in standards have been gained, the successful pupils have shown a higher degree of merit. The foregoing remarks apply only to the requirements for passing a standard. The requirements for passing in a single subject have not been altered except in reading and history. In the former, fair comprehension of the language of the lessons has been made a *sine quâ non* of passing, while in the latter the standard has been materially lowered. On the whole, the standard of attainments required during the year in separate subjects has remained practically what it was, the increased strictness in reading being fully counterbalanced by the greater laxity in judging of history. The results of the examinations held during the year are summarized in the following tables :—

TABLE I.: Showing the Average Age of each Standard, the Number presented, the Number passed, the Percentage of Passes gained, and the Number of Schools at which each Standard was represented.

—				Average Age.	Number presented.	Number passed.	Percentage of Passes.	Number of Schools.
				Yrs. mos.				
Standard I.	...	...	...	9 1	2,414	2,268	94	152
Standard II.	...	...	...	10 2	2,352	1,796	76	154
Standard III.	...	...	...	11 7	2,354	1,466	62	149
Standard IV.	...	...	...	12 6	1,757	989	56	139
Standard V.	...	...	...	13 5	983	609	62	114
Standard VI.	...	...	...	14 3	414	345	83	75
Totals	...	...	...	...	10,274	7,473	73	...

TABLE II.: showing the Percentage of Passes gained in the several Subjects of Examination.

Subjects.	Percentage.	Subjects.	Percentage.
Reading...	84	Grammar	73
Spelling...	86	Geography	82
Writing...	91	History	80
Arithmetic	68		

TABLE III.: showing the Percentage of Passes gained under each Standard in the several Subjects of Examination.

—				Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Arithmetic.	Grammar.	Geography.	History.
Standard I.	...	...	...	94	95	95	84	...	...	...
Standard II.	...	...	...	81	87	85	75	...	79	...
Standard III.	...	...	...	83	80	90	61	74	83	78
Standard IV.	...	...	...	76	82	92	51	72	76	79
Standard V.	...	...	...	83	85	97	56	65	88	83
Standard VI.	...	...	...	92	88	97	75	85	95	90