1886.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:

REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In Continuation of E.-1B, 1885.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

[It has not been thought necessary to print in all cases the tables, or those portions of the reports that relate only to particular schools.]

AUCKLAND.

1.—MR. O'SULLIVAN'S REPORT.

SIR,— Auckland, March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ended 31st December, 1885.

The number of primary schools in the education district and the attendance of pupils are given in the following table:—

Quarter ending	Number of Schools.	Roll-Number.			Average Attendance.		
		M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.
March 31	226	10,106	9,650	19,756	8,193	7,804	15,997
June 30	229	10,249	9,677	19,926	8,259	7,646	15,909
September 30	228	10,768	9,702	19,970	8,165	7,499	15,664
December 31	233	10,211	9,692	19,903	8,265	7,630	15,895

The following table shows the number examined and passed in each of the standards, also the average age at which the pupils passed:—

Standard.	Examined.	Passed.	Failed.	Percentage of Passes.	Average Age at Time of Passing.
					Yrs. mos.
Standard I.	3,040	2,552	488	83·9	9 1
Standard II.	2,880	2,272	608	78·8	10 6
Standard III.	2,324	1,640	684	70·5	11 2
Standard IV.	1,251	847	404	67·7	12 10
Standard V.	760	437	323	57·5	14 1
Standard VI.	301	185	116	61·4	15 9
Totals	10,556	7,933	2,623	75·1	...

The following is the corresponding table for 1884:—

Standard.	Examined.	Passed.	Failed.	Percentage of Passes.	Average Age at Time of Passing.
Standard I.	2,860	2,260	600	79·02	9
Standard II.	2,581	1,982	599	76·79	10½
Standard III.	2,089	1,343	746	64·28	12
Standard IV.	1,095	823	272	75·15	13
Standard V.	560	338	222	60·35	14
Standard VI.	269	169	100	62·82	14½
	9,454	6,915	2,539	75·14	...

The changes recently introduced by the department considerably modify the standard examinations. I regret to see geography taken out of the Fourth Standard as a pass-subject. I also regret that physical geography, which ought to be very easily taught, is put off till the Fifth Standard. "One of the first things a child asks his mother is 'What becomes of the sun when it goes down?' and as soon as he has read two descriptions of travel—in polar and in tropical countries—necessarily he will ask why palms do not grow in Greenland. We are bound, then, to give notions of cosmography and physical geography from the earliest childhood."—(*Nineteenth Century*, December, 1885.) The majority of pupils leave school when they have completed the Fourth Standard; they will then go into the world without a hint of any of these things. I think it very undesirable that such an important subject as the laws of health should be put into the background, as it appears to be by regulation 19. It appears to be optional with a teacher whether he shall teach laws of health, or elementary mechanics, or botany, or some other subject. This, I think, is a grave mistake. Hear what Herbert Spencer says on the matter: "We infer that, as vigorous health and its accompanying high spirits are larger elements of happiness than any other things whatever, the teaching how to maintain them is a teaching that yields in moment to no other whatever, and therefore we assert that such a course of physiology as is needful for the comprehension of its general truths, and their bearings on daily conduct, is an all-essential part of a rational education." Surely it ought to have a prominent place in the education of a people. I notice another change which I fear will cause much mischief. "Knowledge of subject-matter of the reading lesson" is torn from the reading, and made an "additional subject," as if there would be any good and intelligent reading without a knowledge of the subject-matter of the lesson. In some of the Maori schools, many years ago, the pupils read English. Many of them did it with some fluency. But they did not understand the meaning of a single word they read. I know this of my own knowledge. I am afraid this regulation will have a tendency to get us back to this absurd manner of English-Maori reading. I do sincerely believe that a child would be more intelligent if he had not learned to read at all than he would be if he had learned to read without knowledge of the meaning of what he read. Nothing so dulls the intellect as the habit of repeating words to which no meaning is attached. I feel I should be acting wrong if I did not give expression to the opinions I have formed on these matters.

I perceive that a recommendation has been made to the department which I trust will not be given effect to. It is that the pupil-teacher regulation throughout the colony should be uniform, and that all pupil-teachers should serve for a period of four years. Now, this means the taking-on of pupil-teachers at an early age, and the making general the spectacle of the little pupil-teacher teaching and toiling. Here a pupil-teacher is seldom taken on till he is sixteen years of age, and has passed an examination more than equivalent to an ordinary pass of the Sixth Standard. To a person who has passed that examination it should not be hard to pass the other examinations required. By this arrangement many of the objections to the pupil-teacher system are at once got rid of.

I have come to the conclusion that the usual system of teaching—or, rather, hearing—reading is altogether wrong. Teaching should take the place of this hearing. If pupils can be made, say, in a week, or even in a month, to read a sentence of a paragraph as it should be really read, much will have been accomplished. As increased power to read correctly comes, larger quantities can be attempted. The system, which is too general, of allowing the pupils to mumble over their sentences with little or no attempt at guidance or correction is as ineffectual as every one allows it to be, and as it cannot fail to be. A good reader is rarely to be found in any walk of life; and, when one comes to think over the subject, it does not appear strange that it should be so—indeed, the wonder would be if it were not so. I would again remind the teacher that there can be no good reading when he must have the book before him in order to understand what his pupil says. I would also remind him that the nearer reading comes to telling or relating, the better it is.

I have been very much disappointed to find how deficient in many schools is the knowledge shown of the simple grammar required from the Third and Fourth Standards. In the Fourth Standard no syntax is required, as there ought to be. The pupils are merely required to name the parts of speech. Yet this knowledge—which ought, for the most part, to be picked up incidentally in the Second Standard—is often more than they can compass. We find pupils mistake nouns for verbs, adjectives for adverbs, and the like. This invariably comes of insufficient teaching. It is very easy to make children distinguish the parts of speech, and in a rational manner too. It should be impressed on them that there is only one way to tell what part of speech a word is—that is, *by the work they find it doing*. If they find a man shoeing horses they conclude he is a blacksmith. So, if they find a word telling the name of a thing, they know it is a noun; if it tells what sort the thing is, that it is an adjective; if it tells what the thing does, that it is a verb; if how it does it, as an adverb. I was lately horrified to find a teacher telling his pupils to distinguish adverbs by their ending in "ly;" and he stated that he found it a very useful plan. I need hardly say that the grammar in his school was very deficient.

I find that the knowledge of how to begin, end, and address within, various kinds of letters is becoming defective. This comes of not keeping before the pupils the skeleton form of letters, as the instructions provide. I am glad to find that the new standard regulations provide that pupils in the First Standard should know "the relative values and chief aliquot parts of current English coin; and relative lengths of yard, foot, and inch;" and those in the Second Standard "the relative values and chief aliquot parts of the ton, hundredweight, quarter, stone, and pound; relative lengths of the mile, furlong, chain, and rod."

I have more than once pointed out the absurdity of practically assuming that children cannot learn those things of which they speak and some of which they see every day. In time, perhaps children in the Third Standard may be allowed to amuse themselves by learning a little simple mensuration.

I do not consider that there has been much improvement in the methods of teaching in many of the schools during the past year.

It has frequently been represented to me by School Committees and by teachers that they undergo great inconvenience and expense by the wretched state in which the dwellings attached to the school are often given up by outgoing teachers. I think it is absolutely necessary that some means should be taken to remedy this evil. I brought the matter under the notice of the Board some four years ago.

In singing, gymnastics, and drawing satisfactory progress has been made. Mr. Robinson, the drawing-master, seems to have got over the difficulty of teaching mechanical drawing as part of the school course, which has hitherto seemed almost insurmountable.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland. R. J. O'Sullivan, Inspector.

2.—Mr. Goodwin's Report.

Sir,— Auckland, 12th March, 1886.

I have the honour to present a report of my work for the year 1885.

During the year I examined ninety-five schools in standards, and inspected five. In the earlier part of the year, until the end of April, I was engaged in the northern part of the district, in the winter I was in the Waikato and at the Thames, and the latter part of the year in and near Auckland, occupied with the examination of some of the town and suburban schools. I also examined the Hamilton and Cambridge District High Schools, and took part in the pupil-teachers' examination.

The number of children on the rolls of the schools examined by me was 9,019: of these, 2,987 were below Standard I., 1,070 were absent on day of examination, and 5,180 were actually examined; of these, 3,975, or a little more than 76 per cent., passed in their respective standards.

Of the schools that have come under my notice I may, I think, on the whole report favourably: I am of opinion that they are improving steadily year by year. In the northern portion of this district the schools are, with few exceptions, very small, and the salaries paid at present are not sufficient to tempt highly-qualified or experienced teachers to take charge of them. In some cases they are in the hands of persons who were appointed many years ago. Possessed of no experience to begin with, remote from intercourse with their better-qualified brethren, they had in the earlier days to work under considerable disadvantage. Some of these teachers have done really good work; others, without natural aptitude, with little knowledge and no industry, have, as they deserved, failed in the profession they ought never to have adopted, and their places are being filled as rapidly as circumstances will admit. In the southern portion of the district the schools are larger and more accessible, the salaries are higher, and in almost every case they are in the care of teachers of more or less experience, whose work would, I hope, compare favourably with that of teachers in any part of the colony.

I now proceed to remark upon the results of the instruction given in the several standard-subjects.

I cannot say that, as a rule, the art of reading is well taught. Although the words read are generally correctly pronounced, and the subject-matter of the lesson well known, there is little attempt at expression, and in the lower standards I have noticed a tendency to get the lesson by heart. In some of the country schools the children read in so low a tone as to be almost inaudible. When this occurs I expect failures, and I am seldom mistaken: most children are eager to display what they can do well; and a low tone in reading or answering is to me indicative of want of knowledge—they do not read loudly because they cannot read properly, and perhaps dread reproof. There are, of course, cases where the child is really nervous or timid; but these, I feel sure, are rare exceptions. I should recommend teachers to give more attention to "pattern reading." In Standards V. and VI., where more difficult words are introduced, very few seem able to clearly grasp their meaning. I find the results in spelling, as tested by dictation, very satisfactory; as shown in composition, where the pupils are at liberty to choose their own words, it is anything but creditable. I attribute this to neglect in correcting transcription exercises, and to the fact that very few of the children attending our schools read anything except their lesson-books. Spelling is learnt more by the eye than the ear, and those pupils who are fond of reading at home generally spell correctly.

Writing in this district is not, in my opinion, so good as it was. Good penmanship is the result of constant practice, care, and obedience to instructions. I am afraid that some teachers are relaxing their vigilance in this direction. It is, however, only fair to state that, out of the many thousands of papers I have from time to time had to correct, I have rarely, even in Standard III., found the writing illegible.

The mechanical operations in arithmetic, involving little thought, are generally well done, though not always with that perfect accuracy which, to my mind, is so important a feature in the more elementary portions of this subject. I always give at least one problem in every standard above the first; but the results hitherto have not been very satisfactory. Most of our teachers are now adopting the later and more scientific method of instruction in arithmetic—more appeals are made to the reason and less to the memory than formerly. I should be glad to see a better knowledge of decimal fractions in the Sixth Standard. Mental arithmetic has not received the attention it deserves: it would be well if all fresh rules were introduced to the pupils at first mentally—I mean in the form of questions requiring few figures, and of not greater complexity than can be easily retained in the memory.

I cannot speak very highly of grammar work. The parts of speech and inflexions in Standards III. and IV. are usually well known; but it is in the parsing of Standards V. and VI. that faulty

teaching becomes most apparent. It is rarely, indeed, that even very simple sentences are thoroughly well parsed throughout; and when, as in Standard VI., the scholars attempt more difficult pieces, they often make such mistakes as show how very little attention has been given to this subject.

The English composition of this year has not been very satisfactory, especially in the higher standards. The papers, while free from gross errors, have been very weak, evincing but little command of language, and mainly characterised by the introduction of irrelevant matter and the constant repetition of the same words and phrases.

Map geography is generally well taught: the scholars are, as a rule, tolerably familiar with the position of important places on the map of the world. I regret to say that the more educative branches of geography—namely, physical and mathematical—are, judging from results, not well taught. Questions on climate and atmospheric phenomena are generally either not answered at all, or in such a manner as to lead one to suppose that the principal facts had been committed to memory from a text-book: in some cases I have recognised the very words used in the little manuals which treat of these matters. It is needless to say that knowledge so acquired is of little value.

In English history the work is in most cases limited to the amount of information contained in the text-books in use. There are more failures in this subject than in any other.

The work done in object-lessons is in too many cases mere book-work: little effort is made to develop the perceptive powers of the children. I find this particularly in questioning a class upon one of the object-lessons given during the year: as long as the questions are direct, and facts only are demanded, the answers are generally correct; but I can seldom get them to give any reason for their belief: they have been told that the object—a piece of chalk, or whatever it may be—has certain qualities, and they merely repeat the names of these qualities. Very little has been done to train the scholars to find out things for themselves. That this is so is somewhat remarkable, for every book that treats of object-teaching lays great stress upon the absolute necessity of eliciting from the children what they know, or can observe, themselves; and unless this is done the lessons are possibly of use for the information they afford, but as a means of training are almost worthless.

In most of the schools lessons are given in some branch of elementary science; but in this, as in the object-lessons, I regret that so much is thought of books and so little of experiment. There are, of course, exceptions, but I am often met with the remark, "I can't afford to purchase apparatus." It seems useless to tell these teachers that, at all events as regards very many of the experiments to be shown, very rough appliances indeed will suffice. I have a lingering suspicion, however, that the causes of the lack of zeal on the part of teachers in this subject are not to be found altogether in the want of knowledge or fear of expense, but in the dread that the time devoted to science teaching will not "tell" at the examination for standards. In vain have I asserted that, where object-lessons and elementary science are properly taught, the other subjects are also good; my remarks are received with courtesy and manifest incredulity: they cannot believe that they will find their account in the increased intelligence of their pupils. To those who question the practical utility of science teaching in elementary schools I will quote what Professor Huxley says: "Now, the value of a knowledge of physical science as a means of getting on is indubitable. There are hardly any of our trades, except the merely huckstering ones, in which some knowledge of science may not be directly profitable to the pursuer of that occupation. As industry attains higher stages of its development, as its processes become more complicated and refined, and competition more keen, the sciences are dragged in one by one to take their share in the fray; and he who can best avail himself of their help is the man who will come out uppermost in that struggle for existence which goes on as fiercely beneath the smooth surface of modern society as among the wild inhabitants of the woods."

Instruction in drawing is given with very fair results in the town and larger schools; in the smaller schools the teaching of this very important subject is, I am afraid, too much neglected. As in the science lessons, it has, I think, been supposed not to "pay;" but now that marks are to be awarded it is probable that some improvement will take place.

Singing is very generally taught. In the drill and gymnastic exercises the chief fault in the smaller schools, where they have not the advantage of a professional instructor, is want of precision.

Of the discipline and behaviour of the children attending our schools I can speak favourably. It is very seldom indeed that I have to report the discipline of a school as "bad."

In the two district high schools examined by me quite as much work, although of an elementary kind, has been done as could reasonably be expected. It is not likely that young people who are at the same time striving to pass in the higher standards and working hard for a scholarship will make very rapid progress in French, Latin, and mathematics, the time devoted to these subjects being necessarily very limited.

I have been much surprised at the large number of children absent on the day of examination. Taking the roll-numbers of the schools I have examined, I find that more than 10 per cent. were absent, although ample notice is always given. Various causes are assigned—"Sickness," "Kept at home to work," &c. I make no remark on this; but I shall be curious to see whether reckoning the percentage of passes on the roll-number, instead of, as hitherto, on the number actually examined, will cause any alteration in this respect.

My work during the past year having been almost entirely devoted to the standard examinations, I have not in this report dwelt much upon the methods of instruction pursued by our teachers, except in so far as they came under my notice at the examinations. I am, however, convinced that most of the inferior results are caused by the neglect of steady systematic teaching, and by the apparent inability of some teachers to make the most of the material at their command.

In conclusion, I must express my sense of the uniform courtesy and assistance that I have received from teachers when examining their schools.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland. JOHN S. GOODWIN, Inspector.

3.—MR. FIDLER'S REPORT.

SIR,— Auckland, 25th February, 1886.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ending the 31st December, 1885.

During the past year I have paid 101 visits to various schools—Eighty for the purpose of examination, and twenty-one for that of inspection. The schools allotted to me have not been in one particular locality, but mostly in groups in different parts of the province, and have embraced several of the town schools. The division of the province into districts for the purpose of examination and inspection, which comes into use this year, besides its other advantages, will render an annual report of this kind more useful, as it will then be easy to compare the work done in successive years in the several districts thereby defined.

I submit the following table, drawn up in accordance with the requirements of the regulations under the Education Act, VIII., 5:—

Standard.	Examined.	Passed.	Failed.	Average Age of those who Passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Standard I.	1,194	988	206	8 11
Standard II.	1,057	850	207	10 5
Standard III.	852	590	262	11 8
Standard IV.	406	226	180	12 9
Standard V.	250	120	130	13 6
Standard VI.	76	44	32	14 11

Two fortuitous circumstances have made the percentage of passes in the schools examined by me this year lower than should be expected. One group, consisting of fifteen schools, in the Bay of Islands District was examined, by order of the Board, four months before the usual time, to prevent the examination taking place during the winter. Again, the majority of the schools examined by me chanced to be some of those from which mediocre work is generally got. Many of them were in bush or gum-digging districts, or were mill-schools, and were, on the whole, far below the general average of the schools in the province. But this does not explain the whole result as numerically expressed above, as in not a few cases inferior work was got from larger schools and from those differently situated. An inquiry into the more general causes of these results, which are noticeably poor in the upper standards, distinguishing those which have operated in small schools from those which have acted in larger ones, or those which have affected both, will show which are beyond control, which can be modified, and which eliminated, and what are the conditions and probabilities of an early improvement in those schools which are below the mark. Though much that I treat of has been noted before at one time or another, still, along with the facts I shall state such inferences as seem worthy of attention, and occasionally suggest, with respect, what seem to me to be the lines to be followed by those who have the control over the causes referred to.

One Cause of the Results found in the Character of many of the Scholars.—One cause operating very largely in a number of the small schools is found in the conditions unfavourable to the scholar's progress which exist in the character of many of the scholars themselves and in their surroundings. The great amount of physical labour which many of the parents require from their children, even though they may allow them to attend school, is a condition unfavourable to anything like intellectual progress. A great number of the boys and girls of thirteen or fourteen on the small bush-farms (which are so numerous in this province) or on the gumfields, besides attending school, have to do several hours' hard physical work every day. On such farms there is no machinery, no paid labour, and the children aid their parents very materially in their efforts to make a comfortable home. Truth compels me to add that not an insignificant proportion of parents who could afford to render the conditions of their children's educational progress more favourable prefer to use their labour, and to send them to school very irregularly, rather than procure that hired labour which their circumstances would permit. The interest of such pupils in their school-work is necessarily much diminished, and they often prove the most difficult subjects that the teachers have to deal with. In many of these schools, where a good number of the children are the offspring of parents with little or no appreciable school-education, much of the good, moral and intellectual, that is done does not admit of statistical representation, and only one who observes carefully can estimate the great progress which must be made by many of these children before they pass even the Third or Fourth Standard. When the system of public instruction has existed longer its effects will act more powerfully as causes, and every child who is fairly educated in such schools as I am speaking of will, directly or indirectly, vindicate the claims of its associates, or of those in the family who are younger, to the enjoyment of similar advantages. It is well, therefore, to recognise that, while the overtaking of the standard-work in a thorough manner is an object to be aimed at in such schools, the adverse conditions stated or alluded to often make the task difficult even for a good teacher. There are influences awakening the intelligence of children brought up where many of the schools are large which are not brought to bear on those attending small scattered schools—forces acting on

children attending town and large village schools at once stimulating a desire for information and rendering its acquisition easier. These are important factors in the Auckland Province, where the Board's report for the year ending the 31st December, 1884, shows that the percentage of schools where the average attendance is under twenty-five is 27·8, and that out of more than 200.

Second Cause found in the Difficulties incident to the teaching of Small Schools, where one Teacher has to deal with so many Classes.—Another cause is the difficulty incident to the teaching of small schools, which, of course, is increased or diminished according to the class of scholars attending each, and the regularity or irregularity of their attendance. It is that of teaching a number of subjects to a number of classes, where different portions of each pass-subject have to be mastered by each class. This difficulty does not amount to an impossibility: in many instances it has been overcome; and many of our best teachers have won their spurs in such schools. It will now be diminished very much by some of the new Standard Regulations, which lessen the number of pass-subjects, and facilitate the grouping of classes for instruction. Yet the task, by no means easy as compared with that of an assistant in a town school, will require well-directed energy, experience in teaching, tact and skill, and a scholarship not too meagre for one who would undertake the duties of a schoolmaster and perform them with credit. It has hitherto been unaccomplished in many cases because a number of the teachers have not had the qualifications indicated; and such schools will, as a rule, remain poorly taught until the action of general causes, or specific circumstances created by the Board—such, it seems to me, as are referred to in the next heading—will induce a greater number of efficient teachers to take charge of them. This brings me to the third cause of the results given above.

Inefficiency of Teachers in some of the Schools visited found to be a Third Cause.—About 25 per cent. of the schools examined by me were in charge of uncertificated teachers, some of whom had fair scholarship and considerable aptitude for their work, but others of whom were wanting in scholarship, or method, or both of these requirements, and were, from having had too little practice in teaching before taking charge, or from not having mastered with sufficient thoroughness the principles of the subjects taught, unable to conduct their schools with success. But what inducement beyond the hope of promotion is there for men of skill and education to go to remote places to contend with the difficulties incident to teaching small schools for a salary barely above a labourer's wage. This brings me to the conditions under which the Board will be able to secure good teachers for the small schools. They are, first, increasing the number of half-time schools; secondly, sending to the small schools, which by their geographical position cannot be worked half-time, the *young* certificated teachers, or probationers, who have had *at least six months' experience in teaching*, and have shown somewhat higher attainments than hitherto required of them. I believe that the late extension of the half-time system will be attended with success in the schools where it has been adopted. Where this system is in force "the income derived from the combined attendances of both schools becomes sufficient to provide a reasonable salary for a certificated teacher;" and I think that the poor results got in so many cases by having a number of small full-time schools in charge of uncertificated teachers should be a strong inducement for extending the system as far as possible in the outlying districts. The principal objection stated is, I believe, that the children forgot one week what they have learnt the preceding one. But where there are many small full-time schools, for lack of inducement to men of suitable qualifications to take charge of them they must necessarily, for the most part, be in charge of teachers of very mediocre ability, under whom the children will be taught unskilfully and make slow progress, as is evidenced by the long time it generally takes children attending them to pass from one standard to another, and the very small number reaching the higher standards. If two schools are taught on alternate weeks by a qualified teacher (whose experience and scholarship should be shown by a certificate), the scholars, being taught with skill, will make appreciable progress in the week during which they attend school, and, by the judgment exercised in setting suitable home-tasks for the off-week, and the interest aroused in their work, will not forget what they have learnt in the school-week, but come with a clear knowledge of it, and prepared to make further regular progress. An efficient teacher will win the co-operation of parents and scholars, and secure *regular attendance* on the school-week, and, by the interest he will give the senior scholars in their work, will cause them to acquire and perform more than what is learnt or worked out under his immediate care. It is undoubtedly an onerous task, and one requiring much skill, to conduct two half-time schools, and great credit is due to those who have conducted them with success, as a number of certificated teachers have done. It is not to be expected that the scholars attending them can pass a standard every year. In many of the small full-time schools a very poor percentage of those in fair attendance manage to do this at present. I anticipate, however, that in them a fair proportion of scholars will pass the higher standards, judging from the results found in such schools when in charge of certificated teachers. Briefly, while the opening of small schools in outlying districts helps settlement, it is better for the settlers to have their children taught by teachers of fair scholarship, experience, and skill on alternate weeks, than to have them subject, were it six days every week, to the care of inefficient schoolmasters. Additional reasons in favour of having the very small schools conducted on the half-time system are:—the wholesome influence of a good teacher, such as can be secured for the salary based on the combined attendances of two half-time schools, extends beyond the scholars; a qualified master is superior to local influences which may be brought to bear upon one who is not duly qualified; half-time schools can now be worked more easily than heretofore, under the new Standard Regulations, which facilitate the grouping of classes for instruction; some of the half-time schools are under uncertificated teachers, and, therefore, the system has been tried under unfavourable conditions; when there are more certificated teachers in such schools, the settlers' minds will be disabused, and they will feel the advantage of this system for the reasons stated above; the opportunities which uncertificated teachers, sent to take charge of small full-time schools, have of getting help in their studies are few, and they may go on for years preparing for the examination with little chance of passing; certificated teachers, whose services can be secured for the salary

given to those in charge of half-time schools, are in a better position, if they see fit, to prosecute their studies alone; there should be little difficulty in obtaining certificated teachers (now that there are so many in New Zealand) for such positions, as vacancies occur.

I now pass on to those very small schools which, owing to geographical position or bad roads, cannot be conducted on the half-time system. The young certificated teachers, who have gone through their course of training, and who, being single, can live on the salary, could teach the major part of them, and should make a start in them, as they must naturally expect to climb the ladder by beginning at the lowest rungs. There would be no chance of their staying unreasonably long in them; for by good work they would soon have a just claim to a higher status and salary. Those who, having the requisite scholarship, have entered the Board's service as probationers, and have, since entering, had *at least six months' training in the art of teaching* in some larger school, are in a position, as vacancies occur, to conduct with success the small schools which are neither half-time nor full-time in charge of certificated teachers. The standard of scholarship expected from probationers on entering the service should be fully up to the mark of that for the E certificate in all the subjects except in the principles of school organization and government, of the art of teaching and of method, and in singing, in which they could qualify themselves afterwards.

Notwithstanding some of the remarks under this heading, the equitable claims of certain teachers in the small schools, who have for many years served the Board to the best of their ability, but who, by their isolated position, have been less able to fully qualify themselves, call for some recognition—such, perhaps, as being placed for a time near some centre where they will have more facilities of so doing.

I take occasion to remark on the importance of having as first assistants in large schools teachers of as high qualifications as possible, as on them in many cases falls the conduct of the higher classes. Unless a head-master has as first assistant a good disciplinarian, able to treat with skill the subjects taken up in these classes, he is not in a position, without prejudice to this part of the school, to devote a sufficient portion of his time to the lower classes, and, what is vitally important, *to the training of the rest of his staff.*

Frequent Changing of Teachers a Fourth Cause.—The frequent changes of teachers is a hindrance to progress, especially where the changes in a staff take place midway between two examinations, or shortly before one. The continuity of the work is destroyed—one teacher seldom takes up the threads of his predecessor's work. As far as circumstances will permit, the changes should be made just after an examination, otherwise an Inspector is less able to estimate the work done by the several teachers who have had charge of a school or class during a year.

Strict Way in which the Standards have been Applied to the Cases of Individual Scholars a Fifth Cause.—The strict observance of Regulation 8, Standards of Education, 1878, has told severely in certain schools where the work was uneven, being good in some subjects, to which disproportionate attention had been given at the expense of others. History has invariably been counted as a pass-subject, a matter in which there seems to have been some latitude in one or two of the provinces where there are many small schools. The past year's experience has shown me how greatly the new Standard Regulations, which come into force in 1886, will facilitate the teaching of such schools. Unevenness of work in certain schools has arisen from not paying close enough attention to the lines of the standards of education; so that, while good work has been done in certain subjects, and much progress on the whole has been made in them, when tried by the standard test a low percentage was obtained. In some of the schools the unevenness was attributable to the poor method in which some of the subjects had been handled; in others, the time-table could not have been followed with sufficient regularity. In several of these schools, however, I anticipate considerable improvement in the next year's work. In one or two cases a good deal of effort has been put forth by the teachers to prepare their scholars to give musical entertainments occasionally. However excellent such entertainments may be, and calculated to make a school popular, their preparation should not encroach on the school-work.

The way in which the Subjects have been treated in Class in certain cases a Sixth Cause.—In some of the schools, including some of the larger ones, the results in the higher standards were poor, because, though the whole of the standard work had been gone over, it had been treated in a superficial or otherwise imperfect manner. Thus, in some cases the children could read a large portion of their reading book fluently, without having any idea of the drift of the lesson, as the explanation they had been accustomed to was simply the substitution of one word for another, with little or no attempt to bring them into communion with the thoughts and feelings of the writers. So, too, in many cases the children in the higher standards—Fifth and Sixth—have failed to do the problem-work in arithmetic; because, while they had been taught certain rules and formulæ, they had little grasp of the principles on which these were based, and were only able to apply them to the simplest cases, as their intelligence had been brought insufficiently into exercise. In the teaching of grammar there is little variation in the method used, so as to enable the scholars to grasp its principles: the inductive method is not sufficiently adopted. In teaching the analysis required by the Standard Regulations it should not be treated only as a separate subject, but should be made an instrument in the teaching of parsing. The scholars should be accustomed to analyse sentences before parsing them, that they may better see the relations of the words to one another. As to the teaching of physical geography, where the more general laws governing the phenomena treated had not been skilfully explained, and their action suitably illustrated, the pupils in one or two schools gave pretty certain proof that they had been preparing for the examination in this branch by committing to memory long passages from a text-book which they had evidently failed to understand, for the reason stated. There may be many good methods of treating the same subject; the main thing is the skill with which the method adopted is applied. The practical difficulties experienced by a teacher in getting his scholars to grasp the principles and laws referred to under this heading are often great, owing to the poor mental power some of the scholars bring to their tasks, especially those who have not been well trained in the earlier stages of their school course.

Extra Subjects.—Object-lessons have been taken in all but four of the schools visited by me. In fifty-six they had been treated very successfully or fairly well, in twenty they had been very poorly treated, and consisted of little more than a few names and definitions by rote. Drawing has been taught successfully in thirty schools, with a pretty close observance of the order of instruction laid down by the department; in thirty-seven it consisted only of freehand, practised on slates, or was poorly taught; in thirteen schools it was not taught at all. Recitation has been well or fairly taught in fifty-three schools; in twenty-seven it was mere repetition. The tonic sol-fa system of teaching singing has been adopted in the majority of these schools; in some the old notation; in twenty-six singing has not been attempted. The children showed a good acquaintance with the elementary laws of health in forty-four schools; in thirty the subject had been unsuccessfully taken up; in six it formed no part of the school course. A good knowledge of elementary science other than laws of health was shown in nineteen schools; in nine a slight knowledge; in fifty-two no instruction was given in this branch, though in a number of cases the teachers were well qualified to give it. The Board's resolution requiring that laws of health should be taught two half-hours in each week renders it very difficult for the teachers in small schools to find a place in the time-table for any other branch of science; and I recommend that this resolution be somewhat modified, seeing that section 19 of the new Standard Regulations reconciles the claim of this branch of elementary science with that of other branches to have a place in the school course. Unless this is done the time which should be devoted to the standard work will be encroached on.

Discipline.—In the great majority of the schools visited the discipline was very good. The Board's attention has been called to the few cases in which it was not so.

Small Number of Male Pupil-teachers.—The small proportion of male pupil-teachers calls for some attention. One would almost think that youths were beginning to look upon teaching in the primary schools as more peculiarly the province of the other sex. One cause which keeps lads from choosing this occupation is the immediate high rate of wage which can be earned in other employments in the colony. A lad must be fifteen before he can be a pupil-teacher at £30 per annum; while at that age, if he has made good progress, he can find other more lucrative employment. Of course he cannot expect much when beginning to learn an art; but the prospect for the future, perhaps, does not seem so clear or so promising as in other employments. The calling may seem to demand more restraint than a lad brought up under the free institutions in a colony may care for. A schoolmaster can occasionally do much to engage in his own calling some of his more promising scholars. I have in several instances noticed that where the teacher has been an enthusiast, thoroughly devoted to his work, one or more of his scholars have been brought into sympathy with him therein, and have resolved to follow a calling which they have felt to be so honourable and so useful. I think that some concession should be made, so that suitable lads may not be prevented from entering the profession of teaching by difficulties at the outset, and that therefore, when there is a vacancy, a male pupil-teacher should be allowed to begin his course in the school where he has been educated. Notwithstanding the objection which may be made on the ground that a pupil-teacher is not likely to exert sufficient control over a class in a school which he has attended as a scholar, I think the concession referred to might be made, as the allowance (£30) is not enough to maintain a youth who lives away from home, and there may be many suitable applicants whose parents are not in a position to supplement their salary. A head-master who rules his school well will take care that his pupil-teachers exert proper control over their classes. It is an advantage for a lad to continue his studies as a pupil-teacher under the master who has brought him through the standard course. Something should be done to facilitate the entrance of suitable lads into this calling, and the concession here referred to would, I believe, prove beneficial in this respect.

There are many other matters which call for attention in a report of this nature; but I have thought it better to deal fully with a few than to treat many in a cursory manner.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Board o Education, Auckland. W. FIDLER, M.A., Inspector.

TARANAKI.

SIR,— Education Office, New Plymouth, 23rd February, 1886.

I have the honour to lay before you the annual report on the schools of the district for the year ending the 31st December, 1885.

Since the close of last year the only change affecting the number of schools was that caused by the amalgamation of the Courtney Street Girls' School and the Central School, New Plymouth, thus lessening the number by one. As to the wisdom of the step it is unnecessary to make any remark, but I desire to express a hope that both buildings will, when the Board's funds permit, form one commodious structure. At Inglewood the erection of the new school was delayed by questions affecting the site; hence both schools were examined before the reorganization took place. The proposed arrangements for Waitara are still an open question; but I trust no time will be lost unnecessarily in coming to a decision, as the obtainable results are not a fair return for the money expended.

Besides the usual visits of inspection and examination I have again been able to undertake, with a few exceptions, one or more surprise visits to all the schools in the district. My attendance during these visits has generally extended throughout the day, or, at least, the greater portion of it. Organizing, criticising time-tables, and giving practical lessons on method have occupied much of my time at these visits, as I am aware that successful results will only be obtained by giving as much help as possible to those teachers whose only experience has been confined to their own schools. Classes were also examined to get at the weak points of the instruction, thus enabling the teachers

to alter or improve with a surer touch on the sequence of their work. The attendance and admission registers were examined. They were generally well and accurately kept, with their entries posted to date of visit; still, in several instances a little more care in their preservation is not too much to expect. Circulars and regulations, issued by the office from time to time, should always be kept in some convenient cover or exhibited on the walls for handy reference.

At the close of December, 1884, the attendance was 2,113. This year the increase is decidedly better, being 148, or ninety-five more than that of last year. This places the attendance at 2,261 for the December quarter. The scheduled number, 2,226, is slightly under this, owing to the examinations covering more than the last quarter of the year. Of this number, 1,381 were presented in standards, 808 were presented in preparatory classes, and thirty-seven were re-examined in standards already passed. As the Board allowed me to exempt from each school's percentage of passes those failing whose attendance was under 60 per cent. of the number of times the school was opened, the presentations in standards were slightly increased by teachers allowing scholars whose over-classification was reported last year to attempt the next higher standard. Such action reduced the number for re-examination, which I expected would have been much greater, as 162 were marked as unsatisfactory by failing to make pass-marks when re-examined last year. Although the number examined is slightly increased—from 1,725 to 1,852—the attendance at examination is still, as formerly, at 83 per cent. on the scheduled number. With fine weather prevailing, and the absence of any epidemic, there has been no reasonable excuse to prevent a better attendance on the examination day. Probably many parents are indifferent about their children passing the standard examinations.

The question of irregular attendance, the burden of every teacher's complaint, is becoming of serious moment to the Board. Its efforts to meet the growing wants of the district by erecting new buildings, as well as maintaining and repairing existing ones, are being crippled by the loss to its revenue caused by the irregularity. During the present year nearly £2,600, a sum sufficient to have undertaken most of the pressing claims, has been lost. Until improvement takes place in the daily attendance, neither efficiency in instruction nor a satisfactory condition of your school-buildings can fairly be looked for. The fact that the working average is 3 per cent. less than last year clearly shows that many parents are unconcerned about their responsibilities, despite the inclination of the Board to grant privileges that are denied in other portions of the colony. Much explanation of the fitful attendance is attainable from a perusal of the quarterly returns of children in irregular attendance, furnished by teachers during the past nine months. Perhaps a few of the remarks given as reasons for non-attendance will best exemplify and convince that a large share of this wrong can fairly be set down to the apathy and unconcern of parents. Here are a few about boys and girls from thirteen to fifteen years of age: "Passed Standard I.;" "Passed no standard;" "Said to have passed Standard I.;" "Comes for a change;" "Has not passed Standard I." Some of the commoner excuses are: "Required at home;" "Keeps cows out of neighbour's garden;" "Assists parents." A few of quite a different class are: "Education neglected;" "Indifference on the part of parents;" "Come when they like;" "Should be at school;" "Neglected;" "Running wild." I fear those of the latter class are likely to bring about the expenditure of a still greater capitation than that allowed to Education Boards. With the new clauses in our amended Education Act, such a state of things should not now be tolerated. The Board's solicitor is the proper person to stamp out such reasons as the last given for non-attendance. From conversations with Chairmen and members of several School Committees I know there is a willingness and a desire to aid in this direction if some person is empowered to take the needful steps. At Huirangi, Lepperton, Midhirst, Omata, Tikorangi, Wortley Road, Waipuku, Koru, and Waitara, the irregularity prevails, indeed, to such extent at several of the schools named that a monetary loss has taken place through the capitation falling short of the ordinary working expenses. This should not be the case, as the list includes a number of our best country schools, where considerable sums of money have been expended during the past two years in erecting new buildings and enlarging others. Before leaving this subject I mention the fact that only seven first-class and thirty-three second-class certificates of attendance were required for issue throughout the whole district. This will make known the wide extent to which the evil prevails.

The passes in standards are 819, as against 472, or an excess over last year of 347. The best returns are certainly those of the Sixth and First Standards: in the first, due undoubtedly to the experience of the teachers in schools where presentations were made, and in the latter to the better acquaintance generally with the work of that standard. The Third and Fourth are fairly creditable, but the results are disappointing in the Second, and indifferent to bad in the Fifth. At Rahotu and the Inglewood Girls' School all presented passed with credit. Very good work was done at the Central, Fitzroy, Lower Mangorei, Oakura, and Waitara East Schools, while at thirteen others the passes ranged from 12 to 50 per cent. on the number presented.

Numerically the best evidence of the year's teaching is shown by the percentage of marks, which is 62·2 on 1,213 examined. Last year this was 55·9 on 884. The improvement is unquestionably due to the better methods adopted by teachers, along with a closer adherence to standard lines, than had been formerly followed. The percentage is not by any means yet what it should be, although there are good grounds for hope that it will, however, rise in schools, where the results were lowered by many failures in special subjects, as better work in these was evident, when compared with that of my former examinations. Altogether, when the past is reviewed and the many difficulties considered under which all have had to labour, the outcome of the year's teaching must be considered fairly satisfactory.

The examination questions, regarding which no complaint was made to me, were favourably received, and somewhat similar in character to last year's ones. The few changes, however, were evidently new to the teaching at several schools, where probably the opinion existed that the same routine of last examination would be followed.

In the following table of examination results, which is more convenient for reference, are the percentages, ages, passes, and other information usually given. These entries could easily be increased, but I consider no useful purpose would be gained by doing so :—

Standard.	Average Age.	Presented.	Examined.	Absent.	Passed.	Failed.	Percentages of Passes on		Re-examinations.				
							Presented number.	Examined number.	Presented.	Examined.	Absent.	Made Pass-marks.	Failed.
	Yrs. mos.												
Preparatory ...	...	808	605	203	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard I. ...	8 8	405	355	50	294	61	72·6	82·8	6	6	...	5	1
Standard II. ...	10 1	470	429	41	266	163	56·6	62	8	8	...	8	...
Standard III. ...	11 10	286	234	52	133	101	46·5	56·8	12	10	2	7	3
Standard IV. ...	13 0	151	132	19	91	41	60·3	68·9	6	6	...	3	3
Standard V. ...	13 7	57	51	6	25	26	43·8	49	3	2	1	1	1
Standard VI. ...	14 7	12	12	...	10	2	83·3	83·3	2	2	...	2	...
Totals ...	...	2,189	1,818	371	819	394	...	...	37	34	3	26	8

SUMMARY.

——	Presented.	Examined	Absent.	Passed.	Failed.	Percentage.
Preparatory	808	605	203	...	...	Percentage of passes on 1,381 ... 59·3
In Standards	1,381	1,213	168	819	394	Percentage of passes on 1,213 ... 67·5
Re-examined	37	34	3	26	8	Percentage on Inspector's marks, 1884, 55·9
Totals ...	2,226	1,852	374	845	402	Percentage on Inspector's marks, 1885, 62·2

Reading.—As the faults pointed out have received a good deal of attention, I am able to give a more favourable report of the instruction of this subject. Where last year bad grouping or the entire absence of it influenced the reading, especially in the preparatory and lower standards, much success had resulted. Good progress also has attended the efforts made to dispose of the faulty articulation and inaccuracy; still, the tendency almost in every school is to drift into a purely mechanical style, without manner, or without tones befitting the subject-matter. There is one great fault that tends greatly to promote this style. Scholars are too frequently reminded of the grammatical points, and too seldom of the pauses used in speaking. Why cannot pupils be oftener encouraged to read as they would speak? Teachers should enforce frequent grouping of words, a proper attention to emphasis, with a slow and deliberate rate if they desire to obtain expressive and intelligent reading. These can readily be done by frequent personal illustration or pattern by one or more of the best readers in the class or school. When difficulty occurs, or the reading is given in a spiritless or lifeless manner, the sense of what is read should be explained, and the scholars required to tell all they know about it.

Spelling.—The tests, both in this and dictation, were answered creditably. About four schools only showed what might be fairly classed as bad work. Certainly the better methods have given the present standard of proficiency, seeing that many teachers have informed me of the change effected in their schools in a few months' time. Unfortunately, the carelessness of the past will, I fear, always show itself less or more; yet the year's results are cheering and inciting.

Writing.—The pass-marks were awarded on the specimens done for me in the copy-books. Good progress is noticeable in many schools where obviously the black-board has been utilised. A few teachers were apparently disappointed at the change from the transcription tests to the copy one, as the usual daily treatment was too plainly apparent by the faulty forms and common carelessness which accompanied such. The position while writing and the holding of the pen are not yet satisfactory.

Arithmetic.—I am fairly well satisfied with the papers and slate-work. The subject is improving in mechanical accuracy, and the problem-teaching showed advance; though much remains to be done. Throughout the year it was frequently noticed that problems were given without any previous explanation of the principles involved. This is, beyond doubt, the reason why so many fail to work them successfully. Greater care could be imparted with profit to the arrangement of the work, especially in standards from the Fourth upwards. The defect is chiefly caused by the want of practice in preliminary examinations, when no opportunity should be lost in giving hints or models of good methods of solution. Evidently the disastrous results of last year have done good in constraining teachers to give more care to the instruction in notation, which is greatly improved; probably the weakness in numeration, as well as the necessary acquaintance with the use of arithmetical signs, seen to a large extent in the Second Standard, will be dealt with in a similar manner and with the same success. Many substitutes for calculation are greatly indulged in: they ought to be strictly forbidden, as their need is really the result of faulty knowledge of tables and insufficient practice in mental arithmetic. To stimulate to more rapidity while working, it is very desirable

that more spirit be introduced into the teaching. Many were exceedingly lazy over their papers. At a few schools very good work was done within an hour, but repeatedly the time taken was beyond all reasonable allowance. In future this paper will require to be timed.

Grammar.—No two opinions exist about the work of the Third Standard. The teaching has been confined to the four parts of speech with considerable success. At four schools only did I meet with an approach to last year's bungling. Inflection in the Fourth is slowly improving; meanwhile the awkward attempts to teach case by position survive. At the Central, Waitara East, Egmont Village, and the Inglewood Girls' Schools the inflection of the verb was known; in all other schools, however, where presentations in the Fifth were made, the instruction must have been very imperfect to give such worthless results. Analysis seems to be beyond the powers of many who are intrusted with the education of the youth in the district. The work of the Sixth was a great deal better; in a few instances a weakness in derivation was seen. The exercises in composition were on the whole fair, with good promise. The prevalent method of attempting letter-writing as an introduction to composition has given way to the more sensible plan of building up easy sentences first.

Geography.—To be rightly treated the instruction ought to have a good foundation in the Second Standard. In order to assist teachers the Board enabled me to provide a good elementary geographical chart to each school, by the intelligent use of which I had hoped to secure better returns. Occasionally my tests were promptly answered and illustrated on the chart; but too frequently I had to take meaningless definitions, over which so much time is foolishly wasted. A few excellent papers were done by the Fifth and Sixth; while at Waitara East and the Central Schools the answers in physical geography were exceedingly creditable. Map-drawing was occasionally well done, comparing favourably with last year's productions. It should be constantly practised, with the intention of giving ready facility to draw from memory. No attempt to overcrowd maps should be allowed; the work should be limited to the geographical features that may be fairly expected.

History.—The examination in the Third Standard was limited to a selection by the teachers from a list of events selected and grouped by myself. By so doing the teaching was distributed over all the periods, with more hope of better results. I am glad to say that they exceeded my expectations. Very seldom did any appearance of "cram" show itself, and once only was the intention misinterpreted into a mere repetition of the list. Where the higher standards were examined, the papers and oral questions gave proof of the work being covered, in a fair proportion, with intelligent instruction.

Sewing.—Much satisfaction was expressed by the lady examiners with the improved quality of the work of the specimens, which to a large extent fairly represented the different stages of the syllabus instruction.

Extra Subjects.—I cannot report any material increase or advancement on any of the extra subjects. Singing and drawing are very rarely taught: a few teachers give instruction in the latter, specimens of which seen bore evidence of teaching ability. Very little towards the introduction of elementary science has been done, but object-lessons are receiving some attention, with more or less success, in the development of the children's observing and thinking powers. I hope to be able to afford more assistance and advice in the direction of a judicious use of these lessons than I have done. A supply of good pictorial illustrations and a collection of useful objects are much needed. Repetition of poetry has generally been attended to; I cannot, however, speak well of it, for, as a rule, it was taken at a hurried rate, and without any attempt at expression.

Discipline.—The discipline and tone are good, though the latter is influenced very much by the want, in many instances, of good manners, which it will be to the advantage of teachers to remedy before next inspection.

School-buildings.—Regarding the condition of the school-buildings and residences, it is very desirable that the old ones be repainted. The action of the weather is causing the timber to give way about the window-framings: if the painting is longer delayed a serious outlay will be incurred. The few residences in the district have evidently been erected at the least possible expense. Most of them are mere shells, with a room generally boarded, and the others either lined with scrim, or with no covering but the bare boarding. The majority of the schools have no residences, and in some localities it is a difficult matter to obtain lodgings for the teachers. The Board's attention must be given to supply a better class of residences and to improve those already erected. When the Bell Block, Stratford, and Frankley Road District Schools are attended to there should be no difficulty in undertaking this needful reform.

Whether next year's results will show still more improvement is a question that frequently occupies my mind. I have grave doubts about the matter. In a number of your schools I do not hesitate to say they will be exceeded; but about the others I cannot dismiss the fact that many of the passes are the outcome of a preparation extending over two years. Certain I am of some, and doubtful of a few, that they will not even attain to the percentages of the present year. Time and patience, along with hard work, may do a great deal, aided by the advantages of the new regulations; still, I fear the question of expecting passes in the higher standards, at any rate, from a number of the present staff will have to be considered as the passes of efficient schools are year by year brought out in comparison with others. Your uncertificated teachers are now alive to the necessity of obtaining their certificates; but, at the same time, there is little encouragement held out to those who do so and desire to remain employed. This condition the Board should endeavour to rectify by an increased salary or a higher scale of payments.

I have to acknowledge the courtesy and the energetic co-operation which teachers have given me in the general interest and desire to forward the educational work of the district.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM MURRAY,

Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Education Board Office, Wanganui, February, 1886.

I have the honour to submit my second annual report on primary education in the Wanganui District.

In my last report I pointed out that of the sixty-nine schools examined eight were taken in February and March of 1885; so the report treated of all schools examined before the 31st of last March. As such a course, however, materially interfered with my visits of inspection, I think it better that the examination year should in future terminate with the calendar year. Accordingly, the results obtained last February and March by the eight schools that stand highest on the list in point of date are included in the calculations in this report as well as in those of last year.

All schools in the district open for twelve months were examined, with the exception of the aided schools of Maramara Totara and Kimbolton Road, which will be taken next month. Over ninety visits of inspection were paid, one or more to each school, as occasion demanded and opportunity offered. During the year 1884 new regulations regarding pupil-teachers were drawn up; and they were passed in their entirety by the Minister of Education. The first examination under the new syllabus took place last June, when thirty-one pupil-teachers and ten candidates and cadets presented themselves. The work showed a marked improvement upon that of the previous year, more especially in spelling and general neatness and arrangement. The want of soundness was, however, still apparent. Questions asking for explanations such as should be given to pupils were often shirked or badly answered. Also, more attention in future to the requirements of the syllabus would be advantageous. On the 5th of August and the two following days I conducted the examination for scholarships. Six scholarships, tenable now for the first time for two years, were offered by the Board for competition to all children in the educational district complying with the usual conditions. The head-master of the Wanganui Collegiate School also offered a scholarship to the pupils attending the Wanganui Boys' District School. It was disappointing to find only twenty-five candidates—fifteen for the senior and ten for the junior scholarships—while only eight of the Board's schools were represented, though the syllabus embraced chiefly standard work. Scholarships cannot be considered to fulfil the purpose for which they are established until they draw pupils from all parts of the district, and from large and small schools alike. For further information respecting scholarships and pupil-teachers' examinations I beg to refer you to my special reports thereon. On the 11th of August last I commenced the examination in standards, and was engaged in this work until the 16th December, when I took charge of the teachers' examination. I may here state that if the examinations in standards were extended over the greater part of the year, in place of occupying nearly every consecutive day of the last five months, not only would the work be lighter to the examiner, but more time could be devoted to visits of inspection, and more attention be given to the general affairs of the district.

Schools, Accommodation, &c.—At the close of the school year ended the 31st December, seventy-three schools were in active operation, having an average weekly roll-number of 5,970, and a working average of 4,433, or 74 per cent. The numbers for the corresponding quarter in 1884 were, average weekly roll-number 5,708; working average, 4,278; percentage, 75 nearly. Of the seventy-three schools ten are "aided," having an average attendance of 132, and three of these ten are conducted in houses not belonging to the Board. During the year a fine building capable of accommodating 160 pupils (present average 130) was erected at Terrace End. Extensive and much-needed alterations and additions, embracing commodious and well-lighted infants' rooms, were made to the buildings at Hawera, Waverley, Marton, Bulls, and Normanby. Some improvements are urgently needed at Foxton and Sanson, as also in the gallery and lighting of the infants' room at Palmerston; and when these are effected all the larger buildings will be in a creditable state. In March last the Board voted £250 for the erection of a building near Eltham. So much feeling and diversity of opinion have, however, been shown by the settlers with regard to the site that, in place of their having enjoyed the benefits of a school in full operation for the last six months, in a building erected by the Board, an aided school was started only last December. The settlers in the northern-most portion of the district have shown a commendable desire for the establishment of schools, to enable them to take advantage of the Education Act, and several new districts have accordingly been formed, and aided schools are about to be opened. Unless considerable care is taken in obtaining teachers for these schools, more harm than good may result. And here I may say, great caution should be exercised in arranging the boundaries of new districts. As long as schools are very small, so long will it be difficult to obtain competent teachers at the low salaries available. In some portions of the district the schools on the main roads are far too close. In the Paraekaretu a schoolhouse to accommodate sixty children has just been completed, and will shortly be opened. At Woodville a new building is much needed.

My remarks in last year's report with reference to the appearance of the class-rooms have borne good fruit. As I foretold, children, and some Committees, have shown a desire to help the teachers in improving the rooms; and now growing plants, framed time-tables, and such like are frequently to be found. Trim flower-gardens, also, are to be seen at some schools. During the year a good deal of apparatus, chiefly blackboards, easels, and infants' cards, has been supplied, as also dual desks where most urgently needed. I am glad to say that at many places children now take a pride in keeping their desks clean.

Registers are in general well kept, but I regret to say I had to report two cases of falsification during the year. Log-books should throw more light upon the organization and working of the schools. It would be well for a teacher leaving any particular school to remember that a copy of his late time-table should be left behind.

Teachers.—In the seventy-three schools in the district 136 teachers are employed—viz., seventy-three principal teachers, twenty-three assistants, and thirty-nine pupil-teachers. There are also six cadets. All the teachers in charge of aided schools are uncertificated, and of the remaining

sixty-three principal teachers, forty-nine hold certificates, two have "partially passed," and one holds a "license to teach." Of the assistant teachers, eighteen are certificated, three have "partially passed," and one has a "license to teach." At the examination in January one new candidate (a pupil-teacher) succeeded in gaining the E certificate, three were partially successful, and twelve completed. These examinations do nothing towards filling up vacancies brought about by promotions or other causes; for the successful candidates are few, and they are at the time already in the service of the Board. Some schools are thus occasionally closed for a few weeks, because there is no qualified candidate to hand. And here I may say it appears to me that Wanganui and like districts should be in some measure put upon a similar footing with Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago, by enabling the former also to train their own teachers. But how is this to be done? Perhaps by granting the Board a sufficiency of funds to allow of teachers being employed on probation. These probationers would attend, in excess of the staffs, at the best-conducted schools, and the head-masters would be held responsible for their training in class-management, and would receive some remuneration for instructing them. Perhaps, too, Saturday lectures at some centre could be inaugurated. I am convinced that by some such method good teachers could be turned out, at less expense, too, than from training colleges, and possessing more practical knowledge in working a school than the pupils of such institutions. At all events, there is no training college here, and it behoves the Board to get something in its stead through which a supply of teachers of known character and qualifications can be obtained. A great want in the district, also, is a teachers' library. As long as the reading of teachers is confined to the dry bones of elementary text-books, so long will the teaching tend to be uninteresting "cram."

Examinations in Standards.—In all, seventy schools were examined, or one more than during 1884. Kaitoke and the aided schools at Sandridge and Whakamara have been closed, and, consequently, are not represented in the list; while Birdgrove, St. John's, Mangaone, and Otakeho have been examined for the first time. On the days appointed for the examinations there were 5,834 children on the school-rolls, of whom 3,511, or 60 per cent., were presented. Of the remaining 2,323 no less than 2,180 were below Standard I., thirty-three had passed Standard VI., and 110 were re-presented. The number examined shows an increase of 268 since the previous year. Twenty-seven schools took advantage of the re-presentation clause, but seven schools were responsible for only one pupil each, and eight for two pupils each. Of the large schools Wanganui Boys', Wanganui Girls', Aramoho, Hawera, Manaia, Patea, Waverley, Marton, Feilding, and Palmerston ignored the order; while Mosstown, with forty-four children in standards, re-presented twelve; Porewa, with twenty children in standards, re-presented nine; Mangaone, with twenty-five children in standards, re-presented eight; Bulls, with 129 children in standards, re-presented nine; and Normanby, with 102 children in standards, re-presented eight. Of the 3,511 children presented, 3,233, or 92 per cent., attended and were examined; 2,066, or 63·9 per cent., passed the requirements; and 1,167 failed. Of the 278 children absent, the Wanganui Boys' and Girls' Schools account for no less than eighty-one. This is, perhaps, partly due to the fact that sickness was very prevalent throughout the town during the spring and early summer months. The average age in standards, also, at these schools is low. I may here refer to a practice indulged in by some teachers —that of telling children they think will not be successful to absent themselves. Sometimes the child is not spoken to, but the vanity of the parent is worked upon to induce him to keep his children at home. Such practices appear to me unworthy of the teacher, and they must lower him in the eyes of his pupils, while they also engender deceitful habits.

The following table (Table A) gives a condensed summary of the examination results during the last two years; Table B shows the average age of pupils and the results in each standard; and Table C (not printed) shows the results at each school.

TABLE A.

—	1884.	1885.
Number on rolls on days of examination	5,510	5,834
Not presented for promotion—		
Below Standard I.	1,988	2,180
Re-presented	254	110
Passed Standard VI.	25	33
	2,267	2,323
(1.) Number in Standards, omitting pupils already passed Standard VI.	3,497	3,621
(2.) Percentage of roll-number presented...	59·1	60·5
(3.) Presented	3,243	3,511
(4.) Examined	2,989	3,233
(5.) Absent, although presented	254	278
(6.) Passed	1,953	2,066
(7.) Failed	1,036	1,167
Percentage of passes on—		
Number on roll	35·4	35·4
(1.) Number in Standards	55·8	57·0
(4.) Number examined	65·3	63·9
Number examined, omitting exceptions	Not kept	67·9

TABLE B.

Number of Schools examined in Standards.	—	Average Ages.		Presented in Standards.	Examined in Standards.	Passed in Standards.	Failed in Standards.	Percentages of Passes on Number Examined.
		Yrs.	mos.					
70	Standard I. ...	8	7	909	845	539	306	63·7
67	Standard II. ...	10	0	808	756	482	274	63·7
68	Standard III.	10	11	775	694	431	263	62·1
62	Standard IV. ...	12	1	582	529	347	182	64·4
53	Standard V. ...	13	5	308	290	177	113	61·0
39	Standard VI. ...	14	0	129	119	90	29	75·6
	Totals ...		...	3,511	3,233	2,066	1,167	63·9

Mean age, 11 years 6 months.

Upon looking at Table A, it will be seen that the percentage of passes each year is nearly the same. There has been, however, a great improvement in the work sent in during the past year, *the number of passes in subjects* being far higher than in 1884, and the passes in standards being stronger. Table B shows that the percentages of passes in five standards are nearly uniform, and that those in Standards III., IV., and V. are higher than in the previous year. Standards I. and II. ought to have done much better. I have kept a record of "exceptions," or unsuccessful pupils who had not made half the possible attendances during the three quarters preceding the examination. These amounted to 193, and, omitting them from the calculation, the percentage of passes for the district on the number examined is 67·9. A few very bad schools have been mainly instrumental in causing this comparatively low result, and the following analysis will show that many schools are in a more satisfactory state than may at first sight appear: 100 per cent. of passes, three schools; 90 but under 100 per cent., five schools; 80 but under 90 per cent., eleven schools; 70 but under 80 per cent., fourteen schools; 60 but under 70 per cent., nine schools; 50 but under 60 per cent., nine schools; 40 but under 50 per cent., nine schools; 30 but under 40 per cent., five schools; 20 but under 30 per cent., one school; below 10 per cent., three schools (two teachers dismissed); all failed, one school (teacher resigned). Thus, forty-two schools obtained 60 per cent. or over; and fifty-one reached, and nineteen failed to reach, 50 per cent. These percentages are calculated omitting exceptions. It will be interesting to know that all the schools in the first class, three of those in the second class, and five of those in the third class are each in charge of only one teacher. Four of the larger schools are in a very unsatisfactory state, three did moderate, and the remaining seven some excellent work. Some schools have suffered from changes of teachers, and there has been a good deal of sickness, mumps being very prevalent during the latter half of the year, as also whooping-cough in the Manawatu. Irregularity and unpunctuality are, however, the bane of primary schools. With regard to the former it is surprising upon what trivial pretexts children are kept away from school; as to the latter, morning after morning boys and girls may be seen dawdling along the road after the hour for commencing work, so that they frequently miss certain lessons—and on this account what lesson to place first on the time-table is a source of anxiety with several teachers—and disturb classes and teachers. And all this is the result of not starting from home a few minutes earlier and walking briskly. It is, however, very noticeable that from these troubles, irregularity and unpunctuality, the best-conducted schools suffer least. And why is this? Simply because they are the best-conducted schools, and therefore parents know what advantages their children would lose by being irregular and unpunctual; while the children desire to save their teachers annoyance, have too much self-respect to walk late into their class-rooms, and are never so happy as when in school. Yet another cause of poor results is, I regret to say, the systematic neglect of instructions shown by some teachers. I can call to mind schools where on examination day I found directions that had been given orally and written in log-books and reports on three previous occasions still entirely neglected. And yet Committees and teachers wonder at the want of success of their schools! Again, the number of small schools in this district, and the consequent difficulty in finding well-qualified teachers for all when the salaries are so small, will ever tend to lower the gross percentage of passes. Indeed, for some of the smallest schools it is difficult to find teachers of any class.

The following Table (Table D) shows the number of pupils examined and the percentage passed in each of the seven pass-subjects. A few remarks on the quality of the work in each subject will not be out of place, though it is not possible to write anything that will be correct with regard to all the schools.

TABLE D.

Subject.	Reading.		Spelling.		Writing.		Arithmetic.		Grammar.		Geography.		History.	
	Number Examined.	Per Cent. Passed.	Number Examined.	Per Cent. Passed.	Number Examined.	Per Cent. Passed.	Number Examined.	Per Cent. Passed.	Number Examined.	Per Cent. Passed.	Number Examined.	Per Cent. Passed.	Number Examined.	Per Cent. Passed.
Standard I. ...	845	72·3	845	71·5	845	70·8	845	65·5	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard II. ...	756	67·1	756	75·5	756	71·5	756	63·8	...	...	756	75·5	...	...
Standard III. ...	694	73·1	694	72·7	694	76·0	694	61·0	694	59·2	694	79·3	694	69·7
Standard IV. ...	529	75·6	529	77·8	529	82·0	529	61·2	529	60·3	529	79·3	529	65·7
Standard V. ...	290	72·0	290	78·6	290	90·6	290	49·6	290	58·6	290	77·9	290	69·6
Standard VI. ...	119	84·8	119	94·1	119	96·6	119	63·8	119	72·2	119	89·9	119	79·8
Totals ...	3,233	72·2	3,233	75·2	3,233	76·7	3,233	62·0	1,632	60·4	2,388	78·5	1,632	69·1

Reading and Spelling.—The reading throughout the district is very varied, but I am afraid I must say that, on the whole, it is badly taught. I invariably find that when much care has been bestowed upon the reading in the lower classes the senior pupils read well and intelligently. It was, however, no unusual experience to find pupils in Standards I. and II. able to read the text only when pointing with the fingers, and pupils in Standard IV. frequently unable to pronounce the words. The reading in Standard III. was generally the best received, that in Standard IV. the worst. Comprehension in the Fifth and Sixth Standards was bad, and the pupils often gave utterance to unmitigated nonsense, not only mangling and mispronouncing words, but also repeating words, regardless of sense, that were not in the text. Such an experience at the examination in reading was a very common and a very sad one. Mr. Thring, head-master of the Uppingham School, in speaking of boys calmly getting up and proceeding to construe undiluted nonsense, says, "This is generally treated as not knowing the lesson, and punished accordingly. But in essence it has nothing to do with not knowing the lesson. Not knowing the lesson is ignorance—idle ignorance, perhaps; but this unblushing outpour of nonsense is being a fool—a very different matter. . . . . This folly, unblushing and common as it is, is not because the boys are fools, or shameless, but bears witness to their never having been taught that thought is the first thing, thought the second thing, thought the third thing to be learnt." Now, if this be true with regard to construing, how much more so is it true with regard to a boy reading his own language! In giving a reading-lesson to a lower class, supposing the passage to be understood, the teacher should first read aloud, the class meanwhile carefully listening, and following in their books. Secondly, the children should read with the teacher simultaneously a few words at a time, imitating his voice, pauses, and inflections. Thirdly, the children should read by themselves simultaneously, the teacher pointing out errors. Fourthly, the teacher should ask individual pupils to read, selecting them promiscuously, but putting on the worst readers oftenest. Fifthly, in the last five minutes the teacher should question the class rapidly upon the matter and text of the lesson, the children signifying their ability to answer by holding up their hands. Some of the most frequent errors in reading were indistinct articulation, with eliding of consonants and slurring of words; want of proper intonation, emphasis, and expression; dropping the voice at commas; and neglect of punctuation. It is surprising how few pupils pay any attention even to the paragraph. Not only should the punctuation marks be carefully regarded, but pupils should be trained to notice the rhetorical pause at the logical divisions of the sentence. The aspirate failing is very common in a number of schools. In the higher standards, although only one book is used, I was obliged at most schools to select the simplest passages, or the result was failure. In the infants' classes I always found that pupils read in the best manner in those schools where reading was taught mainly by the "look and say" and phonetic methods. Several sets of reading-cards have been supplied to the schools during the year.

Spelling in the two highest classes was fair, in the two lowest strangely varied, in Standard III. very often bad. In Standards I. and II. I gave orally from ten to fifteen words to every pupil, causing each to pronounce the word before spelling it; and here there was great evidence of rote-work, absurd combinations of letters being made when the word was unfamiliar. In the remaining standards a passage from a reader lower than that used by the class under examination was dictated by the teacher. I may here state that some teachers dictate in a very careless manner; and I would draw the attention of all to the fact that few pupils ever took the trouble to look over, and, if necessary, correct their dictation and other written papers. When reading is well taught, and transcription given, with a little time at the end of the lesson devoted to calling attention to difficult words, spelling should not give much trouble. But, in addition to this, pupils should be taught to syllabicate their words, and to note the sounds of letters and combinations of letters, as, for instance, the terminations "y" (ee), "ous," "ious," "tion," "sion," "ign," &c. I often found during a reading-lesson, even in the highest standards, that, when pupils could not read a word, they were unable to divide it into syllables, and, in fact, did not know what a syllable was.

Writing.—This subject has much improved during the year, the writing in several of the schools being now excellent. Nowhere was this improvement so noticeable as in the slate-writing of Standards I. and II.; and it was partly due to the slates being properly ruled, and partly to the fact that teachers are now aware that writing requires to be taught, and is not merely a subject for filling in time. Some schools, however, still remain in their backward state, and teachers have ignored instructions, the result being that the letters in Standard I. were unrecognisable. Strange as the assertion may appear, the writing in the primer classes in some schools was superior to that in Standard II. in others. Some teachers foolishly expect their pupils to write with short, blunt pencils. On my inspection visits, as well as on examination days, I looked over all exercise-books and copy-books. More attention should be paid to the position of the pupils when writing. They should not be allowed to sprawl over the desks, with their cheeks resting on their arms, and their wrists under their slates. At the schools where I received the best writing in the lower classes I noticed that the children kept dusters and took especial pride in keeping their slates spotless and free from grease. The slate-work in arithmetic and writing at Stanway School was the neatest I have ever seen. Teachers would find it an advantage to place before their lower classes, when transcribing, cards upon which the letters of the alphabet are correctly formed, or headlines of old copies.

Arithmetic.—This subject also has improved. Some of the work in Standard I. was excellent, some very poor. Numeration and notation were the great trouble in Standards II. and III., and in the latter class pupils were more successful with money-sums than with the simple rules. In Standard IV. the most frequent errors were in bills of parcels, foolish mistakes being made that could have been avoided by a little knowledge of mental arithmetic and exercise of common sense. Standard V. was very weak pretty nearly throughout the district; but several schools came to the front this year in Sixth-Standard arithmetic. Want of thought, and inability of pupils to turn their knowledge to practical account, and work little problems (if the sums given could be called such),

are what I have most frequently to complain of in the arithmetic. For instance, in working such a sum in Standard IV. as "If 800 horses cost £11,400, what did each cost on an average?" more pupils would multiply than divide. Thus, boys in the habit of riding horses since they were able to toddle would gravely inform me that the price of a horse was several thousand pounds. Again, in Standard V. I have found whole classes puzzled at the term "£2 15/- per cent." simply because it was not written "$2\frac{3}{4}$%," and interest has been made far more than principal. All this is what I call the result of "cram." If pupils were trained to write down their premisses as they proceed, the work would be more intelligent. An example may be of advantage. A Sixth-Standard pupil being required to find the cost of carpeting a room, the length and width of the floor, the breadth of the carpet, and the price per lineal yard being given, the left-hand half of his slate would present the following: Area of floor = ... ; width of carpet = . . . ; ∴ length of carpet = ... Cost of carpet per yard = . . . ; ∴ total cost of carpet = ... The statements would of course be under each other. In such a sum fractions should be employed—not, as I almost invariably found, reduction; and no multiplication should be used till after the cancelling in the last fraction. And here I may say it appears to me a pity that fractions are not introduced earlier into the syllabus than at present. I do not think a boy thrown on the world without any acquaintance with fractions—and many boys leave school after passing the Fourth Standard—can turn his knowledge of arithmetic to much practical account. From what I saw, both on visits of inspection and examination, I have no doubt that bad results in arithmetic are often due to the constant copying during the year. There is no subject which offers more opportunities for copying and prompting than arithmetic—for a word or glance is sufficient—and none in which it is more difficult to detect them. The only effectual way to stop these faults is to make them impossible. But many teachers take no notice of them. Prompting in spelling, deliberately done before me without any idea that it was wrong, was an every-day occurrence. Again, at one large school, where the arithmetic in Standard I. was very bad, one boy calmly left his place and went some distance away to a class-fellow. On being asked what he was doing, he replied indignantly, "I am only showing him how to do it." What a tale of bad training throughout the year this tells! And yet the headmaster of that school was surprised at the bad results in arithmetic. I found mental arithmetic in general very poor.

Grammar and Composition.—In Standards III. and IV. the parts of speech required were generally recognised, provided only no thought was required to note the function of the word. In the latter class ability to distinguish inflections of nouns and pronouns was absent from nearly all schools. Surely pupils who write down on their papers that such words as "children," "horses," and "our," are singular number are incorrigibly thoughtless, and have received no educative training. In Standard V. parsing was bad, a mood outside the indicative, subjects, and objects being seldom recognised. The work was fair in Standard VI., except analysis, which in few schools showed effective treatment. Composition in Standard III. was very weak, few pupils giving me anything sensible except when they remembered word for word a previous lesson; while the forming of a simple sentence containing a word on the card was either neglected as too difficult or misunderstood. At a few schools, indeed, complete statements and paragraphs were made, with due attention to punctuation and capitals. In Standards IV. and V. I was glad to find a general improvement in writing letters. In Standard VI. the subjects ought to have been better handled. I again impress upon teachers the importance of beginning with the sentence in teaching English grammar and composition (*vide* last report). When a child can construct a sentence he feels that he is doing something. Parsing should be subservient to logical analysis. But how thoughtless rote-work may creep in even here was shown at the pupil-teachers, scholarships, and standards examinations, when candidates, after analysing sentences correctly, parsed subjects as objects, and *vice versâ*. As has been well said, the custom of teaching the English language to children by first drilling them in the parts of speech and their functions is about as reasonable as prefacing the art of walking by a course of lessons on the bones, muscles, and nerves. At three schools where I received excellent composition I found that the subject was taught in connection with analysis. The almost universal habit of allowing pupils to jerk out disconnected words in answer to questions is ruinous to good composition. Pupils should always be required to make distinct statements. And in this connection I may say that a great deal of ignorance is due to teachers being satisfied with an approach to a correct, or partially correct, oral answer from one pupil, and failing to impress upon the whole class what is required to be made known.

Geography.—In Standard II. I examined some excellent classes, and those taught by rote were evidently in the minority. At the best schools pupils in this standard could travel in their mind's eye over the world, noting continents, oceans, &c. The slate-work in Standard III. was generally neater than in the previous year, and the *vivâ voce* answering was fair. In Standards IV., V., and VI. pupils were most successful in locating places, but they often failed to trace a voyage from one country to another. New Zealand geography was generally weak, and mapping in Standard V., outside of New Zealand, was invariably bad. In physical geography pupils often ignored the questions, or they failed to apply their knowledge. Political geography should wait on physical.

History.—This subject was on the whole fairly known except in Standard III., where a searching oral examination often disclosed a great lack of intelligent teaching. Lists of battles generally comprised the whole stock of the children's information; but as to what nation these battles were between, whence the Saxons or Normans came, in what period Great Britain was first ruled by one sovereign, whether Wellington was a French or English general, and Waterloo situated in England, Belgium, or New Zealand, they were generally quite in the dark. The aim in teaching history should be, to give facts that will help the children to see how the nation has grown and organized itself—not mere biographies of monarchs and lists of battles. History and geography should be taught hand in hand. Education is always advanced by the gathering of suitable associations around the subject of study.

Class-subjects.—Object and natural-history lessons are given in most of the schools, but with poor success in the lower standards, except where experienced teachers are employed. I certainly have not come across a boy like the Durham pitman's son, who mistook the picture of a rhinoceros for that of a "coodie;" but I did examine a First Standard in which half the pupils made random guesses at what the flesh of a cow was called, and none could tell the difference between the hoof of the cow and the hoof of the horse. The mistake in giving these lessons appears to be that children are merely told a list of attributes in long, difficult words, and, being expected to repeat these words after the teacher, they become listless and dull. In a well-managed object-lesson in which the children's interest is aroused, the difficulty is, not to keep the class attentive, but to moderate the excitement. In several of the larger and in a few of the smaller schools elementary lessons in physiology and physics have been given with success to the higher three standards. By the new Standards Regulations science must be taught as a class-subject in these standards. This is a step in the right direction, for there can be no doubt that science in some of its departments is of fundamental importance, since it most nearly concerns the business of life. And this is especially true in a new country like ours. And yet, as Herbert Spencer points out, this vital knowledge—that by which we have grown as a nation to what we are, and which now underlies our whole existence—men begin to acquire as they best may when their education is said to be finished. That science should have been neglected so long is merely the result of the general tendency to place what is ornamental before what is useful; to consider what knowledge will be most imposing and conduce to social advantage—not what will be of most intrinsic value. It would be interesting to know how many premature deaths occur annually and how many lives are shortened through want of acquaintance with the principles of physiology, or how many undertakings fail through ignorance of rudimentary scientific knowledge.

Singing is taught in most schools with a female assistant, and at a few in charge of male teachers only. The tonic sol-fa method is most in favour.

Needlework is more or less satisfactorily taught at all schools where female assistants are employed; and these teachers are, I regret to say, often allowed to provide at their own expense material for the children of careless parents.

The recitation at a few schools was excellent, but at the majority verses were merely gabbled off in a manner that must do a great deal of injury to the reading, and the passages were not understood. Sometimes punctuation was carefully noticed, but the spirit of the piece received no attention.

Order.—Drill is taught in the playgrounds at several schools, but its effects are often wanting when pupils are entering and leaving class-rooms. I should be glad to see better discipline at change of lessons. Every child should know exactly what he has to do; books and slates should be taken out and put away noiselessly; pens and pencils should be passed as methodically as buckets at a fire; and lounging, fidgeting, and slovenly ways of standing should never be permitted. To insure good discipline the teacher should always be able to see every pupil in his class. He should therefore take up a well-chosen position, from which he can control all by voice and *eye*; and when he has occasion to look at books or slates during a lesson, he should do so, as far as possible, from the front, back, and sides of the class, and not by going amongst the desks. Some teachers walk up and down like caged lions before their classes, and so turn their backs on children. I am often puzzled to know whether teachers are aware that their pupils are in disorder, or think that copying, prompting, talking, and lounging are the necessary concomitants of work. At some schools the manners of the pupils are very pleasing; at others much is to be desired. Examination-day appears in general to be looked forward to with pleasure.

Infants' Schools.—The infants' schools at Wanganui and Hawera, in charge of experienced married teachers, are doing excellent work. Waverley and Normanby I expect to come to the front this year. Palmerston, Halcombe, Sanson, and Foxton have very unsuitable class-rooms. Several of the infants' classes at the large schools are in charge of young girls, who have but little sympathy with children.

In conclusion, I may say that many teachers have worked earnestly and well. Some failed through their own shortcomings, and through their efforts being badly directed; others were unsuccessful through persistent disregard of instructions and of directions written at the cost of many late hours. During my visits of inspection I spent from half a day to three days in nearly every school, consulting with and advising teachers both while the work was going on and after school was dismissed. This conferring between teacher and inspector is undoubtedly one of the most important parts of the latter's duty, if he is to be other than a fault-finder. I regret that such a conference is not always possible after examination. That it cannot be so will be readily understood when it is remembered that examination is going on every consecutive day for months, and is seldom over till six o'clock, when the inspector has probably several miles to ride and work till midnight. However, whenever opportunity offered I showed the papers worked to the teachers, and pointed out common errors. I also explained, using the blackboard, the arithmetic and grammar cards to the children in the presence of their teachers. These conferences and explanations were appreciated by the principal teachers, but too often the desire of the juniors seemed merely to be to go home as soon as the examination of their own classes was completed. Some schools found backward on my first examination have come amongst the very foremost rank this year, so that no teachers need be discouraged. I would ask those who were unsuccessful to read their examination reports carefully, and set about remedying the defects pointed out therein, giving over the habit of laying the blame of their failure on the examination, or on anybody's shoulders but their own. They should remember that all the cards used were cleared at some schools, that the better a school does the pleasanter it is for the inspector, and that failures would be far more frequent if he did not take a lenient view of the regulations—more especially that one with regard to reading. Moreover, I would ask every teacher to endeavour to make his work as practical as possible. When boys, though able to work division and multiplication of money, cannot calculate the price of a horse, the

cost of a carpet, the amount of a simple bill of parcels; when they can write a page of foolscap on the cause of rain, and yet fail to tell why a particular country, whose physical features they know, has a heavy rainfall or the reverse; when they can locate places, and yet cannot mention through what oceans, seas, &c., a vessel would pass on a voyage to London from New Zealand; when they are unable to write half a dozen readable sentences on a subject or place familiar to them from childhood; when they have no idea how a law is made, or their country governed, the inevitable conclusion is that these boys may have been "crammed," but they assuredly have not been educated. And here it is where the opponents of the system score a victory. And, further, I would ask teachers to pay the utmost attention to the discipline of their classes. Let no little faults be overlooked. "No leak ever broke up a dyke more certainly than trifles passed over break up the order of a class." A sleepy manner on the part of the teacher, however earnest he may be, produces apathy in the lazy and tricks in the thoughtless section of his class. Indolent attitudes produce indolent minds. "Inattention is a master's sin. It is a weed which, above all, grows on badly-farmed ground." Attention, on the other hand, rises or falls in the barometer in proportion to the master's ability. And if the class does not learn it is the teacher's fault, though it may be the fault of the class also. But the teacher has to train the class, and overcome the various difficulties that present themselves—not allow himself to be baffled by them. The trainer's colt may be restive and vicious; but, nevertheless, it is the bad horseman who is unseated.

Before closing this report I must refer to the strange laxity shown by many parents in causing their children to take advantage of the educational privileges offered to them. The most specious excuses are given for irregular attendance—"Johnny has "to mind the cows," or "nurse the baby;" "the roads are bad," &c. I say "specious excuses," because I almost invariably find that, when inquiry is made, they fall to the ground. The attendance, too, at some schools is excellent, at others very bad, though the surrounding circumstances are the same. Again, I have known a child kept at home for months because the teacher punished him. If parents were obliged to pinch to pay directly for the education of their children, they would probably see that such children attended more regularly than they do at present. On comparing the average weekly roll with the working average, I find that the loss to the Board's revenue from irregular attendance has been about £6,000. Imagine what could be done in the country districts with even the one-third of such a sum!

I have, &c.,

W. H. Vereker-Bindon, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

Sir,— Wellington, 24th February, 1886.

In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, I beg to present my twelfth annual report on the work and general condition of the primary State schools in this district.

Owing, apparently, to the opening-up of new settlement, and to the commercially attractive condition of the district as compared with some other parts of the colony, the year 1885 shows a marked increase in the number of schools in operation and in the number of children attending them; the number of schools having increased from fifty-five to sixty-three, and the number of children on the roll from 7,299 to 8,235. Although the work now thrown upon me is greater than that of last year by eight schools and 938 children, I have been able to examine all the schools in operation, and also to inspect all of them, except two aided and three small country schools. But the increased work necessitated some change in the time for examination in several country schools, and I have now arranged to examine most of the schools taught by one teacher in the early part of the year.

The attendance at the examinations still continues satisfactory, very few standard candidates being absent. The actual attendance was 7,522, or 91 per cent. of the number enrolled; and, notwithstanding the large increase for the year of nearly one thousand pupils, the absentees this year, including infants, numbered only 713, as compared with 659 last year.

To this report is appended a table of results showing the passes made in each school at the annual examination. A return similar to this, but differing from it in detail, will in future be furnished by all District Inspectors at the request of the Education Department. With the view of affording fairer comparison between school and school as to the working results, I have grouped the schools according to size, and separated the purely infant-schools from the rest.

Before going into the question of results at the examinations I should state that no appreciable difference was made in the severity of the tests, and therefore a standard pass this year means no more and no less than it did last year. Nor do I think the requirements in grammar and arithmetic can be made more difficult of attainment without disaster, or more useful in aim without unreasonable increase in the work. On the other hand, I see no reason for making the tests less exacting in the pass-subjects as now prescribed.

The following table will show at a glance a comparison between the passes made this year and last in the several standards:—

Standard.	Number of Passes.		Percentage of Passes.		Expected Passes.		Average Age.	
	1884.	1885.	1884.	1885.	1884.	1885.	1884. Yrs. mos.	1885. Yrs. mos.
Standard I.	973	882	97	95	997	929	8 10	8 8
Standard II.	835	920	89	86	936	1,070	9 11	9 10
Standard III.	618	644	74	71	731	913	11 2	11 2
Standard IV.	537	430	91	75	589	575	12 5	12 3
Standard V.	345	344	85	76	405	450	13 2	13 2
Standard VI.	132	166	80	73	167	228	14 5	14 0
Total ...	3,440	3,386	88	81	3,825	4,165	...	...

In closely reviewing the whole work of the district, I am of opinion that the numerical deficiency, as shown in the first part of this table, fairly and accurately represents the falling-off in the work generally, but more particularly in the work of the higher standards. The number of passes in Standard VI. is still less than the number (183) passed two years ago. And now come the questions, Where is the weakness? and What is its cause? Last year I was pleased to be able to state that there were no cases of serious failure with badly-taught classes in large schools; and again, that there were few cases of schools which had suffered considerably by change of teachers. It is not so this year. One large city school, two large Wairarapa schools, several country schools, besides large classes in one or two others, have this year been more or less under inefficient instruction. Almost without exception the weak classes have been under newly-appointed teachers, or under teachers whose past reports have been unsatisfactory. It is not necessary for me to go into the particulars of these cases, for they are already pointed out in detail in my *ad interim* reports sent in to the Board in each case soon after the examination was made. The falling-off in the results is in part attributable to the weakness in the strength of the staff in several large schools. The time of the head-masters has been largely taken up in acting as substitutes for assistants required, ill, or suddenly removed. It is necessary that the Board should have at least one assistant-master as a supernumerary teacher, who could fill any post on emergency. But without doubt there is nothing more essential to the success of the present system of elementary education than the careful appointment of painstaking, kindly, and thoroughly practical teachers, and, if possible, of teachers who are known by experience to be capable of doing useful work.

It is in a great part due to the energy of the head-masters of some larger schools, in taking so much of the work upon their own hands, that the examination results have been on the whole fairly good. But this work deprives them of the opportunities necessary for training their junior teachers, and for supplementing the general class-teaching of the schools. In schools with about two hundred children attending the head-master takes the Fifth and Sixth Standard work himself; and, if he should be supplied with an inefficient assistant for one of his larger classes, the result is serious. This occurred in three Wairarapa schools during the past year, one of them being so good in the remaining classes that 81 per cent. was made on the whole, notwithstanding the fact that in the weak class alluded to only eight children passed the Third Standard out of a class of thirty-eight on the schedules. To obviate the evils and injustice which arise from the want of a fair distribution of good teaching-power, I think it would be well for the Board, with my assistance, once every three months to carefully revise the teaching-power of the larger schools, the number and efficiency of the staff being considered.

I do not wish it to be inferred from what has been said that the condition of the whole district is unsatisfactory. Six of the seven largest schools obtained very creditable results in several of their classes, and in one class—Standard V., Masterton—the arithmetical work was the best that has come under my notice, one-fourth of the sixty candidates clearing the paper. The standard work of the Clareville School was particularly commendable. The larger country schools around Wellington also did improved work. The chief cause of failure, both this year and in former years, is the difficulty of meeting requirements in grammar and arithmetic.

The standard system is a levelling system. It aims at uniformity; it ignores ability above an average order; it sets as much value on the fairly passable work of the dullard in the lowest standard as it does on the strong pass of the Sixth-Standard candidate. The attention of a head-teacher is most directed to his largest classes; the energy and skill of a class-teacher are most directed to their weakest pupils. This is as it should be, and the interests of the community as a whole are thus best considered. Again, the standard system exacts just as much from a class which has in past years been under an untrained or unskilled teacher as it does from a class which has received its previous instruction and training from one who is master of his art, provided always both classes have satisfied the minimum of requirements for the class-promotion. Looking at these facts, how important it is, first, that the early training of the classes should be such as to lay a good foundation for the higher work; and, secondly, how unwise it would be on the part of any teacher to aim at obtaining brilliant results from a few, and fail to satisfy the requirements of the standards with regard to many pupils of more moderate ability! Hence it is that I view with alarm any outward pressure which may be put upon teachers to specially prepare the best pupils for scholarship-examinations. It would be easy to do, and there is some temptation to do it; but the interests of the many would be wholly sacrificed by the practice.

The question of the supply of teachers for the lower classes of elementary schools is a burning one. The pupil-teacher system, if well carried out, has much to commend it; but it is open to one very serious objection—these young teachers gain their experience and training at the expense of the pupils, and more or less in a haphazard way. They are not prepared to begin their work systematically and to use the most approved methods. Moreover, the candidates are not chosen, as they should be, after they have shown aptitude and skill as teachers. Only literary attainments are looked for. All this appears to me radically wrong, and I strongly advise the Government of the colony to take up this question. It would not be difficult to put candidates for pupil-teacherships through a preliminary course of training in the precise work which they would be required for a year or two to teach. Then, with the practice and experience they would gain as pupil-teachers, we may reasonably suppose they would become efficient. The preliminary period of training would allow of a good selection being made, and those who were selected and trained would carry with them into the school on their appointment a fair knowledge of their duties. The more I see of elementary school work, and the more I look into the cause of failure in class-teaching, the more I am convinced that failure is caused by deficiency on the part of the teachers in method, skill, tact, patience, judgment, or knowledge of the elementary principles of the art of teaching any particular subject. And yet in our pupil-teacher system the great aim is an annual pass-examination—a literary examination; in our Training College the all-absorbing subject is a pass-examination—a literary one; and, lastly, with our head-teachers the beau-ideal of a first-class man is one who has

made a good pass-examination—of course, a literary one. I think the training colleges should for the most part do purely training work, and that the literary examination might be met by attendance on outside classes. My scheme for the complete training of pupil-teachers would largely utilise the training colleges for the purpose.

The following is a brief outline of what I consider a practical and thorough training for a teacher, and one which, I think, from the absence of unreasonable pressure put upon candidates, would be likely to attract more young men into the service: Applicants for admission as teachers should be placed on trial for a short time in a State school, in which they would act as supernumerary cadets, but not as permanent class-teachers. On approval, they should be assembled in centres and put under the training for six months of an experienced practical teacher or trainer. They should then act as class-teachers in an infant department for a short time. They would now be qualified for appointment as pupil-teachers for two years, taking no work higher than that of the Second Standard. Up to this point I would not require any examination test other than a fair Standard Sixth pass on admission as cadets; but during their pupil-teachership opportunities should be afforded them of receiving regular instruction. I would next encourage, but not compel, any pupil-teachers who had served at least two years to go under a further short period of training in a training college, to fit them for teaching higher standard work in the most approved methods; and, on passing a fair literary and practical examination, they should be classed as assistants, and receive a higher salary on reappointment. At any time after qualifying as assistants they could go up for the certificate examination; but it would not be necessary for them to undergo further training, and the necessary instruction could be obtained in the colleges of the colony, or in special classes. And when it is borne in mind that the sound elementary education of the whole of the eight thousand children in my district depends entirely on the teachers' ability to completely grasp the work of the Sixth Standard—to have it, as it were, at their fingers' ends, and thoroughly impart it, then it seems to me a matter of comparative unimportance, so far as the schools are concerned, and so long as teachers can do all Sixth-Standard work with facility, whether they are further educated or not. For the most part it is method, not knowledge, which is lacking in our system.

The city infant-schools, at the time of my visit, were all working satisfactorily. I examined them class by class, especially in reading and writing, and made suggestions as to classification and the use of books. There appears some danger of the more useful part of the work being less thoroughly done than the more attractive part of it. I was pleased with many efforts to make the occupations more varied, and especially with the new kindergarten table for class-teaching in the Mount Cook School. The reading of the Courtenay Place School was quite equal to that of the others. It is essential that the head-teacher of an infant-school should be specially fitted and qualified for the particular work to be done. The late Mr. Holmes, master of the Te Aro School, possessed in a high degree these qualities, showing particularly a natural fondness for children, kindliness of heart, and gentleness of manner. I recommend that the age of removal of children quarterly from the highest class of an infant-school be altered from eight years to seven and a half.

For years past I have done organizing work during my visits of inspection. As my other duties increase the time for inspection is necessarily distributed over a much wider area, and I am often compelled to crowd into a few hours the inspection of the whole work of a large school. To be as useful as possible on these visits I take notes of the weak points in the work at examinations, and afterwards call attention to them and examine the methods of instruction used. This year I have generally called attention to the class-marking of errors in copy-books; to the importance of making clean and light lines in drawing; to the giving of daily exercises in mental arithmetic; to improved wall-furnishing; to the importance of the teacher writing on the blackboard in the Vere Foster style; to the teaching of spelling in system, and in several methods, and not by dictation; to the use of drawing-boards ruled in squares in red lines; and to the giving of grammar lessons daily as written exercises on paper. I have also advised that for composition exercises should be given descriptions of objects near at hand, or of passing events; that the pupil-teachers should be daily supervised and a lesson given by the head-teacher in their presence; that the teachers should address the weak ones of their class rather than those who are ready to answer; that teachers should make notes and use memoranda of their class-work; that the head-master of a large school should keep a time-table showing how his own time is employed for every hour of the week; and that the teacher himself should more often read to a class as a model for the class to imitate. These and many other matters have been brought under the notice of teachers as occasion seemed to call for it, and suggestions of this kind are often entered in the log-book of the school.

The instruction in class-subjects—drawing, science, and drill—having this year received special attention from the Board by the appointment of instructors in each branch, it is hoped a new impetus will be given to the teaching, and a higher class of results produced. To the freehand work in drawing I have added instruction in practical geometry this year. The June examination in the two subjects was very satisfactory. In freehand nineteen schools sent up candidates, representing a total number passed of 128. The previous year fifteen schools passed eighty candidates and none of the pupils then passed were again allowed to sit. The general character of the work was improved. Still better work will be produced if construction-lines are more used when sketching in, and more attention paid to the lightness and fineness of the stroke when lining in. The results in practical geometry passed all expectations, both as to the number of successful candidates and as to the accuracy of the work done. Ten schools sent up candidates, of whom 105 passed, working correctly at least three problems out of the five given. I find the introduction for the first time of geometrical drawing has been a decided success. It has been well received by the teachers and pupils, and it has been useful, not only in extending the knowledge of the pupils and in cultivating habits of accuracy and order, but it has furnished subject-matter for an additional attractive lesson.

A short course of lessons has been given in the larger schools in elementary botany by the science-master; but the teaching of the elements of chemistry and physics, which have been hitherto well taught in several of our best schools, has been in abeyance, the teacher looking to the science-master to take up the direction of the work. It is a pity that this should have been the effect of the appointment, which was made without much previous intimation; but the science-master could not see his way to go on at once with the experimental work, and did not make arrangements for the work going on as before. Well-defined programmes in physics and botany will shortly be put before teachers to indicate the work of the year, it being left optional to them to take up one or the other subjects.

The duties of the drill-instructor are to teach extension motions, the use of Indian clubs and dumb-bells, and gymnastics generally. Most of the parallel bars and other necessary appliances have been erected under his direction by the city local Committees, and a course of instruction is sketched out and begun. Much of it is repetition of exercises which have been already well taken up in some of the schools, but it appears to the instructor necessary to begin *de novo*. I think, however, he will do well as soon as possible to delegate some of the work to teachers who are competent to go on with it, and to confine his own work to gymnastics.

Whilst I am hopeful that the appointment of visiting instructors in drawing, science, and drill will be attended with advantage, I must point out that the changes have not been made without friction and without loss. It has already been stated that the science-teaching in the schools has actually suffered during the past year by the appointment of the science-master. The new arrangement for carrying on the drawing-classes may lead to some loss of time in going back to a fresh point of departure. Also, the teaching in gymnastics is practically setting aside, at least for a time, the system of military drill in cadet corps which some time ago was an interesting feature in school-work. This is at best a misfortune, and it shows how carefully and timely changes should be made. It will be my duty to watch the issue of events, and jealously guard against any further retrogression consequent on the change.

I could not afford to set apart sufficient time for examining the Training College this year, but I have made one or two occasional visits. The number of students does not increase, and the work is nearly confined to preparation for passing the D and E certificate examination. The tone of the institution is good; and, I believe, the class-instruction is well imparted both by the principal and the normal mistress. Also, the theories taught in school management are generally sound in principle.

The high-school work, Masterton, which last year was begun with a few pupils in each of three subjects, has now almost altogether fallen through.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Wellington Education Board. ROBERT LEE, Inspector.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,— Education Office, Napier, 4th January, 1886.

I have the honour to submit my general report upon the condition and progress of the schools in this education district for the year ended December last. Thirty-nine schools were then in operation, and all of them were examined and fully reported upon by me before the close of the school year, with the exception of the small school at Wainui, which was not opened until the beginning of the December quarter. The number returned as attending school was 4,654, which gives an average number of pupils to each school of 119·3. The schools are distributed in the five counties now forming the education district as follows:—

County.	No. of Schools.	Total at end Quarter.			Total Average Weekly Number.			Total Working Average, December, 1885.			Average in December, 1878.
		M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	
1. Cook	7	494	442	936	510	446	956	423	387	810	307
2. Wairoa ...	3	93	99	192	91	100	191	74	86	160	101
3. Hawke's Bay	10	1,027	951	1,978	1,048	962	2,010	839	746	1,585	770
4. Patangata ...	6	194	174	368	197	170	367	164	144	308	179
5. Waipawa ...	13	618	562	1,180	591	545	1,136	458	412	870	292
Total ...	39	2,426	2,228	4,654	2,437	2,223	4,660	1,958	1,775	3,733	1,649

New Schools.—Two new schools were opened during the year—viz., Maraetaha, in the Cook County, where the attendance has already necessitated an enlargement of the original building, and Wainui, in the Waipawa County, where for several years a schoolhouse has been standing unoccupied in consequence of the existence of local jealousies among the settlers. Happily, peace has been made, and in the latter part of the year a teacher was appointed to take charge of the school.

School accommodation.—In most of the school districts the accommodation provided at the end of the year was sufficient for the average number of pupils attending school. The building operations which have been carried on during the year have supplied a want that has been more or less severely felt in a number of school districts for some years past. At the present rate of increase, however, I doubt whether a fair balance between the attendance and the school supply will be of long duration. At Napier and Hastings the provision which was made in the latter half of the school year has already been taken up, and the school at Norsewood, though large enough for the numbers attending during the past year, would have been totally inadequate had the school been under efficient management. There are at least a hundred children of school age residing within the limits of

the Norsewood School District, who are kept from school in consequence of the inoperativeness of the Education Act, which the Committee have introduced, but which has been found to be unworkable. Should clause 6 of the amended Education Act of 1885 be carried out, as I sincerely trust it will be, by School Committees, the above-named schools will require further additions during the coming year. With regard to light, ventilation, internal arrangement, and suitability of out-offices, the recent school additions are in every way satisfactory, and form a favourable contrast with the earlier buildings erected in the district. The painting of the school-rooms, which has been commenced, is a step in the right direction, and must tend, as is already apparent in several schools, to improve the tastes of the children and to arouse their activity in this direction. Already in a number of schools the handiwork of the girls is being displayed by the erection of brackets and macrame draperies, and in a few instances ferns and flowering plants are carefully kept and tended by them. The neatest, cleanest, and best-arranged schools in the district are Waipawa, Hampden, Taradale, and Makatoku, which are models of what school-rooms ought to be.

Works Required.—There are now only three districts where the buildings used for school purposes are not the property of the Board. These are at Mohaka, Te Ongaonga, and Takapau. At Waerenga-a-hika the building which was erected several years back by the settlers, and afterwards conveyed to the Board, stands upon a Native-school reserve, and, as the lease of the land expires shortly, the removal of the building, which is scarcely fit for school purposes, will become a necessity. I have several times drawn attention to the desirability of acquiring a portion of a ten-acre confiscated block in the neighbourhood as a school site, as the population is rapidly increasing, and the school attendance is far too large to warrant the closing of the school. Such a result, however, must ensue unless something is soon done in the direction pointed out by me. It is to be regretted that a residence is not attached to a schoolhouse in each district. I am convinced that if the schools, more especially the schools in outlying districts, are to become efficient there must be a teacher's residence provided for each. Teachers of experience will not go into places where there is no suitable house accommodation, and where the only lodging-house is the country inn. It seems to me that the small country school might be made quite as attractive to teachers with growing families as the town school, if only a little foresight was shown in providing a suitable residence to each school, and a paddock where a horse and cow might be kept, so as to lessen the cost of living in the teacher's family. There are eleven schools without a residence, and there are three others where the buildings are in sad need of repairs.

Examinations.—The standard examinations, all of which I was able to complete before the beginning of the midsummer holidays, compare very favourably with the results of former years. In several districts the school work was hindered by the alterations and additions which were undertaken; but, on the other hand, few days were lost either from sickness or bad weather, both the weather and the general health of the pupils having been remarkably good throughout the year. There has been a satisfactory increase in the number of pupils presented for examination in standards; but what is of much greater importance, as showing the actual progress of education during the year, is the fact that the increase has taken place mostly in the higher standards. Although there were 250 fewer children presented in standards in 1884 than in 1885, I notice that there were more children examined in Standard I. in the former year than in the latter. Standard VI. shows the largest proportionate increase for the year, both in the number presented for examination and the number passed. At the date of my examination there were 4,401 pupils enrolled as attending school; 2,735, or 62·2 per cent., of these were deemed capable of being presented for examination in standards; fifty-three were re-presented in standards they had already passed, under rule 2 of the Government regulations dated June, 1884; and the remaining 1,613 were classed as infants, or as preparing for Standard I.

From the following table it will be seen that 2,641 of those presented in standards were present at the examination, and that 2,066 of them, or 75·5 per cent., passed the necessary tests:—

Standard.	Average Age.	Number presented in New Standards.			Number examined.			Number passed in New Standards.			Per-centage of Passes of those examined.	Per-centage of Passes for 1884.
		M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.		
Standard I. ...	8·8	421	441	862	405	425	830	332	361	693	83·5	87
Standard II. ...	10·2	393	332	725	384	325	709	294	279	573	80·8	78·6
Standard III. ...	11·1	269	238	507	262	232	494	198	177	375	75·9	81·8
Standard IV. ...	12·5	203	170	373	197	171	368	140	136	276	75·5	67·6
Standard V. ...	13·3	97	97	194	82	87	169	35	51	86	50·8	62
Standard VI. ...	13·1	41	33	74	40	31	71	34	29	63	88·7	70·5
		1,424	1,311	2,735	1,370	1,271	2,641	1,033	1,033	2,066	75·5	...
Number re-presented in standards		25	28	53	25	28	53					
Infants too young for standards		870	743	1,613	704	622	1,326					
		2,319	2,082	4,401	2,099	1,921	4,020					

Out of every hundred pupils examined in the requirements of the different standards, eighty-one passed in reading, eighty in spelling and dictation, seventy-six in arithmetic, eighty-four in writing, seventy-nine in grammar and composition, sixty in geography, and eighty-three in English history. The fifty-three pupils re-examined in standards already passed came from nine schools, the large majority being from Norsewood and Takapau. Bad attendance, sickness, and general dulness were alleged as the causes for the re-presentations; and in each instance I satisfied myself that the excuses given were reasonable.

Infants.—The infants too young for presentation in standards were examined by me individually when they had been taught in a separate department by a special teacher, and collectively when taught (?) by a teacher who had had the very difficult task to perform of preparing ten or a dozen infants for a pass in Standard I., and instructing a score or so of other children in work ranging through the requirements of the six standards. The best infants' departments in the order of merit are Gisborne—which is a model department—Napier, Hampden, Clive, Hastings, and Wairoa. At Waipawa, Hastings, and Waipukurau the instruction of the infants has been retarded in consequence of the building operations; but I anticipate great progress at each school during the coming year, as all are in charge of well-qualified teachers. I regret to report a great falling-off in efficiency in the infants' departments at Taradale and Norsewood. The latter was, no doubt, caused by the resignation of an efficient infants' mistress, and the appointment of one whose experience in such teaching was very limited; whilst at Taradale the mistress accounted for the comparatively inefficient state of her department by urging "that the other teachers in the district had told her that she worked too hard, and was injuring other teachers thereby"!

High Percentage of Presentations.—In the standard examinations I do not know whether my requirements for a pass are less severe than those in other districts. I have exchanged sets of standard questions with other inspectors in several instances; but it seems to me that my tests, especially in arithmetic, grammar, geography, and history, are quite equal in difficulty to any of those I have yet seen. I mention this because I find that the number of pupils presented in standards in my district is 8 per cent. higher than the average presentations and passes for the colony, as shown in the annual report of the Minister of Education published last year. Of course, I cannot say how the results will compare as regards the year under notice. A few years ago the case was very different. I was then under the necessity of complaining of the exceptionally low results obtained by me as compared with those obtained in other districts, and, as far as I am aware, the tendency in all my examinations has been upward rather than downward. For myself, I can only account for the comparatively large number of presentations by supposing that the offer of a bonus by the Board to all those teachers who pass 50 per cent. of the pupils attending their schools, at the annual standard examination, has proved a great incentive in bringing forward the younger pupils; but, if this be not the cause of the high average standard passes in this district, it seems to me the time has arrived when an Inspectors' conference has become a necessity, if only for the purpose of consulting one another as to what should constitute a fair standard pass.

Quality of Work.—Regarding the general character of the schools, it is to me a source of satisfaction to report that most of them are in a comparatively efficient state. Not that the standard subjects are taught as I hope yet to see them taught, or that there is no further room for improvement in discipline and organization—in these respects much still remains to be done; but a comparison between the condition of the schools as they were even four years ago and their present condition shows that in the district a body of earnest men and women is growing up, who, if not yet efficient, are aiming at being so, and who are grudging no efforts to bring on their schools to a satisfactory standard. Hitherto the Gisborne and Napier schools have occupied the places of honour among the schools of my district; but they are being closely pressed, and in some respects they have been overtaken, by such schools as Makatoku, Hampden, Matawhero, and the upper divisions at Kaikora, Waipawa, and Taradale. The rapid increase which has taken place in the schools at Hastings, Waipukurau, and Port Ahuriri has naturally thrown them back somewhat for a time; but they are in the hands of diligent workers, who will, no doubt, be able to give a good account of themselves another year. Taking the condition of education according to counties I find that the Cook County contains the best and certainly the worst schools in the district. Gisborne is without exception the best disciplined and most efficient school under the Board, and Matawhero is following the good example of its neighbour; but the schools at Patutahi, Te Arai, and Ormond are unsatisfactory in many important points. The absence of suitable buildings for so many years has done a good deal to retard the progress of these schools; but after making every allowance I cannot help feeling that the schools ought to have been in a much better state than they were at the date of my last examination. In the Wairoa County all the schools are in charge of lady teachers, and as far as results go they will bear favourable comparison with schools of equal size in other parts of the district. I think, however, that the time has come when a head-master should be engaged for the Wairoa County School. Not that the school is inefficient, for the mistress is an exceptionally good and hard-working teacher; but it appears to me desirable that an effort should be made to place the school on a still sounder footing than it is even now, being situated in a district where the outlying settlers must look to the county school for the higher education of their children. All the schools in the Hawke's Bay County are in very fair working order, and I think that each of them, without exception, is in the hands of a capable teacher. The Napier Central schools are doing, on the whole, good work; but in general efficiency they fall below the only other borough school in the district, to which reference has already been made. In the Patangata County, Kaikora, Waipukurau, Patangata, and Porangahau schools are doing satisfactory work, and are likely to improve still more under the present teaching staff. I am not yet prepared to offer an opinion as to the efficiency or otherwise of the schools at Wallingford and Wainui, as they have only recently been placed under the charge of the present mistresses. The Waipawa County contains several very efficient schools, and several that fall below a fair standard. Among the

former may be mentioned Makatoku, Hampden, Waipawa, and, in some respects, Ashley Clinton; and among the latter, Norsewood, Takapau, Te Ongaonga, and, I regret to add, Woodville. The other schools in the county, except the one at Makaretu, are in fair working order.

Makaretu School.—Makaretu occupies quite a unique position among the schools of the district, and it appears to me to deserve more than a passing notice. When judged according to the standard work alone the results are low, but, judged according to the usefulness of the work done, I am inclined to place it among the best in my district. The children are of mixed race, but the majority are Scandinavians; and the master, well knowing how the lives of the majority of them will be cast, has practically adapted his instruction to the future necessities of the children. From Standard II. upwards the work partakes more or less of a technical character. The pupils are made familiar with all forms of business—of buying and selling, of exchange, of keeping accounts, of tendering for work, and making topographical plans of the Makaretu settlement. They are acquainted with the more important trees in the bush, and can botanically describe the flowers growing by the wayside. I have carefully examined the pupils in most of these matters, and I must confess the pleasure I experienced on finding that the children had a full appreciation of many of the social and economical questions which will come more closely under their observation in years to come. The topographical maps of the settlement constructed by the pupils in Standards III. and IV. are excellent; and, when mounted and varnished, readily sell to the settlers at prices varying from 2s. to 10s. each. The tendering by the lads for digging small garden plots for the master is well carried out, and shows really good judgment on their part. I have gone over the last lot of tenders sent in for digging a plot of ground 4½ yards by 5 yards, and I have not found relatively so much difference between the highest and lowest tenders as I have often seen in tenders for the erection of school-buildings. The method adopted by the master in teaching his children the art of buying and selling, and keeping accounts, is exceedingly interesting and instructive. Each senior pupil is required to open a business account with the master. The latter is supposed to purchase from the parents, but only through the children, articles such as bread, milk, butter, eggs, and cream, and directly from the children eels, wood-hens, and many other things. Then, the children purchase from the master various kinds of articles which they or their parents may require from time to time. The account books are balanced monthly, and the master expects a proper credit balance to be carried forward.

The following is an account taken at random from one of the books used by the children :—

1885.	*Dr.*	£	s.	d.
July 16.—Cash		1	10	0
1yd. blue ticking		0	1	0
„ 29.—1 whistle		0	0	2
1 top		0	0	1
1 squeaker		0	0	1½
2 hats at 6s.		0	12	0
1 bag sugar		0	12	6
„ 31.—2lb. mercury at 4s.		0	8	0
Cr. balance		2	8	10½
		£5	12	9

1885.	*Cr.*	£	s.	d.
July 1.—Brought forward		4	16	9
„ 21.—1lb. butter		0	1	6
„ 27.—2lb. pork at 6d.		0	1	0
1 woodhen		0	0	6
1 bucket milk		0	2	6
11 chickens at 6d.		0	5	6
„ 31.—1 quarter meat		0	5	0
		£5	12	9

Preparation of Subjects.—The preparation of several of the standard subjects does not proceed as satisfactorily as I could wish in a number of the schools. There is an absence of steady and systematic teaching, which, if it does not destroy, is very detrimental to educational efficiency. For a few months before an examination extreme pressure is put upon the children; and then for four or five months the teaching is carried on in the most desultory and erratic manner. The fault is to be found in large as well as in small schools, and, I regret to say, among trained and untrained teachers alike. In paying casual visits of inspection one is often surprised to find how seldom the work is proceeding according to the time-table. I think it is of great importance to promote as much as possible individuality among teachers; but individuality will never be promoted by breaking through the school time-tables or by permitting teachers to give lessons which form no part of a definite and systematic course. On visiting a school I do not merely wish to find the pupils busy and the teacher seemingly active, but I want to be fully satisfied that good, honest, and systematic work is being done. It is not pleasant to find in visiting a school that the geography lesson, the history lesson, and even the reading lesson have been skipped for an arithmetic lesson—that "city of refuge" to the unprepared and unsystematic teacher; but I have found this state of affairs in more than one instance. The new regulations of the Board will, no doubt, cause an improvement in this direction during the coming year.

Standard subjects.—Few teachers appear to give that attention to reading and its opposite, writing, which their great importance demands. A child who can read with intelligence has acquired the power of becoming acquainted with the thoughts and actions of mankind both past and present, and a child who can write has acquired the art of conveying his own thoughts to others. By means of the one process the children gather knowledge, and by means of the other they sow it, and all mental and moral education may be said to be embraced within the scope of these two arts. Much of the reading in the schools, especially in the higher standards, betokens a want of "conception" of the incidents in the lessons on the part of the readers, and I much doubt whether a love of reading is being engendered among the pupils who pass through the schools. It is impossible to create interest in a reading lesson which has no counterpart within the range of the children's experiences, and this is the case with many of the lessons found in the reading-books in Standards V. and VI. The reading in the lower standards is usually more intelligent than in the higher ones, and it is to be accounted for by the fact that the lessons in the books used by the former relate to subjects with which the children are familiar, or about which they are able to form correct notions. Exposition

lessons, if adopted by teachers in giving instruction in reading, would prove of great help to the children; and I am glad to find that something of this kind has been duly recognised in the new Standard Regulations, where additional marks are authorised to be given for "knowledge of the subject-matter" of the reading lesson. But what is really wanted to aid in making good readers is the establishment of proper school libraries for every school. Writing is making commendable progress in this district, and in several schools it has reached a high standard of excellence. Wherever careful and systematic teaching is carried on the results are satisfactory. In arithmetic the standard results are somewhat low, but of late a great improvement has taken place in the neatness and general style of setting down the work. Mental arithmetic and tables are not as well taught as they might be, and where these are neglected the arithmetic results are always poor. I am inclined to put a high value upon mental arithmetic for young children. In the Gisborne Infants' School, where it is taught to perfection, the little children can add, subtract, multiply, and divide mentally any number not higher than fifty as fast as I can myself, and the results of this kind of teaching are to be seen in the remarkable efficiency of the little ones in arithmetic of a degree not higher than Standard II. Geography and history continue to be taught with fair success in the higher standards; but I am unable to report favourably upon them below Standard V. For my part, I should prefer to see both subjects taught by means of Geographical and Historical Readers, as is the case in England. It would certainly be preferable to the present system, where in too many instances a mere smattering of the names of capes, mountains, and peninsulas in geography, and of the headings of leading events in English history is made to do duty for geography and history.

Singing.—Singing is taught in twenty-four schools, and is quite a favourite subject with the pupils. The teaching is generally carried on by the tonic sol-fa method, which has a number of able and enthusiastic adherents among the teachers. The schools where singing is best taught are Napier, Waipawa, Gisborne, Ormond, Hastings, Makatoku, Taradale, Woodville, and Matawhero.

Drawing.—This subject receives comparatively little attention in the large majority of schools, and unless some special classes are provided where teachers themselves can first receive instruction in the elements of the subject, I very much doubt whether it will be much better taught under the new regulations than it has been hitherto. The only schools where the subject is well and intelligently taught are Gisborne, Petane, and Ormondville. Mapping, however, is capitally taught at Matawhero, Makaretu, Frasertown, and Napier.

Sewing.—Sewing continues to be taught with excellent results in twenty-four of the schools. At the Industrial Exhibition held in Wellington last year five schools sent specimens of sewing, and not less than twenty-four prizes were awarded to them—viz., eleven firsts, nine seconds, and four thirds, together with five honourable mentions. For Captain Russell's sewing prizes there has never before been such competition, and the lady examiners were occupied two days in examining into the merits of the many specimens sent. Throughout the standards this subject is so well taught that I consider it should be placed among the pass and class subjects as an alternative with drawing for girls; otherwise I fear that sewing—a subject of vast importance—is doomed to occupy a very subordinate place in the school course of the future.

Penny-banks.—There are no penny-banks established in any of the schools, and I doubt whether there will be any for some time to come. I find that teachers, except perhaps one or two who possess more individuality than the rest, do not care to introduce anything into their schools which does not minister directly to high percentages in the standard subjects; and really no one can blame them for so doing, for it is by means of percentages that their efficiency is now gauged by School Committees, by the public at large, and even by the Education Department. That some kind of practical training should be introduced into the school course for the purpose of inculcating habits of thrift is, so I think, very desirable; but would not such habits be better taught by making children realise that honest industry begets means, and that judicious and careful expenditure begets savings available for future needs? What is badly needed just now is the establishment of classes for the training of our girls in "practical cookery," and in that branch of domestic economy which relates to the economical purchase and use of breadstuffs, to the qualities of calicoes, woollens, and other articles of dress, and to the relative values of each for household and personal use, whether as food or clothing. Practical instruction in such matters, I venture to suggest, would be more likely to foster habits of thrift even among men and boys than would the establishment of penny-banks, however well they might be managed.

Pupil-teachers' Examination.—The examinations of the pupil-teachers which took place in July, and of candidates for scholarships which took place in November, have already been reported upon by me. The alteration of the date of the pupil-teachers' examination to December, under the new syllabus for pupil-teachers, will prove a great convenience to me personally, and I feel sure that it will add largely to the pleasures of the pupil-teachers themselves, as they will now be able to enjoy to the full the midsummer vacation, knowing that there are no further examinations to anticipate for another year. It is pleasant to find that the ex-pupil-teachers who are attending as pupils at the Wellington and Christchurch Training Colleges for teachers have received excellent reports from the principals of those colleges, and in the examinations they have done credit to the district.

Technical and Evening Classes.—There are no evening classes yet established in this district under section 86 of the Education Act. Two efforts have been made by the assistant masters at the Napier and Port Ahuriri schools to form such classes, but hitherto without success, the fees not being sufficient to recoup the teachers for the time and trouble they gave to the work. This is to be regretted, for I think that one of the most urgent wants in the education system of to-day is the establishment of classes into which youths can be drawn to receive that practical instruction and training which cannot possibly be given in the day schools under present conditions. Last year I drew attention to this question, and I am convinced that it is one which will soon require careful consideration at the instance of the Board. Within the short compass of a thousand hours each year, equal to about six weeks of time, it is impossible to crowd into the school course even the

subjects which are now required to be taught to children between one standard examination and another, without finding imperfections somewhere. But already other and more practical class-subjects are pressing into notice, and, for my part, I can see no way how they can be taught, except by an interchange with some of the present standard subjects, or by the establishment of evening advanced and technical classes. Certainly, if the instruction which is now given in the schools is to be of permanent value to the children, and to the social and industrial needs of the country, either evening classes, as suggested here, must soon form a part of a general school system, or a new standard syllabus will be needed, in which technical and literary standard examinations will follow one another in alternate years. How the evening classes, if established, could be maintained without any increase in the capitation grant, I have already pointed out in a report presented by me a year ago.

School Committees.—In concluding this report, I think it due to the large majority of the School Committees to say that they are doing a good work in their respective districts. My reports do not always give them satisfaction, for they dislike to present bad reports to the householders at the annual meetings, and I notice that some of them are inclined to think harshly of the Inspector on this account, until a little experience shows them the effect of plain speaking upon the well-being of a school. But, with all their faults—and they are not a few—the School Committees deserve credit for the good they have done and are still doing, and I am quite sure that without their help the school organization of this district would have been far less efficient than it now is.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier. H. Hill, Inspector.

MARLBOROUGH.

Sir,— Picton, 18th March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit to you my annual report on the public schools of this district for the year 1885.

I have examined twenty-five schools, with a total attendance of 1,347 scholars on examination-day. The number of scholars on the roll of these schools—1,535—exceeds by only five that for last year, the absentees from examination being, however, fewer by forty-four. On the whole, the results of this year's examination compare very favourably with those obtained the previous year, the percentage of passes—92—being exceptionally high. A considerable increase has also taken place in the number of children presented for standard work. A summary, giving my opinion as to the way in which each subject is usually taught in the schools in this district, may be of service. The reading of the older scholars is relatively much better than that of the juniors. The common fault is bawling. Teachers seem to forget that if the voice is strained all modulation is lost, and that distinctness can be attained without any approach to loudness. The reading of the scholars presented for the First Standard still falls far short of what it ought to be, especially in several of the larger schools, as will be pointed out in the detailed notice of each school. The spelling, as a rule, is much better than the reading. The handwriting of the scholars, though somewhat better than it was several years ago, still leaves much to be desired, both methods of teaching and results being defective. Where sufficient pains are taken to teach this art, as at Renwick or Havelock Suburban, the writing is uniformly good throughout the school; but such work is still quite exceptional. Even in so apparently simple a particular as the proper position of the writer—a matter of detail that I have repeatedly pointed out on my visits of inspection—I can detect little, if any, improvement. I begin, indeed, almost to despair of ever seeing a school in which every pupil, during a writing-lesson, sits upright, with shoulders squared, hands in the proper position, and feet firmly planted on the floor. The bulk of our scholars still sprawl and loll in every conceivable posture but the right one, with feet crossed, or doubled up underneath, and with face almost touching the copy-book. The most effectual way of bringing about a reform in this respect would seem to be the refusing of a pass in writing to every scholar who does not sit properly on examination day when writing. Arithmetic is thoroughly well taught in the majority of our schools, the latest and best methods of teaching being followed, as a rule. So much prominence has, indeed, been given to this subject during the last two or three years that time is hardly left for other equally important matters, such as reading. I therefore purpose making the arithmetic papers somewhat easier—which the new regulations enable me to do—so that more attention may be paid to such subjects as at present get less than their share of time. Geography, including map-drawing from memory, is very successfully taught, oral teaching having to a great extent superseded the text-book. In history too much reliance is still placed on book-work, and the answers obtained from the scholars are much less satisfactory than those usually given in geography. Formal grammar gets as much attention as it is entitled to, letter-writing on familiar subjects now forming a regular part of the school course. Although the handwriting of these letters falls short of what I expect, their neatness and orderly arrangement are generally creditable. Needlework, so far as I am able to judge, is not neglected in any school where a mistress or assistant mistress is employed; but I regret that a practice which was at one time not uncommon has now fallen altogether into disuse. Formerly, a committee of ladies undertook to examine and report on the needlework in several of our schools. The praise or censure of experts had a value that cannot be claimed for the opinion of one whose knowledge of the mysteries of back-stitch and cutting out is necessarily of the most rudimentary kind. It is not, I think, too much to ask that in all our larger schools, at least, a good custom should be revived. The time and pains required are not a serious matter, and could hardly be better bestowed.

Having satisfied myself last year that there were some matters of detail affecting injuriously the Marlborough schools, and which might easily be altered for the better, I endeavoured to point out, not only what was amiss, but also wherein lay the way of cure. I made certain suggestions as to uniformity of school hours, as to a better and cheaper way of supplying the scholars with books

and school material, and as to more various reading matter being supplied, especially to the younger scholars. Not one of these suggestions, so far as I can learn, has been adopted anywhere, nor has any one hitherto undertaken to show that they were impracticable or uncalled for. Experience has taught me, however, not to be discouraged by the failure of a first attempt at effecting any reform, but to trust to gaining something, at least, by constant reiteration. I shall therefore repeat that another year's observation has only strengthened my conviction that it would be better if school began throughout the district at nine in the morning, that the children suffer from being insufficiently supplied with cheap and suitable books, and that it is not good for them to be compelled to pore from the beginning to the end of the year over the same little reading-book.

It is satisfactory to find that the reprehensible practice of publishing in detail the results of an examination before they have been submitted to the Education Board has been put a stop to, except in a single instance, due, it is to be hoped, to pure inadvertence. Teachers and the public are beginning to understand, what ought never to have been doubtful, that, with reasonable diligence on the part of teacher and taught, a child of average ability finds little difficulty in passing a standard year by year. It is now also pretty generally recognised that, if at least four-fifths of the scholars presented do not pass, some sufficient explanation of such failure ought to be given. To comply with the minimum requirements of the regulations is by no means a remarkable feat; to fail is discreditable.

I subjoin a brief estimate of the state of each school at the time when it was last examined.

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I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Marlborough. W. C. Hodgson, Inspector.

NELSON.

Sir,— Nelson, 31st December, 1885.

I beg to lay before you my report for the year 1885 on the Nelson public schools.

Seventy-eight schools, with a total roll of 4,903 children, have been examined. The total number on the rolls of the district at the end of September (the latest date yet sent in) was 4,959; 4,511 scholars were present on examination day, the number of absentees—392—being still less than it was last year. The non-attendance of most of these was satisfactorily accounted for, showing that a better sense of duty in this respect prevails than was the case two years ago.

The percentage of passes—83—is exactly what it was last year. A better criterion, the proportion of passes to the number on the roll—49 per cent.—is higher by 5 per cent. than it was a year ago. On the whole, therefore, so far as the tests of passes and percentages are to be trusted, our schools have not fallen off.

The comparatively early age at which a steadily increasing number of scholars succeeds in passing the Sixth Standard does not, apparently, bear out the complaint that the work exacted, in this district at least, is too hard for the average scholar. If 178 children can, without being pressed, and at the average age of thirteen years and nine months, get through the highest kind of work expected from them fifteen months before the end of the time up to which they can claim admission to a public school, there does not seem much to complain of on the score of over-pressure. A comparison of the papers set six years ago with those used recently will show also that the demands of the examiner have not been lowered.

Although in Nelson the freest scope has always been given to individuality, as far as is compatible with the requirements of the standards, so that the practice of almost every school differs somewhat from that of its neighbours, such a general resemblance exists that it is practicable, and may be useful, to point out where the methods pursued seem generally faulty, and where each subject taught gets more or less than its fair share of attention.

Arithmetic, it appears to me, has gradually crept into too prominent a place. In some schools it has gone far to crowd out nearly everything else, occupying a full third of the school day. The great prominence nowadays given to this subject can only be justified, and that very partially, by its efficiency as one mode, among many others, of giving mental training. That the practical value of school arithmetic is not nearly so great as is commonly supposed is a truth that will be speedily discovered by the confident Sixth Standard boy when he sits for the first time on an office stool, or stands behind a draper's counter. He will then find out how much he has yet to learn before his school work can be made readily available. I believe that a teacher who really knows his business, and has himself some capital of knowledge to draw upon beyond what can be got from the ordinary text books, can make a reading lesson, with the illustrations and explanations that should invariably accompany it, just as valuable a means of mental discipline as any drilling in compound proportion. Even such subjects as geography and history, which are generally regarded as mere memory work, can be made, by a skilful interpreter, speaking from a full mind, very effective instruments of mental training. The plain English is that arithmetic makes fewer demands upon the imagination, the knowledge, and the power of expression of the teacher than any one of the comparatively despised subjects to which I have referred, and hence, it is to be feared, its excessive popularity. There is no other subject that makes so great a show—or, as that singular modern product, the man of passes, would put it, gives so quick and sure a return—as arithmetic. There is none in which, after the first four rules are mastered, so much work may be thrown upon the scholar. It should be remembered that there is nothing humanising or refining in the art of arithmetic. A boy may, and often does, leave school a mere barbarian, after mastering all the mysteries of stocks and cube root. And there is a danger in the not remote future of pushing aside altogether the imaginative faculties, with the disastrous result of turning out hundreds of young Gradgrinds, with a turn for nothing but "hard facts."

Reading, unlike arithmetic, gets much less time and pains bestowed upon it than it really deserves, and the result is correspondingly unsatisfactory. Reading is, in fact, the part of our school work that is worst done. The lesson too often consists of the mere hearing a class read in turn, with little more teaching than the correction of words mispronounced or given wrongly. In order that more time and attention may in future be given to this important part of an education, the requirements in arithmetic will be somewhat lowered next year, especially in the higher standards—a change that may be more easily effected under the amended regulations that will then be in force. Still further to induce carefulness in reading, it will probably be found expedient to refuse a pass to any scholar, however well taught in other respects, who reads stumblingly, with a whine, or without expression. Teachers who wish to know practically what is meant by good reading cannot do better than visit Hardy Street Girls' School, where an excellent example of what a reading lesson ought to be is given daily.

Writing is, on the whole, fairly well taught, the only copy-book now supplied, the Abbotsford, giving as a model a plain, round, nearly upright hand, undisfigured by long tails and flourishes, and easy of imitation. The papers sent in by most of the older scholars on examination day also show that neatness and orderly arrangement are by no means neglected.

Geography, as a rule, is sensibly taught, considerable attention being now paid to that interesting part of physical geography which deals with natural phenomena. The explanation of causes and the description of processes are more likely to abide in the memory than lists of names of places which usually have no meaning for the learner. Especial pains are also bestowed on map drawing, the geography of these islands receiving great, but not, as it seems to me, undue attention.

In teaching history the oral method is gradually coming into use, though there are still a few schools in which little is done beyond hearing the scholars read from their class-books, and asking a few questions about the portion just read.

It being found that many children, on leaving school, did not know how to write in proper form, or to address neatly a letter, all the schools have this year been supplied by the Board with note-paper and envelopes in abundance, that the scholars might have plenty of practice in letter-writing. The hundreds of neatly written, correctly spelt, and well expressed notes on familiar subjects that were handed in on examination day show clearly that the expense thus incurred has not been thrown away.

Formal grammar has not been lost sight of, though the time taken up by letter-writing has caused grammar to take a less prominent place this year than has hitherto been assigned to that valuable instrument for mental training.

Energetic steps have been taken to revive the practice of drill, both class and military, which had latterly fallen somewhat into disuse. Cadet corps are being formed at some of the larger schools, and already the good results of the movement are clearly discernible in the improved carriage of the boys, and in their greater promptitude in carrying out orders.

Holidays.—The whole question of holidays seems to me to need revision. Abuses and anomalies have crept in which have only to be stated to be recognised as serious drawbacks to the success of our schools. The great discrepancies in the length of the working year in different neighbourhoods, as shown by the quarterly returns, induced me to make out a list of the times during which every school in the Nelson District had been open during the twelve months beginning June, 1884, and ending June, 1885. I selected this period as being free to a great extent from the disturbing elements of measles, whooping-cough, and other epidemics. I found that the school year varied, in different schools, by as much as sixty-eight days, the highest number recorded being 231, the lowest 163 working days. Twenty country schools were open, on the average, for no more than 184 days, or not quite thirty-seven weeks of five days each, during twelve months. Even the town schools made only 206 school days, leaving 159 days for recreation. It is true that many schools have been closed for six or seven weeks at a time because the bulk of the scholars were engaged in hop-picking; but surely this time should be deducted from, and not added to, the sum of holidays. It is indeed very doubtful, now that this industry is, unfortunately, on the wane, whether any school should be closed on that account. The cases must be rare in which some of the children would not attend, and there seems no good reason why their school life should be unnecessarily shortened. I attach but little importance to the plea that the strain of teaching an elementary school is so excessive that the "monstrous cantle" of the year usually devoted to recreation is absolutely essential to the health of the teacher. This is just one of those statements which, by dint of persistent reiteration, have come to be accepted without question by nine people out of ten. A comparison of the harassing work and long hours of a railway or telegraph officer at one of our busier centres of population with the work of the ordinary schoolmaster ought at once to dispel this time-honoured illusion. There are few bank-clerks who do not undergo a severer strain—to say nothing of their working twice as many hours—during their six weeks' balancing than any country teacher is subject to in as many months. It is incredible that a week of five days, each of barely five hours, should result in the utter prostration of any one enjoying even a moderate share of health and vigour; and it was surely never intended that teacherships of public schools should become harbours of refuge for the feeble. It is not proposed that there should be uniformity in the times at which holidays should be taken—those must always vary with the varying circumstances of different neighbourhoods: I simply suggest that an amicable agreement should be come to between the Board and the Committees as to the duration of the holidays throughout the year, which certainly ought not to exceed by more than a day or two seven weeks in all, including occasional holidays.

Home Lessons.—Closely connected with the question of holidays is that of home lessons. For the ground of defence of long and frequent holidays is often shifted, and it is urged that they are absolutely necessary for the health of the children. But if the doctrine I have so often insisted on, and which is getting to be pretty generally believed is true—that all that our school children need learn can be thoroughly taught in the ordinary school hours—the second argument also breaks

down. It has been demonstrated again and again, at some of our best schools, that the school day of five hours is quite long enough to enable a good teacher to turn out well-trained scholars. Home lessons are now discontinned, so far as I can gather, by all but a few old-fashioned teachers, who cannot depart from the ancient ways, and by about as many novices, who will learn in time that the goal at which they aim is to be reached none the sooner by a fussy and feverish haste. If, after returning home, the older scholars have any intellectual energy to spare, as will frequently be the case, let them, instead of poring over the dreary text-books, do some reading on their own account. Those excellent institutions, school libraries, are becoming increasingly common. There are not many neighbourhoods now where, either from the public or school library, a boy or a girl with a taste for literature cannot get access to "Robinson Crusoe," Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather," or Stanley's "Dark Continent." One of the most mischievous results of the modern plan of swallowing up all the pupils' evening in school work is that it absolutely kills the taste for general reading —one of the best things that a boy can take away with him from school.

A word of friendly warning to teachers as to the working of the new code of regulations will, I think, be taken in good part. By the substitution of class for pass subjects in such matters as history and geography the work of the teacher has been rendered sensibly less irksome, while the complexity, both in examining and recording, involved in the introduction of class and extra subjects has correspondingly added to the work of the Inspector. Moreover, several Inspectors have, as it were, stood sponsors for the teachers that the subjects excepted from the operation of the pass test shall not suffer. I trust that the confidence thus shown will not be misplaced. It would indeed be a pitiable result if the relaxation granted—which may ultimately lead to the gradual abolition of the standard system—should be so abused as to necessitate a reimposition of the old restrictions. Means will, however, certainly be found by Inspectors of marking very unmistakably their sense of any falling-off in the teaching of the class subjects.

I subjoin my estimate of the state of each school when it was last examined.

* * * * * * *

Although the seventy-eight schools that have been examined this year cannot well be crudely sorted into black and white, an estimate may be given showing to what general conclusions my inspections and examinations have led me. Fifty-five schools may be said to be in a thoroughly satisfactory state, seven are but indifferently taught, and the remaining sixteen have done badly. Changes of teachers will account to some extent, but not altogether, for the shortcomings of seven of these, and the sickness of the teacher excuses the eighth. I was unable to find any extenuating circumstances for the failure of the rest.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson. W. C. Hodgson, Inspector,

NORTH CANTERBURY.

1.—Mr. Edge's Report.

Sir,— Education Office, Christchurch, 26th March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit the following general report for the year 1885:—

During the year I examined seventy-seven schools in standards, besides taking part in the examinations of all the large schools except that at Lyttelton. Sixteen schools were also re-examined by me, either by direction of the Board or in accordance with the wishes of the Committees. I also examined and reported on the schools in connection with the Burnham Institution and the Lyttelton Orphanage. Visits of inspection were paid to fifty-nine schools. A very considerable portion of my time was taken up during the months of April and May in assigning marks for efficiency to those candidates who had gained certificates at the annual examination of teachers, and in preparing, for the information of the Education Department, lists of those teachers who had died or left the service of the Board during the year. A return was also made out of all teachers entitled to promotion in their respective classes. As the work of many teachers in the district was almost unknown to me, this last return meant something more than writing down a mere list of names. I had to look up reports and visit schools for the purpose of seeing the teachers at work before coming to a decision. I tried to make the return as complete as possible, but I believe that the names of a few deserving teachers were overlooked. The work of inspection in this district has been very much interrupted during the past three or four years, and these interruptions have entailed on me a large amount of extra labour. During the last four months of the year it was one continuous round of examining during the day, and valuing papers, filling in schedules, and reporting during the evening. In almost every instance the head-masters of the schools examined were promptly supplied with the names of the pupils who had passed the several standards. In the case of some schools that had done very badly I purposely kept back the schedules until I had an opportunity of comparing them with those of the previous year.

The total number of pupils enrolled in the schools examined was 18,770, or an increase of 752 as compared with last year. Of these, 16,780 pupils—89 per cent. of the enrolment—were present on the days of examination. The following table shows the enrolments and attendances for the past three years:—

Table No. 1.

——	1883.	1884.	1885.
Enrolment	17,565	18,018	18,770
Number present at examination ...	15,019	15,679	16,780
Percentage	85	87	89

By comparing the figures in the foregoing table it will be observed that there is a steady increase, not only in the number enrolled, but also in the number present at examination. In view of the latter fact, I think that the teachers deserve credit for having, on receipt of the notice of examination, made some special effort to get as many pupils together as possible.

Very little improvement has manifested itself in the regularity of attendance during the year. In some instances there has been a falling-off in this particular, owing to the prevalence of sickness among the children. Many children, chiefly in country districts, have been kept at home for long intervals during seed-time and harvest to assist their parents in farming operations; and, taking into consideration the low prices of produce during the past few years, I do not see how this was to be prevented. Many persons seem to think that indiscriminate compulsion is the only true remedy for irregularity in the attendance of children at school; but I confess that I do not clearly see this. Of course, in places where children are, owing to the wilful negligence, selfish indifference, or ineffectual control of their parents, allowed month after month to absent themselves from school, compulsion is, in the interests of the children themselves and of society at large, an absolute necessity. In agricultural districts, however, the putting into force the compulsory clauses of the Education Act will always be a delicate question, and one which will require the greatest care in handling. I know something of the opinions of parents throughout the district, and I am greatly afraid that enforced school attendance will not prove either popular or effective. In some few schools that I examined during the year the low average daily attendance of the scholars was undoubtedly due in a great measure to the indolence or incompetency of the teachers in charge. There is not the slightest doubt that the indifferent quality of the instruction and the general inefficiency of the school management cause many children to take a thorough dislike to school, and make their parents negligent about sending them. One very objectionable feature in the attendance is that it is not sufficiently consecutive; and I have heard many thoroughly efficient teachers complain bitterly of this. It is quite out of the question to produce satisfactory results in the higher standards in schools where the attendance is broken. It is difficult enough to get through the work of each standard in a year, without having to be continually going over back work with those children who absent themselves from the most trivial causes. I find, on looking through the duplicate schedules, that on the average about one day out of three was lost from school attendance in the case of fully one-third of the children presented for examination in standards in country schools during the year just passed. The punctuality of attendance is, as far as I had opportunities of judging, good in two-thirds of the schools. Where children loiter on their way to school, apparently indifferent as to whether they arrive in time or not, there is almost certain to be something wrong in the discipline and management of that school. The satisfactory condition of some schools as regards punctuality shows that, notwithstanding the careless neglect of parents, the rate of late scholars may be very much reduced by firmness and tact on the part of the teachers, and by encouraging the children to take an interest in their school work and playground sports. Further, it is a fact that when teachers are earnest and methodical in the discharge of their duties they invariably succeed in securing punctual scholars.

The school registers are usually kept correctly and neatly. In four schools, however, which were visited unexpectedly, the registers were found in such a neglected state that I was compelled to report the matter.

In the large majority of schools the neatness and cleanliness of the schoolrooms may be very favourably reported on. The out-offices, however, were in some instances found in such a bad condition as to indicate carelessness and neglect on the part of those who are supposed to look after the interests of the schools. The neglect of such matters is almost certain to foster habits of indecency among the pupils. Mats and foot-scrapers should be provided at the doors of all schools.

Various improvements, additions, or repairs have rendered the material condition of several schools of a more satisfactory character. With extremely few exceptions, the schools are well supplied with suitable furniture and appliances. Wherever there is a deficiency in such articles it is usually traceable to the neglect of the teachers. Several teachers still require to be more strict and mindful in seeing that the furniture and apparatus are not unnecessarily damaged.

The order and discipline were reasonably satisfactory in the majority of the schools that I examined. The children generally appeared to be earnest and industrious in their work, and very anxious to acquit themselves creditably. As a general rule, I think that the pupils are tractable and amenable to discipline, and that most cases of disorder are traceable to bad organization, inefficient teaching, or to want of experience on the part of the teachers in detecting and correcting faults. Some few teachers still continue to ignore the instructions with regard to school drill and class movements. In several schools I found the pupils of each standard so promiscuously arranged as to cause considerable loss of time during the examination. It is very desirable that the children should be arranged in their standards in the order in which their names appear on the schedules.

Time-tables were used in all schools that I visited except three; but in some cases they were not adhered to, but put up more for ornament than use. When teachers are indifferent about the time of beginning or ending a lesson, it cannot be expected that the scholars will show much regard for order and punctuality; but in schools where the teachers recognise the importance of doing certain things at stated times the pupils will soon see the necessity for being attentive and prepared for their work. In some schools too much time is allotted to mechanical work, and too little to those subjects requiring thought, skill, and continuous mental effort. I think it would be well if all teachers adopted the plan, now so common in the large schools, of making out programmes of the work to be undertaken for certain periods—say, a month, or a quarter. I am quite convinced that many of the failures each year are due to a want of systematic treatment in dealing with the requirements of each standard. At the end of each month or quarter the attainments of the scholars in the work gone over should be carefully tested, the teachers bearing in mind that no one can be certain of the results of teaching on children until those results have been tested by

examination. The pupils would thus become familiarised with the mode of conducting examinations, and would be less nervous and more self-possessed when that on the year's work took place. If, after such examinations, a list for each standard was drawn up, with even the total number of marks gained by each scholar, and posted in a conspicuous part of the room, I am sure that it would have the effect of promoting a healthy spirit of emulation among the children. In my report for the year 1880 the following paragraph occurs: "Shortly after the appointment of the present principal of the Normal School I incidentally heard that it was intended to set apart a room in that building as a 'model country school.' I hope this matter has not been lost sight of, as I am convinced that the establishment of such a school would be of the greatest benefit, not only to the students, or, at least, to those of them who intend to seek employment in small country schools, but also to those teachers already so employed who have not had the advantage of any special training for their work. Should such a school be established there are very few untrained teachers in my portion of the district who would not gladly avail themselves of the opportunity of attending it; and I have not the slightest doubt that the experience gained by such attendance for even a fortnight would be of more real assistance to them in the discharge of their duties than two years' lecturing on school management." I am quite sure that, had the suggestion I then made been carried out, it would have effected ere this a very beneficial change in the condition of small country schools, and that, too, at a trifling cost. It is scarcely possible to frame a time-table which will be exactly suitable to the conditions under which even a small proportion of the schools in charge of one teacher are conducted. In several the standards are not the same, in others sewing is not taught, while in others the teachers, fairly competent in other respects, have no teachable knowledge of singing, drawing, and science. I have been at all times ready to assist teachers of small schools in framing suitable time-tables, varying them to suit the conditions of each school. Some years ago I made out a suggestive time-table, and sent copies of it to all schools where I considered that the time-tables in use were not suitable. In some cases my suggestions were carried out, but in others they were totally ignored. Workable time-tables are a necessity in every school; but until the work of some teachers is characterised by more zeal, energy, and tact, they cannot expect satisfactory progress. The adult teaching power in most of the large schools is, I think, more judiciously distributed throughout the classes preparing for examination in standards than formerly. Greater attention is paid to the classes preparing for Standards I. and II. That something is required to be done in this direction is plain from the fact that for several years past large numbers of children presented in the Second Standard either failed badly or passed indifferently, and, further, that several even of those who passed fairly were found unable to enter in an intelligent manner on the work of Standard III. The standard that gave the most unsatisfactory results this year was the Third, and the large schools were mainly answerable for the failures. And I might here point out that the failures were due, not to casual or trivial errors, but simply to inability to do the work at all. There is no change to note in the organization of infant-schools. The staff in such schools still consists of a mistress, assistant, and a number of pupil-teachers, almost the whole time of the mistress being devoted to supervision. There is, as I have frequently pointed out, too much unskilful teaching in infant-schools. I am afraid that a great deal of valuable time is wasted in such schools in wearying and useless repetition, and that children take something like four years to learn what ought to be accomplished in two. It is monstrous to see children whose ages range between eight and nine years spending nearly half their time each day in jerking their arms up and down, in singing nursery rhymes, or in being lectured on the fact that a sheep has four legs.

In the case of several schools examined by me this year I was precluded from expressing in my reports any positive opinion as regards the character of the discipline and instruction, in point of improvement or retrogression, in consequence of my not having previously visited them. In reporting on schools I have always endeavoured to bear in mind general difficulties, and also those peculiar to certain places.

The following table will show, for the total number of schools examined, the number presented in each standard, the number passed, the average age at which the scholars pass, and the number of schools at which the different standards were successfully passed:—

TABLE NO. II.

—	Number presented.	Number passed.	Average Age.	Percentage of Passes.	No. of Schools at which Scholars were successful.
			Yrs. mos.		
Standard VI.	281	209	14 0	74·4	53
Standard V.	794	455	13 4	57·3	84
Standard IV.	1,512	918	12 3	60·7	104
Standard III.	2,169	1,292	11 2	59·6	119
Standard II.	2,581	2,086	9 9	80·8	132
Standard I.	2,474	2,287	8 9	92·4	140
Totals	9,811	7,247	...	73·9	...

It will be seen from the above table that the percentage of passes for the total number of pupils presented was 74, or 7 per cent. less than the previous year. This at first sight seems a sad falling-of; but I do not see that there is any very serious cause for alarm. The large schools were examined five or six weeks earlier than last year, and this to some extent affected the

results. In the case of some schools—notably those at Ashburton and Rangiora—the meagre results were due to causes altogether beyond the control of the present head-masters. Further, the questions set and the conditions necessary to secure a pass were somewhat different from those of previous years. This year more time was devoted to the work of examination in the large schools, and in every case the Inspector who set the questions supervised the children during the time allowed for answering them. The numbers in the lower standards and preparatory classes are still excessively large, and this objectionable feature is due partly to unpunctuality, irregular attendance, and the removal of children from one school to another, and partly to feebleness in the discipline and teaching. The percentage of passes for the seventy-seven country schools examined by me for results was 72, or 2 per cent. lower than that for the total number of schools examined. Forty schools came above, and thirty-seven below, the average. My aim in examining schools for results has always been to find out whether children had gained such a sufficiently intelligent knowledge of the work of the standard in which they were presented as would enable them to successfully cope with the difficulties of the next; and I do not think that I have been too exacting in my requirements.

I will now present in a tabulated form the results obtained in the various standard subjects in the total number of schools examined, and also in the seventy-seven country schools examined by me; and afterwards offer what criticisms I think necessary on the way in which these subjects have been taught. I did not take any part in the examination of arithmetic, geography, and science in the large schools, so that my remarks on these subjects do not apply to the schools in question.

TABLE No. III.

Subjects.	In Total Number of Schools Examined.			In Seventy-seven Schools examined by Me.		
	Presented.	Passed.	Percentage.	Presented.	Passed.	Percentage.
Reading	9,811	9,125	93	3,116	2,942	94
Spelling	9,811	8,062	82·1	3,116	2,495	80
Writing	9,811	9,211	93·8	3,116	2,979	95
Arithmetic	9,811	7,017	71·5	3,116	2,220	71·2
Grammar	4,754	3,370	70·8	1,471	1,140	77·5
Geography	7,337	5,176	70·5	2,271	1,644	72·3
History	4,713	3,334	70·7	1,439	1,053	73·1

Reading.—In a few schools this subject is taught with fairly creditable efficiency, but in the rest the character of the reading ranges from indifferent to bad. In the higher standards the pupils require to read with greater ease and fluency, and to show a better acquaintance with the elements of elocution. The want of fluency and expression is, I think, very often due to the fact that sufficient attention is not paid to the meanings of the words, the children merely uttering them without having any very clear idea of their force or connection with the other words in the sentences read. In the teaching of no subject is the necessity of commencing well more important. In too many schools the children in the preparatory classes and lower standards are allowed to read or recite, either simultaneously or individually, in a monotonous, or, as it is very often called, a sing-song voice, and this injuriously affects their reading for years afterwards. Simultaneous reading is of the greatest importance if properly used; but it is a method of teaching reading which is liable to very great abuse, and when abused it is worse than useless, if not positively hurtful. When reading simultaneously the children should be made to imitate the voice and accent of their teacher, and not allowed to repeat the words in a monotonous tone; and care should be taken that the lazy and inattentive portion of the class is not permitted to simply catch up the words repeated by the more attentive pupils. I believe that it would be a great advantage if two sets of books were used in the junior classes in every school during the year—one to be kept in the school, and used only for reading practice. The funds raised by entertainments and subscriptions for prizes might very profitably be devoted for one year to the purpose of obtaining such a set of readers. My suggestion, if carried out, would soon improve the reading, for children who read two or three books during a year are more likely to turn out good readers than those who read over the same book a dozen times. That the children—at least, in the lower standards—know the usual school readers by heart is very evident when they are called upon to read from a book of similar difficulty, but previously unknown to them. The reading, when tested in this way, showed that the greatest defect was the inability to group words according to their sense—a point of the greatest importance in the teaching of reading. Teachers sometimes, by allowing their pupils to stand too close to them, encourage them to read in a low and almost inaudible tone. It too often happens that very little attention is paid to the thorough preparation of the pieces of poetry selected for the year's work. The children, as a rule, are fairly word-perfect, but they repeat the lines without the slightest attempt at style or expression.

Spelling.—This subject was examined this year chiefly by means of passages dictated from the reading books in use in each standard. There is not the slightest doubt that this is the best method of testing the value of the instruction given, as it must be acknowledged that we learn to spell for the purpose of spelling correctly when we write.

Writing.—This subject cannot be said to be successfully taught. Writing, like everything else, should be taught intelligently, and on some well defined plan; but it too often happens that children are allowed to write without any attempt being made to teach them how to write. In the first stages

no attempt is made to show them the elements of the letters and their simpler forms. The proper manner of sitting at the desks, and the way in which the pencil or pen should be held, are not clearly pointed out. Generally they are supplied with short pieces of pencil, which it is impossible for them to hold properly, and they are told to copy certain letters or words from a card or blackboard. The slate writing of Standards I. and II. was in far too many instances thoroughly bad, scarcely two children writing alike in any school. In several schools I found children writing in copies who had not progressed far enough in use of the pencil to be able to handle a pen properly. If teachers were to suitably graduate their exercises, and never allow their pupils to do anything without first explaining how it should be done, there would soon be a marked improvement in the writing. Failure in writing is frequently attributable to the mistake which some teachers make of trying to give instruction in some other subject during the writing lesson. The copy books of even the highest classes cannot be too carefully supervised.

Arithmetic.—Of the three elementary subjects, this gives the worst results. The answering of far too many of those examined showed a want of thorough instruction, especially in ability to work out correctly easy miscellaneous questions. There is still too much time devoted to the working out of mechanical questions, which, as a means of developing the reasoning powers, are almost useless. The problems set for Standards III. and IV. were of a simple and practical character, yet in a large proportion of the schools they were not attempted at all. In several schools the children appeared to be unable to add and subtract mentally with readiness, but used their fingers or made strokes on their slates to assist them. Mental arithmetic was generally found to be neglected in such schools, and the pupils knew but little about their tables. Teachers should remember that mental arithmetic does not merely consist of the application of a few technical rules. I have found a class quite expert in finding the prices of exact numbers of dozens and scores, but not one in the class could tell the price of thirteen loaves of bread at 4½d. a loaf. Again, for example, I have found a class presented in Standard II. five-sixths of which would in all probability work out correctly the following sum in subtraction:—

47096352
28096789

But when given such a simple question as the following—"A man has 396 sheep, he sells 198 of them, how many sheep has he left?" hardly one-sixth of the class could find the answer. In setting sums for home work care should be taken that they are similar to those worked on the blackboard during the day.

Grammar.—There is no noticeable improvement in the results obtained in this subject, which is not so very difficult to teach, provided the teacher has a good knowledge of it. Many of the papers handed to me showed gross ignorance of the subject. For instance, it is not possible to pass a scholar who gives "is," a "noun," and "when," a "verb." Many teachers have yet to realise the fact that intelligent oral teaching in this subject is better than the mere rote learning of whole pages of text books. A considerable amount of attention is paid to the analysis of sentences in most schools, but very little to sentence-making; and yet the latter is a far more important acquirement than the former. Composition is certainly not a satisfactory subject at present; and this is, I think, due to want of method in dealing with it. Children are asked to write compositions before they have the slightest knowledge of how to form sentences. In this, as in many other subjects, too much is taken for granted.

Geography.—This subject, judging by the results, has only received a moderate amount of attention. The questions set were well within the requirements, and offered no special difficulties. Sufficient trouble has evidently not been taken to see that the lessons gone over have been really learned. Some teachers appear to think that a knowledge of geography can be acquired by committing to memory a number of unmeaning names, and then pointing them out on a map. A great deal of useless knowledge is taught, while much that is essential is neglected. Sufficient use is not made of the maps, diagrams, and globes with which nearly every school in the district is supplied.

History.—Except in a few schools the answering on this subject was very poor. As history is in future to be treated as a class subject, I do not see any necessity for remarking on the manner in which it has been taught during the past year.

Extra Subjects.—Sewing was taught in all the schools except five. In quite three-fifths of the schools the needlework was satisfactory, but it did not meet the requirements of the standard in the rest. Singing was practised in about half the schools examined. Drawing is now compulsory in the First Standard, and will necessarily receive more attention in the future. The drawing-books in several schools were very creditable, but in others they showed plain evidence of poor teaching and careless supervision. Object lessons are now professedly given in all schools, and in a few with considerable success. In the case of eleven schools the answering in science was very fair; but in the others taking this subject the meagre results proved that the time of the teachers would be better occupied in giving instruction in the elementary subjects.

The usual schedules are attached. I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury. W. L. Edge, M.A., Inspector.

2.—Mr. Wood's Report.

Sir,— Education Office, Christchurch, 22nd March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit the following report for the portion of the year 1885 during which I was engaged in this education district:—

From the 13th of August, 1885, the date at which I entered upon my duties, to the third week of January, 1886, I was almost entirely occupied with the work of examination. The number of schools on my list was so large that it was impossible to get this work completed by the end of the year. I examined, unaided, fifty-five schools, and took part with Mr. Edge in the examination of

ten of the larger schools. I had little or no time at my disposal for purposes of general inspection, except in a few schools, where the work of examination was light. My report therefore deals almost exclusively with the quality of the instruction in the various subjects of the syllabus.

As the results of my examinations agree very closely with those for the whole district, I do not consider it necessary to give them separately. The following tables for the years 1884 and 1885, show the number of pupils examined in each standard, the number of pupils who passed, the percentage of passes, and the average age of the pupils who passed :—

—	1885.				1884.			
	Presented.	Passed.	Per cent. of Passes.	Average Age.	Presented.	Passed.	Per cent. of Passes.	Average Age.
				Yrs. ms.				Yrs. ms.
Standard I. ...	2,474	2,287	92·4	8 9	2,482	2,317	93	8 7
Standard II. ...	2,581	2,086	80·8	9 9	2,301	1,977	86	10 0
Standard III. ...	2,169	1,292	59·6	11 2	2,147	1,606	75	11 4
Standard IV. ...	1,512	918	60·7	12 3	1,378	956	69	12 7
Standard V. ...	794	455	57·3	13 4	587	398	68	13 4
Standard VI. ...	281	209	74·4	14 0	237	183	77	14 3
Total ...	9,811	7,247	73·9	...	9,132	7,437	81	...

A comparative examination of the two tables cannot but give rise to a feeling of disappointment. All along the line there has been a falling-off in the passes, varying from 0·6 per cent. in the First Standard to 15·4 per cent. in the Third; while over all the percentage has fallen from 81 to 73·9. I am not prepared to assign this decline in the results to any particular cause. I think it right, however, to say that it cannot be attributed to any attempt on the part of the Inspectors to exact too high a standard of proficiency. Indeed, from my knowledge of the systems of examination in other education districts of New Zealand I am certain that our tests are not severe. As a rule, poor results were easily traced to faulty instruction; and so many defects in teaching were disclosed by the examinations that, had not the tests been relaxed in several instances, the percentage of passes would undoubtedly have fallen considerably below 74 per cent. To the more serious of these defects I shall briefly refer under the heading of the various subjects of instruction.

Reading.—The reading in the schools of this district is far from satisfactory. A high percentage of passes was recorded; but this cannot be considered any criterion of excellence, for a pass was allowed for mere mechanical work of the lowest order. Had the intelligence test been at all rigidly applied, the list of failures would have been greatly increased. To fix a uniform and precise standard for intelligent reading is well-nigh impossible; yet surely one might reasonably expect that the words would be accurately pronounced, taken in small groups, and delivered with such natural expression as to show that the meaning of the passage read was fairly comprehended. In many schools the reading falls far short of this standard. In the lower classes the words are taken one by one, the "of" and the "the" being quite as much emphasised as the more important words in the sentence. The result, of course, is a sing-song, monotonous drawl, absolutely devoid of any trace of natural expression. No attempt is made to group the words, and phrase them as one does in speaking. To make my meaning quite definite, I take the following sentence from the reading-book in general use in Standard I.: "Jane has been for a week at the farm where her aunt lives." In a great majority of schools we should certainly have this rendered, "Jane—has—been—for—a—week—at—the—farm—where—her—aunt—lives," the pupil putting the same stress on "for," "a," "at," "the," as on "Jane," "week," "farm," "aunt," sometimes speaking very slowly and very deliberately, the finger pointing to each word in turn, more frequently rattling on with great fluency, but such fluency as might be expected of a parrot. Now, were the teacher to set a model to the class, phrasing the words somewhat after the following manner: "Jane—has been—for a week—at the farm—where her aunt lives," he would have no difficulty in getting the pupils to imitate him, and a result at once much more satisfactory and pleasing would be attained. He need not experience any difficulty in the matter of emphasis. A fair appreciation of the sense of the passage will cause the pupil almost unconsciously to modulate his voice and stress the words aright. The reading would then have some claim to be called accurate and expressive, and this is about as far as I go in my demands for a pass, as well in the higher as in the lower classes. Indeed, even with this moderate standard, the percentage of passes, instead of being one of the highest, would certainly have been one of the lowest had not great leniency been shown. In the higher standards a more definite test of intelligence was applied, but little or no account was taken of it in marking the pass. Two—sometimes three—phrases, selected from the reading lessons, were written on the blackboard, and the pupils were asked to give the meaning of them in simple language. It was not surprising to find the results lamentably poor when the actual reading was so very weak. To many of our teachers, then, I feel compelled to say, Seek first to improve the reading of your pupils. Whatever else may suffer in our heavily-weighted syllabus, see to it that it is not reading. Remember that of all the products of school life, good reading is far and away the most useful; and when you have taught your pupils to read well, to read so that it is a pleasure to their hearers and a source of delight to themselves, you have endowed them with a means of self-improvement that will bear fruit a thousandfold in after life, and be to them a joy for ever.

Spelling.—The failure of the higher standards to answer the dictation test accounts for the comparatively low percentage in this subject. In Standards I. and II. spelling was on the whole good, but almost no attention had been paid to transcription. In transcribing a passage of five or six lines from the reading-book, words were frequently mis-spelt, omitted, or repeated, the punctuation neglected, and an utter disregard shown for capitals. Further, in several schools slates were either not ruled at all, or ruled with such want of care that it was no uncommon thing to find the writing of a class varying from half-text to something so very small as to be nearly microscopic. Altogether, the impression was left upon me that little use was made of transcription, and that where it was practised regularly careful supervision was not given to the work. Partly to this fault may be attributed the breakdown of the higher standards in dictation, where mistakes were often made in short words such as "does," "seize," "until," "during," and the like, for the correct spelling of which the transcription exercise of the lower classes is extremely valuable. The shortcomings here, however, were in greater part due to the fact that dictation has hitherto played a less important part in the examination of the schools in this district, and consequently many teachers have confined their attention to spelling, pure and simple. I was frequently assured that if I asked the children to spell twenty of the most difficult words in the reading-book I should be surprised at the superior results. Possibly. Still, the ability to reproduce an average passage of three or four lines with a fair degree of accuracy is of sufficient importance to warrant us in assuming that the dictation exercise should not be neglected.

Writing.—In a large proportion of the schools there is considerable room for improvement in the writing. Great irregularity prevails in the matter of copy-books. Some teachers make use of two or three different sets, and, as a consequence, a variety of styles of handwriting is sometimes found in one and the same school. Others, again, seem to put little value upon regular daily supervision of the written work. Again and again copy-books were submitted in which mistakes were repeated, even aggravated, in successive lines, page after page showing no trace of a correction-mark. In a few instances pupils had no copy-books to show, and in many more a page or two was all that had been done—at least, was all that was available on the day of examination. On these occasions the teachers expressed surprise at my insisting that copy-books should be submitted to the Inspector. They evidently did not understand that after an inspection of the copy-books he is generally able to form a fairly correct estimate of the character of the school. The most frequent cause of complaint, however, arose in connection with work which bore every evidence of careful teaching, but was not in accordance with the regulations on the subject. In nearly all the larger schools of the district, and in a few of the smaller ones, the pupils in Standards II. and III. presented copy-books in text and half-text. I had repeatedly to point out that the syllabus required writing "not larger than round hand" at this stage. Still, I would not have it inferred that I am blind to the advantages of teaching large hand. Indeed, I am strongly of opinion that to produce good writing a child must be taught a fairly large hand before being allowed to write small hand. There is a natural tendency in all children to write small hand, and unless this is counteracted at the beginning the result cannot but prove harmful. Want of parallelism and straightness in lines, and of uniformity in turns, heights, and joining of letters, are all faults much more easily detected in large hand than in small. The style of writing that will make these defects most readily apparent to the child mind must necessarily be the best to cultivate in forming the hand. In this connection slate writing will be found a most powerful auxiliary. The degree of perfection to which even the tiniest of fingers here attain is sometimes most striking.

Arithmetic.—The results in arithmetic are by no means commensurate with the amount of time spent in teaching the subject. For this, faulty methods of instruction are in a great measure responsible. Problems alone did not bar the way to success. Fully one-half of the failures arose from sheer inability to perform the mechanical operations required in the sums. It is scarcely credible that a very large proportion of the pupils in our schools have not yet been taught the A B C of arithmetic. But so it is. In many schools addition has been so very imperfectly taught as to be quite unworthy of the name. On putting a simple sum, such as "Add sixteen and seven," I found the answer was not forthcoming until the pupils had done the reckoning either on their fingers, or by strokes on slates, or by bobbing their heads. This practice had become very general. At times it was confined to the lower classes; more frequently it would run right over a school, from the infants to the Sixth Standard. Such a fault is, of course, sure to prove fatal to anything like accurate calculation, especially where the mechanical processes involved in the sums make any call upon the pupil's power of mental concentration. No better proof of this could have been given than that afforded by the mental arithmetic test. This test was applied, not so much to see whether the pupils had acquired a knowledge of rules for performing rapidly certain calculations, as to show what degree of proficiency had been attained in working very simple every-day questions without the aid of pen and paper. The results were most unsatisfactory. Easy questions requiring scarcely any effort of thought—*e.g.*, "How many twopenny stamps can be obtained for 6s. 6d.?"—were far beyond the power of the average Fourth Standard child; while in the Third Standard such a sum as, "Add 8d., and 7d., and 10d.," would call forth feats on the fingers that were quite bewildering. When children of eleven and twelve years of age, who have had about six years' schooling, are unable to work such sums as these, it may well be presumed that the teaching has been sadly wanting in intelligence. And it is not in questions that make a demand upon the reasoning powers that this is most apparent. It can scarcely be considered creditable to a teacher to allow his pupils to go through their school curriculum without acquiring greater facility in addition than that obtained in counting by units. At the very earliest stage of school-life no doubt it is desirable to show that seven and six are thirteen by fingers, strokes, balls on the ball-frame—in fact, by means of any concrete objects that are readily available. But all these familiar representations are only used to pave the way for the fact that seven and six are thirteen universally. It is impossible for the pupil to make any sound progress in the study of arithmetic until his mind has taken such a grasp of the elementary truths of the science that he can reproduce them without even pausing to think.

Grammar.—This heading in the examination schedule includes composition as well as formal grammar. On the whole, questions in formal grammar were well answered. Composition, however, suffers greatly from want of methodical treatment; and for this there is no excuse. Several excellent manuals on the subject have recently been published. Mr. Park's "Lessons on Composition," and Dr. Abbott's "How to Write clearly," would well repay careful study. They are in general use as text-books in two at least of the education districts of New Zealand, where the results in composition are very satisfactory.

Geography.—There is little to say in favour of the instruction in this subject. It is generally too verbal, and not real enough. Too little use is made of maps and diagrams; too much faith is put in rote work. My examination of Standard II. showed how very worthless such teaching can become. The syllabus defines the work of this standard to be, "Knowledge of the meaning of a ground plan, and of a map; of the principal geographical terms; and of the positions of the continents, oceans, and larger seas." In the schools which came first on my list for examination, the pupils, with rare exceptions, were perfect in the verbal part of the work. They could repeat with great readiness the definitions of common geographical terms, or tell the positions of the continents, &c. But this was literally the extent of their knowledge of the subject. When taken before a map of the world or an outline map on the blackboard, they failed *en masse* to recognise a cape, strait, island, &c. When asked to point to Asia, it was an even chance that any one of them would point to Africa. They had learned the subject by rote; they had not the remotest conception of the real thing. The realistic instruction so necessary in giving the preliminary explanations of such notions as land and water, mountain and plain, &c., had been entirely neglected, and no attempt had been made to cultivate the children's powers of observation, comparison, and grouping. Thus, all that is educative in the subject had been lost sight of. Towards the end of the year, however, it was gratifying to observe a steady improvement in the results.

History.—But little useful progress has been made in the study of history. The knowledge acquired is too often of a meagre and valueless kind. Dry summaries, lists of battles and of the dates of the accession and death of sovereigns are committed to memory for the purposes of examination, and forgotten before the child has been a week from school. This is almost invariably the case with the pupils of Standards III. and IV., and the teacher is not altogether to blame. It is impossible for him to prepare children so young for the ordeal of an examination in history without having recourse, more or less, to cram. The change effected by the new regulations in excluding history from the list of pass subjects will afford a considerable measure of relief, and it is to be hoped that a further advance in this direction will be made at no distant date. Nothing but good could result from the exemption of the Third and Fourth Standards from examination in this subject. A history book, such, for instance, as Mr. Gardiner's "Outline," might then be introduced as a reading book in these classes. Each class would have two reading books instead of one as at present, and the Inspector in applying the test for reading would use one or both of them. There would be no further need for cramming the children with dry summaries and catalogues of names and dates, and thus a most fruitful source of repugnance to the subject would be removed from the path of the young. I would not have it understood that I am here speaking against history as a branch of education. Indeed, under proper conditions it is more than any other subject fitted to arouse the interest, even the enthusiasm, of the child. But what I do mean to say is this: that history as at present taught in the elementary schools, with a view to examination, creates in the ordinary child a feeling of disgust for the subject which will, in all probability, endure with him for a lifetime.

Extra Subjects.—An effort has been made to teach science in nearly all the schools, but in only a few are the results at all satisfactory. The great majority of teachers have little knowledge of the science subjects themselves, and, besides, they are not supplied with even the most rudimentary apparatus. The instruction is therefore entirely limited to learning by rote, and it should scarcely be necessary to state that any attempt to teach science without illustration and experiment is certain to result in complete failure. In my opinion, many of our teachers would be better employed were they to devote the science hour to a careful study of some piece of English prose or verse; and I think it is much to be regretted that this alternative is not allowed them. The instruction in object lessons is very varied. In a few schools exercise-books containing notes of lessons were submitted on the day of examination. These lessons were for the most part suitable in matter and arrangement, and, judged by the answering, they had been taught with care and intelligence. In many schools, however, no notes were kept, and only some seven or eight lessons in all had been given. I had again and again to point out that when the time-table allows for one lesson a week it is not too much to expect that about thirty should be given during the year. Also, no matter how skilful a teacher may be, he cannot afford to dispense with notes; and with these before him, an Inspector is better able to form an estimate of the value of the instruction in the subject. In a very large proportion of schools poetry has been taught with very poor effect. The children had generally got the words of the poems well by heart, but anything more wearisome than the repetition of them I cannot imagine. Questions on the subject-matter were most frequently left unanswered; sometimes they elicited startling guesses. On one occasion I asked a class that had just repeated Mrs. Hemans's "Better Land" what was meant by the "Better Land." The answers ranged the world over, "from China to Peru." Singing is mostly taught by ear. In a few of the largest schools instruction is also given by note, and, on the whole, with satisfactory results. Music drill is a very pleasing feature of most infant-schools. I should fancy no better corrective to ordinary routine could be found. In twenty-seven small schools singing is not taught. A due amount of attention is bestowed on needlework, and the results are in many cases very creditable. In a few instances rather poor specimens of work were exhibited; but these were generally accounted for by special difficulties in providing the children with suitable materials.

In conclusion I may remark that I have seldom had to complain of the behaviour of the children. In a few schools the work of examination was hindered by laxity of control, and extra precautions against talking and copying had to be taken. But this is the exception. As a rule the children are

orderly, and yield a cheerful obedience; and the impression left upon me is that they are being trained in habits of honesty and self-reliance.

Tables of statistics, which have been compiled by Mr. Edge and myself, are appended [not printed].

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury. L. B. Wood, M.A., Inspector.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,— Education Office, Timaru, 8th January, 1886.

I have the honour to present a general report on the schools of the Education District of South Canterbury for the year 1885.

The forty-five schools in operation throughout the year have been examined in detail, and at least one separate visit has been paid to each—with one exception—for the purpose of inspection. The new school opened towards the close of the year at Upper Waitohi Flat was not examined, as no children were attending it who had not been already examined elsewhere, or who were fitted for promotion.

Enrolment and Classification.—In these forty-five schools there were on the rolls at the date of examination 4,157 children—2,141 boys and 2,016 girls—of which number twenty-seven, or 0·65 per cent. had already passed the Sixth Standard; 2,641, or 63·53 per cent., were within the standard classification; and 1,489, or 35·82 per cent., were grouped in the infant division. This classification is very nearly the same as that of last year, in which the proportions in the forty-one schools examined were 0·53, 63·92, and 35·54 per cent. respectively; but it shows a slight tendency to augment the group of infants at the expense of the standard classes.

Examined.—Those who had already passed Standard VI. were examined in the work of that standard. The infants were examined briefly in classes. Of the remaining 2,641, the total preparing for some standard, 2,396, or 90·7 per cent., were present at examination, nineteen out of a total of twenty-three re-presented were re-examined in a standard already passed, and 2,377 were examined for promotion. The attendance at examination, which still leaves something to be desired, has slightly improved, 9·3 per cent. of the standard classes being absent, as against 10·3 last year. Taking the roll number of all schools in the district at the end of December, the proportion of children actually examined in standards is 57 per cent., as against 56 per cent. in 1884—an increase due principally to the fact that only one small school was not in a position to be examined.

Promoted.—The number promoted to a higher standard for the year is 1,754, which shows (*a*) a percentage of promotions of 42·19 on the roll number of the schools examined; (*b*) a percentage of 66·41 on the number enrolled in standard classes; (*c*) a percentage of 73·2 on the number present at examination in standards; and (*d*) a percentage of 73·83 on the number examined for promotion—that is, exclusive of pupils re-examined in a standard already passed. The corresponding figures taken from my last report are (*a*) 42·39, (*b*) 66·32, (*c*) 73, and (*d*) 73·95. In comparing the reports it is to be noted that the word "presented" is no longer used in the sense of present at examination, but applied to the class enrolment.

Comments and Explanations.—To prevent any abuse of the regulation by which teachers were enabled to re-present children in a standard already passed, the practice has been adopted both for 1884 and for this year of not allowing such re-presentation to affect the percentage of passes given for each school, and, in consequence, the number so re-presented is again extremely small. Had more encouragement been given, there is no doubt the proportion of promotions to the number examined for promotion would have been made to assume a very different aspect. By the new regulations that come into force on the 1st January, 1886, the term "percentage of passes" there recognised is made to refer to the school roll, and a new term, "percentage of failures," is introduced to express the relation of the failures to the passes and failures taken together, the failures referred to being the net result obtained by excluding from the calculation those pupils (to be termed "exceptions") who do not pass, and who have made fewer than half attendances during the previous three quarters. With the object of preparing the way for the new order of things, I have thought it desirable to give a "percentage of passes" and a "percentage of failures," according to these definitions, for every school, in addition to the percentage of passes on the number examined in standards to which this district has been accustomed for several years. As, however, the regulation dealing with the re-presentation of children is not included in the new scheme, and as no teacher would re-present children who had any chance of passing a higher standard, the net failures on which the percentage of failures is based must be ascertained for this year by adding the number re-presented to the gross number of actual failures before subtracting the exceptions proposed. The total number of children excluded in the calculation on the principle applied, and termed by me "proposed exceptions," is ninety-one, and the percentage of failures for the district is 24·03. Last year I took the trouble to ascertain the number of children examined in standards who had made 250 attendances since the previous examination, and set down a second series of percentages showing the proportion of passes among those children. The figures then obtained showed that 372 children in this group did not pass, and, as the total number of failures for the year (failures and pupils re-presented being taken together) was 616, it follows that there were no fewer than 244 children among the failures who did not make 250 attendances out of an ordinary total of 400. Had this number been excepted on the new principle, a percentage of failures — of 18·21 — of a somewhat different character would have been obtained for that year. I am unable to give corresponding figures for 1885; but I have no reason to suppose that the result would have been materially different. The more liberal rule of exclusion is, in my opinion, to be preferred, and I hope that the authorities, in seeking to relieve teachers of responsibility for the failures of bad attendants, may see their way, before the next series of examinations, to the adoption of a more comprehensive definition of the term "exceptions."

General Results.—The following table (Table A) shows in a concise form the general results of the examination in each standard:—

TABLE A.—General Result in Standards.

[N.B.—In this table no account is taken of twenty-seven pupils who had already passed Standard VI., and of whom sixteen were present at examination.]

—	Enrolled—*i.e.*, Presented in Standard Classes.	Absent.	Average Age in Years and Months on 1st July.	Examined.	Passed.	Failed.	Re-examined in Standard already passed.	Proposed Exceptions.	Percentage of Passes on Number enrolled—*i.e.*, presented.	Percentage of Passes on Number examined.	Percentage of Failures (net).	Number of Schools presenting.
(1.)	(2.)	(3.)	(4.) Yrs. mos.	(5.)	(6.)	(7.)	(8.)	(9.)	(10.)	(11.)	(12.)	(13.)
Standard VI. ...	122	10	13 11	112	92	20	...	3	75·41	82·14	15·59	22
Standard V. ...	207	17	13 4	190	119	71	...	11	57·49	62·63	33·52	33
Standard IV. ...	441	40	12 1	401	244	156	1	14	55·33	60·85	37·11	38
Standard III. ...	606	73	11 3	533	328	198	7	26	54·12	61·54	35·56	43
Standard II. ...	665	69	9 9	596	476	115	5	21	71·58	79·87	17·36	45
Standard I. ...	600	36	8 5	564	495	63	6	16	82·5	87·77	9·67	45
Totals for 1885 ...	2,641	245	*11 5½	2,396	1,754	623	19	91	66·41	73·2	24·03	45
Corresponding totals for 1884	2,518	232	*11 3	2,286	1,670	588	28	[244]	66·32	73	[18·21]	41

*Mean.

Tables B and C represent an attempt to show the comparative weakness and strength of subjects. The former gives a total of 389 classes of special merit, and the latter a total of 303 of the opposite character—a percentage of 28·7 and 22·33 respectively. All other classes may be treated as moderately, fairly, or very fairly satisfactory. The general result has been unfavourably influenced by the exceptional number of changes of teachers during the year.

TABLE B.—Number of Classes in which the Answering was considerably above the Ordinary Standard, being reported as good, very good, or excellent.

—	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Arithmetic.	Geography.	Grammar.	History.	Total.	Possible Total.
Standard VI.	6	8	10	5	4	10	8	51	154
Standard V.	6	7	10	2	4	2	8	39	231
Standard IV.	8	8	10	4	7	6	7	50	266
Standard III.	6	9	10	9	16	13	8	71	301
Standard II.	12	28	16	23	18	...	...	97	225
Standard I.	13	24	19	25	...	...	...	81	180
Total ...	51	84	75	68	49	31	31	389	1,357
Possible total	226	226	226	226	181	136	136	1,357	...

TABLE C.—Number of Classes in which the Answering failed to reach an Ordinary Limit, being reported as weak, very weak, poor, or bad.

—	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Arithmetic.	Geography.	Grammar.	History.	Total.	Possible Total.
Standard VI.	2	3	2	7	5	5	3	27	154
Standard V.	5	10	9	11	16	12	5	68	231
Standard IV.	5	15	8	16	14	11	9	78	266
Standard III.	4	20	7	7	9	8	9	64	301
Standard II.	4	8	11	3	12	...	...	38	225
Standard I.	8	8	3	9	...	...	...	28	180
Total ...	28	64	40	53	56	36	26	303	1,357
Possible total	226	226	226	226	181	136	136	1,357	...

Pass Subjects.—Reading.—I believe I am justified in reporting some improvement in this subject. A large proportion of teachers have shown an increased interest in it. Classes exhibiting distinct and correct enunciation, due attention to pauses, and some expression, are by no means rare; and one or two additions have been made to the number of cases of special commendation. There is still, however, some tendency to intrust "the hearing of the reading," as it may be aptly termed

under such circumstances, to a junior teacher, or even to a senior pupil; and I generally find little or no improvement in the matter of intelligence. Some vague general idea of the sense of a passage may generally be presumed; but attempts to obtain evidence of accurate apprehension of the meanings of selected words or phrases too frequently meet with mortifying discomfiture. For this result the reading books of Standards V. and VI., especially the latter, are not entirely blameless.

Spelling is intimately connected with the reading, and, with the proper use of transcription and dictation, may be expected to improve with it. The expectation of perfect familiarity with the words of the reading books has been most frequently disappointed in Standard III. In the higher classes attention to suitable punctuation in the dictation exercise ought to be much more general.

Writing.—The Caxton copy-books and those of Mr. Vere Foster continue to be almost exclusively used. Many teachers show a decided preference for the former; but the latter are coming into more general use on account of their greater suitability to the requirements in the lower classes. I must confess, for my own part, that I am fully satisfied with neither, and I should gladly welcome a new series specially adapted to the New Zealand code, and exhibiting the merits of both. Those of Messrs. Marcus Ward and Co., based on the principles laid down by Mr. Vere Foster, seem to be the most suitable of all the existing series that have come under my notice. The writing of Standard II. continues to be the least satisfactory, and with the object of removing this weakness several teachers are, with my approval, introducing the use of the pen in Standard I. In a large proportion of the schools the examination papers are well and neatly written, and great care is taken with the copy-books; but in many I have still to lament the want of sufficient evidence of supervision in the writing lessons, and in a very few I have had to comment severely either on the careless introduction of a variety of styles or on the unformed scribble accompanying the use of advanced copy-books in junior classes.

Arithmetic.—In this subject I wish again to press upon teachers the importance of mental exercises in every class, with the object partly of improving the written work by securing greater facility in small calculations and partly of giving a clearer insight into the reasons for processes and of enabling children to grasp readily the real conditions of a problem. In the former aspect the practice is most urgently required in connection with the making out of bills of accounts in Standard IV., which are rarely found correct; in the latter—the more important educational aspect—it can scarcely fail to prove of great value in the preparation for those tests of the power of applying arithmetical rules to practical uses which will hereafter be invariably applied. Such tests in the series of examinations just concluded have revealed no improvement on the work of the previous year.

Grammar and Composition.—For the purpose of enforcing the early introduction of, and greater practice in, the analysis of sentences, recommended in my last report, I have this year given simple sentences of less obvious construction for analysis in Standard V. While disaster has thus been the result of any unsoundness in the teaching, I am pleased to be able to record some steps of advance. In parsing, the fault most frequently found is an attempt to do too much. The full parsing of a higher standard is not unusual in Standard IV.—full of errors. If there is any time to spare after securing the minimum knowledge of inflection in this standard, it will be more profitably spent in improving the composition and insuring greater certainty in the recognition of functions of words, than in entering upon the accidence of the verb, a special feature of Standard V. Composition still leaves much to be desired.

Geography shows very great improvement in Standard II. A more liberal interpretation of the requirements prevails, and cases of mere rote knowledge are very rare. Maps are, I think, more freely used throughout the classes, and the map drawing is often of considerable merit. Shortcomings are, however, frequent in Standards IV. and V. and the knowledge generally of physical geography is very rudimentary.

History continues to be very fairly taught. I have been particularly pleased in Standard III. to find in a few cases the dry bones of events and periods endowed with the life of personal associations and interesting details. A tendency observable in some of the smaller schools to produce in this class merely an elementary form of the special knowledge required in Standard IV. cannot be approved.

Other Subjects.—In the earlier part of the year a circular issued with the Board's approval required teachers in every school to devote some attention to repetition of poetry, drill, and disciplinary exercises, and to provide a certain specified time for one or more of the subjects—(*a*) drawing, (*b*) vocal music, (*c*) science and object lessons, according to the opportunities which the number of the staff afforded, the last group being expected in all schools with more than one teacher employed. The subsequent issue of the new regulations of the Education Department determined the choice of teachers—where a choice was given—in favour of drawing, and at the time of examination there were few schools in which some drawing had not been done. Too often the work exhibited, besides being of a very elementary character, presented no promising features, and could scarcely be regarded as of any value; but at least a dozen schools showed fair to good freehand, estimated by the measure of the standard requirements; in several, more or less progress had been made with geometrical constructions; two had made a vigorous effort to cope with the difficulties of model drawing; and one produced excellent results in the principles of linear perspective. Object lessons and lessons on science were included in the time-tables of about a score of schools, and in a fair proportion of cases substantial progress had been made; the subjects taken being—(*a*) chemistry or the principles of agriculture, (*b*) physics, (*c*) physiology, and in one case (*d*) a little botany. Of these subjects agriculture and physiology show signs of becoming the most popular, the former from its practical importance in the country, and the latter, doubtless, from the great assistance to be obtained from diagrams. A list of verses for repetition is in all cases provided at examination, and I have noticed with pleasure the extension of an ambition to make the term "recitation" more appropriate. Drill is not quite so general, and, from the discouragement

of insufficient numbers, is often merely nominal. In the larger schools, where its influence on the order and discipline is of more importance, it is almost invariably good. Singing is taught in nearly half the schools, and generally consists of the practice of a few songs with or without modulator exercises. The teachers of sewing deserve great credit for their general success. The quality of the work is quite as high as last year, a greater variety of operations is exemplified, and a close approximation to a perfect fulfilment of the instructions is no longer a rarity.

Registers.—Great improvement has taken place during the year in the keeping of the registers of admission, progress, and withdrawal. These important records are, with few exceptions, found fully and carefully posted up with all the necessary entries, and reasonable efforts to obtain accurate information of the dates of birth are general. There has been no reason to doubt that the registers of daily attendance are kept with scrupulous fidelity; but my visits revealed more than an occasional carelessness in respect of the times of marking, the insertion of marks for absence, and, in especial, the immediate entry of the totals.

Appliances.—Numerous useful additions to the good supply of maps already existing have been made, and most of the schools are now provided with a good globe. Diagrams of physiology and physics, and illustrations of natural history, are in course of distribution; but the cost will scarcely permit of the Board's supplying all schools with similar aids to instruction. Other desirable things, for the supply of which our teachers must live in hope, are suitable drawing models, illustrations of manufacturing processes for Standards II. and III., specimens of minerals and other substances, and scientific sets. It would be a great boon if a small grant from the public funds were made by way of subsidising local effort in providing such adjuncts, and, I may be permitted to add, in establishing school libraries for the use of teachers and children. The fair success of the Board's practice in providing half the cost of gymnastic apparatus, and the readiness with which considerable sums of money are raised locally for the purchase of books as school prizes, ought to afford sufficient encouragement for the application of the principle to the purposes indicated.

Appendices I. and II. attached to this report give the classification and examination results of each school. Appendix III. deals with the secondary subjects in the District High Schools of Waimate and Temuka. [Appendices are not reprinted.]

I have, &c.,

W. J. Anderson, M.A., LL.D., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury.

GREY.

Sir,— Timaru, 24th March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit a general report on the examination of the schools in the Education District of Grey for the year 1885.

The examinations were personally conducted by Mr. E. T. Robinson, your Secretary and Inspector, who judged the work of the lower classes (Standards I. and II., and for the greater part the grammar of Standard III.), made notes on the subjects not necessary for a standard pass, and forwarded for my judgment the papers worked by the higher classes in answer to printed questions previously furnished. Seventeen schools were examined in detail. In these there were on the rolls at the date of examination 1,383 children—680 boys and 703 girls—of whom fourteen, or 1·01 per cent., had already passed through the standard course; 872, or 63·05 per cent., were within the standard classification; and 497, or 35·93 per cent., were grouped in the infant division. Those who had already passed Standard VI. were examined in the work of that standard; the infants were examined briefly in classes. Of the 872 enrolled in standard classes, 828, or nearly 95 per cent., were present; 775 were examined for promotion, and fifty-three in a standard already passed. The number promoted to a higher standard was 579, which shows a percentage of promotions of (*a*) 41·87 on the roll number of the schools examined, a percentage of (*b*) 66·4 on the roll number of the standard classes (excluding Ex. VI.), a percentage of (*c*) 69·93 on the number present in standard classes (excluding Ex. VI.), and a percentage of (*d*) 74·71 on the number examined for promotion—that is, excluding pupils re-presented in the same standard. I am unaware whether these figures will be deemed satisfactory when placed alongside the results of previous years or of other districts; but it is to be observed that, in contradistinction to the practice in some cases prior to June, 1884, no children have been withheld from presentation or excluded from this calculation on the ground of insufficient attendance or for any other reason. In the South Canterbury District, where the same examination papers were used and the same standard applied in the higher classes, the corresponding percentages are (*a*) 42·19, (*b*) 66·41, (*c*) 73·2, and (*d*) 73·83.

By the new regulations dealing with "Inspection of Schools and Standards of Education," which came into force on the 1st January, 1886, the term "percentage of passes" there recognised is made to refer to the number on the school roll, and a new term, "percentage of failures," is introduced to express the proportion between the failures and the passes and failures taken together, the failures referred to being the net result obtained by excluding from the calculation those pupils (to be termed "exceptions") who do not pass and have made fewer than half attendances during the three preceding quarters. With the object of preparing the way for the new order of things I have thought it desirable to give both a "percentage of passes" and a "percentage of failures" according to these definitions for every school, in addition to a percentage of passes on the number examined in standards. The "percentage of failures" for the district is 28·69, as against 24·03 in the South Canterbury District, and the total number of children excluded in making this calculation, and termed by me "proposed exceptions," is only sixteen. In this connection I should explain that, as the regulation of June, 1884, enabling a teacher to re-present children in a standard already passed, is not included in the new scheme, and as no teacher would re-present children who had any chance of passing a higher standard, the net failures on which the "percentage of failures"

is based must for this year be ascertained by adding the number re-presented to the total failures before subtracting the exceptions proposed. Schoolmasters will, no doubt, appreciate the principle of exclusion, by which it is sought to remove from their shoulders the burden of responsibility for the failures of bad attendants; but I think most of them will agree with me that the rule applied is scarcely comprehensive enough to afford adequate relief. Any effort that may be made to induce the authorities to adopt a more generous definition of the term "exceptions" will have my fullest sympathy.

The following table (Table A) shows the general result of the examination in each standard. More detailed information in regard to the separate schools is contained in the Appendices I. and II., added to this report. [Appendices not reprinted].

TABLE A.—General Result.

[N.B.—In this table no account is taken of fourteen pupils who had already passed Standard VI., and of whom thirteen were present at examination.]

—	Enrolled—*i.e.*, presented in Standard Classes.	Absent.	Average Age in Years and Months on the 1st July.	Examined.	Passed.	Failed.	Re-examined in Standard already passed.	Proposed Exceptions.	Percentage of Passes on Number enrolled—*i.e.*, presented.	Percentage of Passes on Number examined.	Percentage of Failures (net).	Number of Schools presenting.
(1.)	(2.)	(3.)	(4.) Yrs. mos.	(5.)	(6.)	(7.)	(8.)	(9.)	(10.)	(11.)	(12.)	(13.)
Standard VI. ...	43	1	14 0	42	26	16	...	1	60·5	61·9	36·6	8
Standard V. ...	97	4	13 3	93	52	39	2	2	53·6	55·9	42·8	15
Standard IV. ...	143	6	12 3	137	71	63	3	3	49·6	51·8	47	15
Standard III. ...	210	12	11 1	198	124	49	25	2	59·05	62·6	36·8	16
Standard II. ...	195	13	9 10	182	145	22	15	6	74·4	79·7	17·6	14
Standard I. ...	184	8	8 5	176	161	7	8	2	87·5	91·5	7·5	17
Totals ...	872	44	11 5⅔	828	579	196	53	16	66·4	69·93	28·7	17

By Tables B and C I have endeavoured to convey some idea of the comparative strength and weakness of classes and subjects, by showing, first, the number of classes in which the answering was highly creditable, and, secondly, the number of those in which it fell more or less below a satisfactory limit.

TABLE B.—Number of Classes in which the Answering rose considerably above the Ordinary Standards, being reported as good, very good, or excellent.

—	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Arithmetic.	Geography	Grammar.	History.	Total.	Possible Total.
Standard VI. ...	1	5	2	3	1	2	2	16	56
Standard V. ...	3	3	3	1	3	3	4	20	105
Standard IV. ...	4	2	3	4	5	5	2	25	105
Standard III....	5	5	5	8	5	10	1	39	112
Standard II. ...	6	12	7	6	11	...	...	42	70
Standard I. ...	10	16	14	11	...	...	...	51	68
Total ...	29	43	34	33	25	20	9	193	516
Possible total...	85	85	85	85	68	54	54	516	...

TABLE C.—Number of Classes in which the Answering fell more or less below a Satisfactory Limit, being reported as defective, weak, poor, or very weak, and including Cases in which no Papers were presented in History.

—	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Arithmetic.	Geography	Grammar.	History.	Total.	Possible Total.
Standard VI. ...	0	0	0	2	5	2	2	11	56
Standard V. ...	0	6	1	8	9	9	6	39	105
Standard IV. ...	2	4	4	2	4	3	10	29	105
Standard III....	1	3	3	4	7	1	10	29	112
Standard II. ...	0	0	3	3	1	...	...	7	70
Standard I. ...	0	0	0	0	...	...	...	0	68
Total ...	3	13	11	19	26	15	28	115	516
Possible total...	85	85	85	85	68	54	54	516	...

Table B gives a general result of 193, and Table C of 115 classes, out of a possible 516, or percentages 37·4 and 22·3 of conspicuous merit and defect respectively.

As the estimates are formed, not on the labour and skill expended, but on the proficiency of the children in the course laid down, it is not surprising that Standards I. and II., with their comparatively narrow requirements, should, in these tables, occupy the most favourable position; but,

in pointing this out, I have no wish to detract from the credit which, I am convinced from the schedules, must be generally due to the teachers of these classes. In the higher classes the subject of spelling and dictation is above the average of my experience. In writing, if there are few cases of very high merit, there are few in which the results do not reach a fair standard. Arithmetic shows gratifying results in Standard III., and, on the whole, impresses me as being well taught in the district. The record of Standard V. forms a conspicuous exception. The weakness in this class is common to several subjects, and, while I must set down a large proportion of the defects to unsound teaching, I am willing to accept in partial explanation some difference of interpretation of the requirements. In geography generally, much improvement is to be desired in map drawing, which rarely rises above the level of mediocrity, and in a knowledge of the historical or commercial importance of places of some note. The most pleasing feature of the grammar is the general attention paid to composition, and the success with which, in many cases, this branch of the subject has been taught. History appears to be entirely omitted in some schools, and this, on the whole, is the least satisfactory subject, being frequently confined in Standard III. to a knowledge of the periods or the names of the sovereigns, to the exclusion of leading events or features, and in the higher standards being frequently deficient in fulness of detail.

It surprises me that in the larger schools there is not more evidence of an attempt to satisfy the demands of the Government syllabus in respect of the subjects not necessary for a standard pass. Whatever may be said in the case of schools with a single teacher of the possibility of doing much more than prepare for the exactions of Inspectors in the pass course, schools enjoying to a greater or less extent the economies attending the division of labour are surely expected to devote considerable attention to other subjects in proportion to their opportunities. I sincerely hope that the entire absence among the notes forwarded of any remark on drawing does not imply that the subject has been entirely neglected, and that the higher object lessons, to which the term "elementary science" would be applicable, are included in the instruction given by more than one or, perhaps, two schools. Object lessons are, however, given in more than half the number, and repetition of poetry is not only almost universal, but almost universally reported to be good. A knowledge of the subject-matter of the reading lessons, too, is generally professed, and generally reported as of fair quality.

I have, &c.,

W. J. Anderson, M.A., LL.D., Inspector.

The Chairman and Commissioners, Education District of Grey.

WESTLAND.

Sir,— Hokitika, 20th February, 1886.

I have the honour, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, to present my eleventh annual report on the state of elementary education in the District of Westland.

The number of schools in the County of Westland at the end of the year 1884 was nineteen, since which time three small schools have been opened—one at Bruce Bay, one at Okuru, near Jackson's Bay, and one on the Christchurch Road. This last consists of a group of three families under the care of an itinerant teacher.

All the schools north of the Mikonui River have been visited for general inspection, and at most of them a day was devoted to this work; but the pressure of business consequent upon the inauguration of the new order of things brought about by the operation of the Westland Education District Subdivision Act absorbed so much of my time that I was unable to visit the remote schools in the southern portion of the district at the beginning of the year. I had, however, arranged to do so at a later date, intending to go down by the steamer "Napier;" but, after waiting her arrival day by day for nearly two months, I was compelled by the near approach of the date fixed for the examinations to abandon the trip; and, lastly, when just about to start for the South some months later, the unfortunate destruction of the Hokitika school by fire threw so much extra work upon my hands that I was again reluctantly compelled to postpone once more my visit to the South; consequently these schools have not been examined during the year 1885. This is much to be regretted, as it is now more than two years since the school at Jackson's Bay was visited; and the two new schools at Okuru and Bruce Bay greatly need a visit from the Inspector in order that the teachers may receive some assistance in the classification of their scholars, and some advice as to organization and general management.

As before stated, there are now twenty-two schools in the Westland District as constituted under the Act above named, and up to this date fifteen of these have been examined for results. As in past years, I commenced the examination at Donoghue's, and concluded it at Kumara, taking the intervening schools as nearly as possible in their topographical order.

The total number of scholars on the rolls in this district was 1,914 at the end of the September quarter; but, leaving out the unexamined schools, the united roll numbers of the others amounted to 1,810. Of these, 999 were examined in standards (exclusive of those who were examined a second time in the same standard), and of this number 859, or 86 per cent., passed.

The following table (A) gives a summary of the results, which are more fully displayed in Table B [not printed].

Table A.

—	Examined.	Passed.	Percentage.	Percentage in 1884.
Standard I.	194	190	98	95
Standard II.	223	191	86	84
Standard III.	248	192	77	73
Standard IV.	164	140	85	75
Standard V.	102	89	87	77
Standard VI.	68	57	84	80
Totals	999	859	86	82

In the foregoing all scholars who, under the new regulations, will next year be classed as "excepted" have been omitted. It will be seen, by comparing the results with those for 1884, given in the last column of Table A, that there is a general improvement in all the standards, represented by an increase in the number of passes ranging from 3 per cent. in the First and Sixth to 10 per cent. in the Fourth Standard. This, on the whole, may be considered as very satisfactory; but it is to be regretted that the largest school in the district does not occupy a more creditable position on the list. The low percentage of passes recorded at this school is chiefly due to what may be fairly called a break-down in the Third Standard, where, out of seventy-six examined, only forty-nine passed. The failures in the Second and Fourth Standards also were more numerous proportionately than in the same standards at most of the Board's schools. With regard to the Third Standard the inferior results cannot be a matter of astonishment when it is known that this class, which at one period of the year numbered as many as seventy children, has been under the charge of a female pupil-teacher of the second class, and, for the greater part of the year, unassisted.

The real cause of the comparatively low position occupied by the Hokitika School on the table of results, both this year and last, is, in my opinion, to be found in the unequal distribution of the teaching power of the staff. The whole time of the head-teacher and the first assistant is devoted to the Fifth and Sixth Standards; the other certificated assistant is placed, very properly, in charge of the infant department, leaving all the rest of the school to be taught by two junior assistants and the pupil-teachers. In a school having 470 children on the roll it is somewhat strange that fifty-eight of that number should engross the whole time of the two principal teachers. In several schools in this district the three higher standards are taught by the head-teacher, unassisted; and it is not too much to expect that one teacher, with a pupil-teacher, should suffice for the Fifth and Sixth at the Hokitika School. I am quite aware that the Sixth and Upper Sixth—the latter numbering fifteen—have derived very great benefit from the nature of the instruction received at the hands of the head-teacher, which embraces much of a very valuable kind which cannot be made to appear on a bare table of results. The length of time—in some cases as much as two years—which scholars are allowed to spend in this division of the school after passing the Sixth Standard is a sufficient proof of the estimation in which Mr. Dixon is justly held as a teacher; but it certainly appears to me that the principle of working for "the greatest good of the greatest number" demands that the advantages derivable from his admittedly excellent teaching powers should be to some extent shared in by more than one-fourteenth of the scholars attending the school. Moreover, an adherence to the present system must tend to perpetuate a state of things of which the head-teacher has on more than one occasion complained—namely, the backward condition of scholars admitted to the Fifth and Sixth Standards. In reference to this complaint I have suggested to him that a redistribution of the staff would probably remove the difficulty complained of; but hitherto, as far as I know, this has not been attempted. I believe that one obstacle to the alteration has been the want of a room sufficiently large to contain both the Fifth and Sixth Classes.

The average ages of the scholars examined in the several standards are given below: Standard I., eight years six months; Standard II., ten years three months; Standard III., eleven years seven months; Standard IV., twelve years two months; Standard V., thirteen years one month; Standard VI., thirteen years nine months.

Table C shows, with respect to each school—first, the number examined, omitting those who had passed the same standard before and those who are "excepted;" second, the number who passed; third, the number who failed; fourth, the exceptions; fifth, those who had passed before; sixth, the absentees; seventh, those below Standard I.; and, eighth, the roll number. The number below Standard I. is 645, or 35·6 per cent. of the whole, being an increase of nearly 3½ per cent. upon last year.

TABLE C.

Schools.	Number examined in Standards.	Passed.	Failed.	Excepted.	Passed same Standard before.	Absent on Day of Examination	Below Standard I.	Number on Rolls, 1st Nov., 1885.
	(1.)	(2.)	(3.)	(4.)	(5.)	(6.)	(7.)	(8.)
Kumara	153	146	7	...	7	38	132	330
Rangiriri	14	8	6	...	...	...	7	21
Goldsborough ...	66	57	9	...	4	8	53	131
Stafford	86	74	12	1	8	8	19	122
Arahura Road ...	31	26	5	...	3	1	19	54
Hokitika	255	200	55	7	15	19	173	469
Kanieri	54	51	3	...	3	16	29	102
Bluespur	37	28	9	...	...	...	9	46
Upper Arahura ...	18	16	2	...	...	2	19	39
Woodstock ...	55	50	5	...	...	3	42	100
Lower Kokatahi ...	13	11	2	...	...	3	10	26
Upper Kokatahi ...	23	14	9	...	...	3	10	36
Ross	148	138	10	3	5	6	90	252
Donoghue's ...	37	34	3	2	...	1	28	68
South Spit ...	9	6	3	...	...	...	5	14
Totals... ...	999	859	140	13	45	108	645	1,810

As I have pointed out in former reports, a low percentage of passes in one year is almost certain to be followed by an apparently high percentage in the next, as all the children failing at

one examination may be, and usually are, retained in the same standard during the following year, and consequently have two years in which to accomplish the work of one. In the first column of Table D, the results of the examination in 1884 are placed opposite those for 1885, in order to facilitate comparison.

TABLE D.

Schools.	Percentage of Number Examined who Passed.	
	1884.	1885.
Kumara	99	95
Rangiriri	Not examin'd	57
Goldsborough	90	86
Stafford	87	86
Arahura Road	97	84
Hokitika	82	78
Kanieri	48	94
Bluespur	74	76
Upper Arahura	71	89
Woodstock	82	89
Lower Kokatahi	36	85
Upper Kokatahi	40	61
Ross	81	93
Donoghue's	100	92
South Spit	20	67

The passes obtained throughout the district on the several standard subjects are given below, where all who gained 50 per cent. of the marks assigned to a subject are recorded as passing.

Subjects.	Examined.	Passed.	Percentage.
Reading	999	924	92
Spelling and dictation	999	930	93
Writing	999	968	96
Arithmetic...	999	667	67
Geography	805	504	63
Grammar	583	420	72
History	519	251	48

I have compiled a table giving the same information in the case of each school examined; but, seeing that this report is already overloaded with figures, I have not introduced it here, but each teacher can obtain the information for himself, or upon application to me. It will be observed that, with the exception of the first three subjects, grammar shows the best results, whilst history is by far the worst. This last is, no doubt, partly due to the facts—first, that in the Third Standard history has never been made a "failing" subject in this district; and, second, that it is an optional subject in all the standards. In some schools—*e.g.*, Stafford, Goldsborough, and Donoghue's—most of the scholars avail themselves of the clause in the Act which allows them to refuse this subject; and wherever this is the case it is always very weakly handled by those who do take it up—so much so that when a large majority of the scholars are exempted from the learning of history I think it would be better to omit it altogether, and devote the time thus saved to some other subject, such as elementary science.

The children below Standard I. were all examined as usual; and in the schools having two or more teachers this department is generally fairly well taught and trained, whilst at some of the larger schools little is to be desired in the way of improvement, unless it is possible to assimilate the methods of teaching, as nearly as circumstances will permit, to the Kindergarten system, by the introduction of lessons on form, colour, &c., and of some of the simpler apparatus required under that system. As might be expected, it is at the small schools having only one teacher that the infant or preparatory classes are less systematically and successfully trained. Elementary science was attempted at the schools, and with the results, given below:—

Schools.	Standard V.		Standard VI.		Upper VI.	
	Number Examined.	Average Percentage of Marks.	Number Examined.	Average Percentage of Marks.	Number Examined.	Average Percentage of Marks.
Hokitika	24	49	18	56	12	71
Ross	...	...	13	23	2	50
Kumara	15	61	9	77	...	...
Stafford	15	12	8	52	6	48·5
Kanieri	8	44	1	66	...	...

The highest marks obtained by any one scholar at each of these schools were:—Hokitika—Upper VI., 100; VI., 93; V., 95: Ross—VI., 75: Kumara—V., 90; VI., 91: Stafford—V., 48; VI., 68; Upper VI., 80: Kanieri—V., 71. The maximum was 100 in all cases. The text-books used were—Hokitika, Balfour Stewart's "Physics Primer;" Kumara, the same; Ross, Huxley's "Introductory Primer;" Stafford, Standard V. Huxley's "Introductory Primer," Standard VI. Roscoe's "Chemistry;" Kanieri, Foster's "Physiology Primer." Many of the papers written by the scholars in the VI. and Upper VI. at Hokitika and the VI. at Kumara were really excellent, and showed a thorough comprehension of the subject.

Object Lessons appear on the time-tables at nearly all the Board's schools, but in only a few of them do they, in my opinion, answer the purpose for which they are prescribed by the Department. I generally found that two or three of the brightest scholars were able to describe with tolerable accuracy the different plants, animals, manufactures, &c., which had formed the subjects of these lessons; but the majority seemed to have derived little educational advantage in proportion to the time devoted to this part of the syllabus. The most satisfactory results were obtained in the First and Second Standards at the Kumara School.

Writing exhibits considerable improvement this year in all the standards as compared with last year, and at some schools that of the primer and first classes is really remarkably good, and quite equal to the Second Standard writing at others. This is particularly noticeable at Kumara, Stafford, Arahura Road, Upper Arahura, and Ross.

Singing has not gained ground in the district. Some improvement has been effected in this subject at Ross (where, indeed, it was much needed), although only half an hour per week is allotted to it; but here, as at nearly all the schools where it has been attempted, the boys are nearly silent. Kumara is the only school where the results are, in my opinion, satisfactory, the boys being exceptions to the rule as stated above, as at my request they sang without the girls, and with very fair effect. The teacher of this school has asked to be supplied with a more extended modulator, and I recommend the Board to procure a few for the use of the principal schools in the district.

Drawing is taught at a few schools—*e.g.*, Kumara, Ross, Kanieri, Arahura Road. It has never been attempted at the Hokitika School; but, as it has been made a "pass" subject, it must form a part of the First Standard work during the current year. I saw some really good specimens at Kumara, some of the freehand drawings being far more difficult and elaborate than the copies given for the teachers' examination. Now that the teaching of drawing is to be made compulsory, every facility should be afforded to promote its successful treatment; and I therefore repeat a suggestion made in a former report, that sets of copies, and especially solid models, should be supplied. I think it is also desirable that drawing pencils should be placed on the list of school requisites provided by the Board. This would insure the supply of a uniformly good article at all schools alike.

Recitation, which is hereafter to be classed as an "extra" subject, will require more attention at some schools than it at present receives, if any marks are expected for it. At present it is entirely omitted at a few of the smaller schools. At Kanieri, where it had been a weak subject for years, a very satisfactory improvement has lately been effected.

Sewing is taught fairly well at all schools having female assistants. At Stafford it is very good, as it is also at Kumara, with the exception of the stitching of the Third Standard and the buttonholes of the Fourth. At Hokitika it is quite as good as can reasonably be expected, considering the very little time that is bestowed upon it. Two half-hours a week, with so many scholars, and a subject which requires so much individual attention, scarcely affords time for the most meagre instruction. Under these circumstances the needlework of the three lower standards was remarkably good. The scanty time allowed for needlework may be partly due to the fact that the Hokitika School is open two and a half hours per week less than the time fixed by the Board's regulations, and actually employed at most of the Board's schools.

Discipline, which was not satisfactory at some schools last year, I found considerably improved, notably at Kanieri. At those schools where it has always been good the effect is manifest at the examination, for in these I have no trouble in keeping order in the absence of the teacher. A good tone is invariably characteristic of schools where the discipline is uniformly wise and firm; and the absence of the slightest appearance of any desire on the part of the scholars to copy from or to communicate with one another is a pleasing feature in such cases. But there is one school, Goldsborough, where the reverse of this is the case, and, although I was unable to detect any individual instance, certain suspicious circumstances convinced me that copying was by no means uncommon; and the remarkable similarity of some of the paper-work left me no room to doubt that my suspicions were well founded. The results, however, on the whole, did not appear to be much affected by these manœuvres, as in most instances the copyists had outwitted themselves, and had copied chiefly incorrect answers. It will tax the teachers' powers to the utmost to eradicate this objectionable habit before the next examination. Intimately connected with the subject of discipline is the matter of supervision in the playground, and I am obliged to say that in scarcely any school is this important part of a teacher's duty properly performed. This is work which should not be left in the hands of a caretaker—it should be regarded as essential to the acquisition of such an insight into the real characters and dispositions of his scholars as the teacher can never obtain in the schoolroom alone, and which might at times furnish a valuable key to the proper method of dealing with some apparently intractable characters; it is, moreover, absolutely necessary (especially in mixed schools) to prevent abuses of all kinds in the playground. Under the new code this is a topic upon which Inspectors are directed specially to report; and, unless considerable improvement be brought about, such report will not be very satisfactory.

Attendance.—The irregularity of attendance which has so often been deplored in my former reports cannot be generally pleaded in extenuation of any shortcomings that may be observed in this year's results. The exceptionally fine weather which prevailed during the latter half of the year had the effect of keeping up a good attendance. The past year, moreover, has been singularly

free from any local or general epidemic, such as has so frequently been made accountable for irregular attendance. The practice of closing a school upon the slightest indication of any infectious disease in the neighbourhood seems to me to be very undesirable on many accounts, and would certainly be unnecessary if parents would have more regard for the public safety than for their own convenience, and would keep all their children from school when any member of the family appeared to be suffering from an infectious disease. As a rule, the sanitary conditions of the public schools and offices are, to say the least, quite equal to those of any of the children's homes, and, perhaps, superior to most; and there would probably be far less risk if the children of healthy families continued their attendance at school, instead of idling their time away at home, or, possibly, running from house to house and mixing up with children from infected families. At one period of the year the Kumara School was kept open during the prevalence of an infectious disease, and no evil consequences resulted; but the average attendance was reduced considerably during the time the epidemic prevailed, and probably the results of the examination were thereby affected, since it will be observed that they are slightly lower than last year. There is little doubt that Committees, in closing schools under the circumstances referred to, are actuated as much by the fear of a great falling-off in the average attendance as by any real apprehensions of danger; and, as their incomes are affected by the fluctuations in the attendance, it would be unreasonable to expect teachers to offer any great objection to the course usually followed.

Furniture and Buildings.—The furniture generally is in a fair state of preservation. In some schools the teachers take a laudable pride in preserving the desks, &c., clean and uninjured: this is particularly noticeable at Bluespur and Arahura Road; but the desks used by the Fifth and Sixth Standards at the Hokitika School are a standing disgrace to all concerned. They are carved and hacked about in a manner which defies description, and show either that the scholars have been very imperfectly overlooked while in school, or, which is equally culpable, that they have been left for long intervals without any supervision whatever. The cupboards or presses provided for the teachers' use are too frequently allowed to remain in a very untidy condition. This may appear to some to be a very trifling matter to allude to in a report of this nature; but those who remember how far more powerful example is than precept will readily perceive how slovenly habits may be unconsciously developed from a constant association with such examples at school. The school buildings throughout the district, which had fallen into a sad state of disrepair, have been mostly put into a decent condition, and now present a very creditable appearance. There are exceptions to this—notably the South Spit School, which is, and long has been, in a very disgraceful state. The school at the Upper Kokatahi is much overcrowded, and additional accommodation will have to be provided, unless the Board should decide to adopt the plan recommended in my original report on that district, and establish one central school in place of the two small ones now existing. The buildings could be removed to some central spot, and a school of between fifty and sixty children would be created, which would enable the Board to offer a salary acceptable to an efficient teacher, as well as to provide a female assistant, whose services would also be available as teacher of needlework.

The destruction of the Hokitika School by fire early in the present year was a great calamity for the town and district; but, if it should result in the erection of a more durable structure, it may ultimately prove a benefit. Whatever material may be employed, I would suggest that, if the same ground plan be adhered to, the eastern wing should be without a partition, so as to enable two classes to be accommodated in the one room, under the charge of one of the chief teachers.

Registers.—The registers are, on the whole, very neatly and carefully kept. Occasionally I find the admission register not posted up to date, or the weekly totals not entered up, as they ought to be, on Friday after school time; but it is long since I discovered any serious error in the keeping of the attendance registers. The quarterly returns are sometimes delayed unnecessarily, and considerable trouble is caused thereby. One teacher neglected to forward the return for December until the end of the Christmas vacation, and, consequently, the "Summary of Attendance Returns" could not be transmitted to Wellington until the end of the following month.

Pupil-teachers.—Seventeen pupil-teachers were examined this year, as heretofore, at the schools wherein they are employed. Of these, six passed into the first class, four of them passing with credit; two into the second class; six into the third class, one with credit; and three into the fourth class, one with credit. A pupil-teacher who gains 75 per cent. and upwards of the possible marks obtainable on the whole examination is said to pass with credit. Notwithstanding the frequent recommendations made by most of the Education Boards, there seems to be some insuperable objection on the part of the Department to its undertaking the examination and classification of pupil-teachers throughout the colony; I will therefore repeat the recommendation I have already made on several occasions—namely, that all the pupil-teachers in the district should be examined at the same time and place, which might be made to coincide with the annual examination of teachers. Of course this would entail some expense to the Board, as it would hardly be fair to put pupil-teachers who reside at a distance from Hokitika to the expense of four or five days' stay in town whilst attending the examination; but, as nearly half of them reside in Hokitika, the expense would not be very great—probably under £30—whilst the advantages are obvious. The employment of stipendiary monitors, which was provisionally sanctioned by the Minister of Education, has so far answered my expectations; and I believe the system, with some slight modifications, might in time be made to supersede the employment of pupil-teachers at all but the four largest schools. There are now eight such monitors employed at four schools, which, judging from the result of the examination, have certainly not suffered by the change; whilst the saving to the Board will amount to £450 in the five years during which most pupil-teachers serve—an average saving of £90 per annum. This estimate includes the cost of instruction and the maximum annual bonuses for passing with credit payable under the present regulations. This saving in a scattered district with so large a proportion of small schools is by no means to be despised, and might be applied to the increase

of some of the lower salaries. The mere saving, however, is by no means the chief recommendation of this system—which must not be confounded with the old "monitorial" system—the chief advantages of which I pointed out in my memorandum to the Minister on the subject, dated the 18th February, 1885. Before quitting this subject I should like to recommend that some encouragement be held out to induce head teachers to continue their assistance to first-class pupil-teachers in prosecuting their studies with a view to passing the examination for Class E. This was provided for formerly under the regulations respecting "junior assistants," which regulations were repealed at the beginning of the year. Seeing that in this district pupil-teachers are entirely dependent upon the head teachers for any help in their studies, I think the Board would do well to restore the clause under which a bonus of £10 was paid to head teachers whose pupil-teachers gained the E certificate within two years from the date of passing their last local examination.

Teaching Staff.—On the whole the Board and the district have good reason to be satisfied with the staff of teachers. They are, without exception, earnest and painstaking in the performance of their duties, whilst some would do credit to the profession in any part of the Empire. I am not aware of a single case in which the general character of the teacher is not exemplary, and as regards teaching ability, allowing in some cases for the absence of any special training for, or of much experience in, the work, there are few who would not give satisfaction in any district; and with respect to these few, it would be unjust and unreasonable to expect high qualifications in return for the bare pittance for which they are performing their duties to the best of their ability.

Future Examinations.—The experience of the past year has shown that it will be necessary, now that the duties of Inspector and Secretary devolve upon one person, to anticipate the usual time for commencing the examinations. The requirements of the new code of regulations respecting the examination of schools will probably cause this work to occupy rather more time than it has hitherto done. I wish therefore to recommend that the result examinations be commenced about two months earlier next year, and for the future. This will enable the Inspector to have his report ready by the end of the year, and will leave the beginning of the next year open for the execution of the work devolving upon the Secretary during the first and busiest quarter of the year, when the Board's report has to be prepared, including the elaborate returns required by the Department, the year's accounts to be audited, and those also of the local Committees. The adoption of this suggestion would necessarily shorten the first year's work at the schools by about two months; but it would affect all schools equally, and the actual time between the two examinations would be recorded with the results. In future years there would be the full interval of twelve months between one examination and the next.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Hokitika. JOHN SMITH, Inspector.

OTAGO.

1.—MR. PETRIE'S REPORT.

SIR,— Education Office, Dunedin, 16th March, 1886.

I beg to submit the following report for the year 1885:—

During the year I paid visits of inspection to sixty-two schools, and examined sixty-six, including some of the largest schools in the district, at ten of which one of the other Inspectors was associated with me. I also examined about half the work done in extra subjects at the five district high schools, on which a special report is submitted.

Results for the Year.—There were presented for examination in the standards 12,161 pupils, of whom 437 were absent on the day of examination. The percentage of absentees was thus 3·6 nearly, which is slightly more than half what it was in 1884, and almost identical with that for 1883. Tables I., II., III., and IV., printed in the report of the Board, show the principal results of the year's work. Seven hundred and sixty-one more pupils were examined than in 1884; and of 11,724 examined 9,005 passed the standard for which they were entered. This gives 77 as the percentage of passes in standards, which is the same as the percentage for 1884. The percentage of passes in the standards taken separately was, as usual, lowest in Standard IV.; but even here it has risen from 51 for last year to 67—a substantial advance, which indicates greatly increased efficiency in the teaching of the classes at this important stage. The same percentage has declined in Standard II., from 85 in 1884 to 80, and in Standard V., from 71 in 1884 to 68; while in Standard VI. it has risen from 79 in 1884 to 83. Except in arithmetic the results in Table II. afford evidence of satisfactory progress. Table III. shows the percentage of passes in subjects in each of the six standards. In Standard II. it has fallen from 86 for last year to 83; but in the other standards the figures compare favourably with those of previous years. The general percentage of passes in subjects is 82, the same as for last year. Table IV. shows the percentage of passes in each subject of each standard. The most noticeable points indicated by this table are a falling-off in the arithmetic results in Standards I., II., III., V., and VI., as compared with last year's figures, a decided improvement in the arithmetic results of Standard IV., and a serious decline in the spelling results of Standard II. On the whole, however, the figures for the present year bear favourable comparison with those of previous years. Of the 172 schools examined twelve gained a gross percentage of 90 to 98, seventy-three of 80 to 90, fifty-four of 70 to 80, twenty-five of 60 to 70, seven of 50 to 60, one below 50. Of schools taught by a single teacher the following had a gross percentage below 60: Eweburn (half-time), 39; Matakanui, 51; Brighton, 52; Heriot, 53; Livingstone, 55; Bald Hill Flat, 56; Kakapuawaka, 58; and Blackstone Hill, 59. Of schools with two or more teachers, the following had a gross percentage below 75: Seacliff, 64; Moa Flat, 66; Pukeuri, 67; Waiareka, 67; Blueskin, 69; Waipori, 71; Kakanui, 72; Naseby, 73; Waikari, 73; Waitahuna Gully, 73; Mosgiel, 74. The teaching in all the schools just mentioned must be

regarded as inefficient. In several cases, however, the inefficiency is to be attributed to teachers who had given up charge of the schools some months before the examination.

Organization and Management.—The organization and management of the great majority of the schools I have visited and examined continue to be satisfactory. It is chiefly in small schools having a large number of classes that serious faults of organization are met with. In these the difficulties to be overcome are certainly formidable. To help to improve matters, time-tables, with suggestions for their working, have been for the past two years supplied to such teachers as required them; and in most cases the teachers report that they have derived considerable benefit from the arrangements recommended. A few have complained that they have found them unworkable; but their exceptional experience may, I think, be attributed in large measure to faults of management and government, and want of resources. In a considerable number of schools marked improvement has been effected in the management and teaching of the infant classes, and I have great pleasure in recording the care and intelligence with which suggestions made by one or other of the Inspectors have been carried into practice by a good many of the mistresses. At the same time, in the smaller schools the work of the youngest pupils is still frequently deficient in variety, and is so arranged as to encourage habits of inattention and trifling. What other result can flow from the practice of setting infants to copy a word or a few figures for an hour or more, as is still done by some teachers? Even in the most intractable of small schools frequent practice of simple extension exercises after a leader, frequent changes of work, and extra intervals for play, might effectually lighten the round of infant lessons. The supervision of the desk work (chiefly writing and figuring) of the lower classes is still unsatisfactory in a considerable number of schools. This need not occupy much time or seriously interrupt the teaching of other work. The slates should always be suitably ruled; but this is not always attended to. In small schools monitors might very well assist in giving the needful desk supervision without interrupting their own work for more than two or three minutes at a time. There is much reason to complain of the training in methods of a good many of the pupil-teachers. In the larger schools especially, where the head masters do little or no regular teaching, they might fairly be expected to train up their apprentices in intelligent inductive methods. I greatly regret that their exertions in this direction have not been more uniformly successful. If the training of the pupil-teachers is weak and disappointing, the government and management of their classes are in most cases creditable.

Instruction.—Reading is, in general, very fairly taught, though, as in past years, fewer schools produce good reading than one would expect. As a rule, throughout the schools of this district too little is read in the course of the year, and too little practice in reading is given in the lessons as ordinarily conducted. In a considerable number of cases even a single reader is not gone through in twelve months. This is, I take it, a great mistake; and it is probably caused by the Inspectors using the books read by the pupils in examining the classes in this subject. If a book strange to the pupils were used to test their proficiency, I am sure that teachers would at once see the necessity for a greater quantity of reading to gain fluency and a wide vocabulary, and very careful reading of selected and often repeated lessons to gain distinctness, expression, and elocutionary graces. In the larger schools, at any rate, I think two reading books should be read through every year, and both should be submitted for examination purposes. One of the books might be simple in style and adapted for rapid cursory reading; the other should be fairly difficult, and should be treated in a more careful and thorough manner. The quantity of reading here advocated would not merely lead to greater fluency; it would also make the lessons more interesting to the pupils and stimulate their intelligence. For some years the satisfactory explanation of one word or phrase out of two, or of two out of four, has been required as part of the pass in reading. This is done to encourage study of the language and meaning of the lessons, and the margin for error that is allowed, it will be seen, is very liberal. Many teachers think it necessary to meet this reasonable requirement by a minute examination of the language of every lesson. Practically they aim at working the meaning of every word or phrase of any difficulty in all the lessons read into the minds of the pupils, and they devote so much time to this that too little is left for sufficient quantity and practice of reading. Now, seeing that so large a margin for error is allowed in the explanation test, such exhaustive treatment of the subject is quite unnecessary. I believe the intelligent training of the pupils and the requirements of the test applied would be best met by the discussion and teaching on a good method of a few selected phrases or passages in each lesson, with a more detailed treatment of a few specially suitable lessons. The method of handling the explanation of difficult words, phrases, and passages is the chief point for teachers to consider. If the method is inductive, if the explanation is elicited, and built up on the knowledge already gained, the consideration of a comparatively small number of examples will secure an intelligent training in explanation, and develop the power of dealing in like manner with passages never before seen or considered. To a teacher who says he cannot in a year get his classes over the whole of the reader used, I would give this advice: See that the reading lessons of your lower classes are thoroughly done; be careful not to advance your classes into books too difficult for them; from Standard III. upwards give as much time to practice in reading as you can (if necessary, combining classes), and let half your lessons be easy cursory reading, with little examination of language or questioning on the subject-matter; so long as the books read are within the capacity of your pupils, depend on it extent of reading will help and further the understanding of the language, and not hinder it; do not spend too much time on explanation of language, but trust to a skilful handling of representative passages and selected lessons to develop the power of dealing with similar ones. I humbly think that with due regard to these principles reading and explanation could be more effectively taught than is usually the case, and that spelling and composition would also benefit greatly. So convinced am I of the inexpediency of restricting the extent of reading to one book or a part of a book for each year, that I would gladly see the Board make it compulsory for all the standard classes to read through two suitable readers each year, as is now done in only one or two schools, so far as I know. In

the 1885 Education Code (England) I observe that "two sets of reading books must be provided for Standards I. and II., and three, one of which should relate to English history, for each standard above the second." It is much to be regretted that a similar provision has not been made by the Minister of Education in our own colony.

Spelling continues to be successfully taught. The lower results in Standard II. are partly due to the words set being taken from other books than those read. This was done by me in many cases, and my object was to encourage greater regard to principles and the characteristic sounds of groups of letters in the treatment of the subject, which has hitherto been unnecessarily mechanical. Of course, nothing in any way beyond the standard was prescribed, and, indeed, with the large margin for error here allowed, the results should not have been seriously affected. Transcription was in most cases careful and accurate, and in many beautifully done. In the larger schools the teaching of spelling always appears to me to occupy too much time. What is there to prevent one half the class from writing out the words and sentences dictated by a pupil, while the other half is having practice in reading or other suitable teaching? This sort of thing is constantly done in the smaller schools without any impairment of the quality of the work. The time thus saved to the teachers would allow of more extended reading, a point which has been sufficiently insisted on above. Good order and management are presupposed, but on the average these can surely be counted on.

Writing in copy-books is, as a rule, satisfactory, and in many cases good. In a very considerable number of schools the exercise-books show careful and even beautiful writing and ciphering, but in fully half of the whole number the difference between the writing in the copy-books and that in the exercise-books is most pronounced and disappointing. In all such cases the teachers show a lamentable want of practical influence over their pupils.

In *Arithmetic* the percentage of passes, as shown in Table II., is 65, as against 71, 67, and 68 for 1884, 1883, and 1882 respectively. The falling-off is chiefly due to the imperfect grounding of the lower classes in notation. Because this had not been specially tested in Standard II. for some years, teachers appear to have ignored it, or taught it most superficially. This is one of numerous indications that passing in standards is far more thought of than educating boys and girls. In Standard II. a perfectly easy question in addition was in very many instances wrongly done, and in nine cases out of every ten the error lay in taking the numbers down incorrectly. In Standard III., from the same cause, an easy mechanical question in the simple or compound rules was wrongly done in about two cases out of every three. On the other hand, the little problems contained in the papers set to these two standards were very fairly answered in a good many schools, and helped to counterbalance the effects of the general weakness in notation. The Standard IV. results are much higher than they have been for several years, and they show that on the whole the teaching has been more thorough and intelligent. The percentage of passes is, however, much below what can be considered satisfactory. In connection with the inferior results in Standards V. and VI. it should be noted that for some years something like half the pupils promoted from Standard IV. have failed in this subject, and many of these must have been unable to enter advantageously on the study of the higher rules. There is no doubt that arithmetic is still the weakest subject in our schools. This is the more to be deplored as a most valuable training is to be derived from a proper treatment of it. The teaching of the elementary operations of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing simple numbers needs to be more thorough. These operations should be drilled up until they are done without effort and almost unconsciously. Except in the very smallest schools, I see nothing to prevent such mastery of this work except precipitancy in hurrying pupils on, bad methods of teaching (especially disregard of due gradation in the upward steps), and the copying and finger or unit counting that are still tolerated in the upper infant classes of a number of schools. From Standard III. upwards the subject is in many cases taught with little intelligence or lucidity. One often sees pupils puzzling out the questions they are doing, and writing the operations down in a jumble of confusion. Teachers would be richly rewarded if they would make it a practice to elicit and set forth clearly the data and what is required in representative questions before setting pupils to work out sets of examples. They should also train the scholars to tell what the object of the different operations is, and what the result of each represents. If the knowledge of arithmetic in this district is to improve, better methods must be employed in the exposition of principles, and greater care bestowed on the analysis of questions and a clear setting out of the solutions. I am quite satisfied that most teachers have a competent knowledge of the subject, for they turn out some excellent arithmeticians, and the number of these would be greatly increased if skill in teaching the subject were in keeping with the teachers' knowledge of it. Mental arithmetic receives sufficient attention, and is on the average satisfactory, and in many cases well taught.

I have been, on the whole, very fairly pleased with the results of the teaching in grammar, composition, geography, and history, though the methods have been in many cases open to criticism. The practice of pointing out the "statements" contained in a sentence, and of eliciting their connection as a preliminary to parsing, is, I am glad to note, becoming more general, and its results are most satisfactory.

In *Geography* the lessons are still very bald, nothing beyond a knowledge of topography and of the scanty supplementary information of the text-books being desired by a great many. A teacher should have such a book as Keith Johnston's admirable School Geography constantly in his hands when looking up the lessons to be taught, and draw upon its stores to make them more interesting and attractive. This should be quite practicable in all the larger schools. Little map-drawing from memory is required, but it is seldom well done, more especially in the case of our own colony. As a rule, the two highest standards are not taught enough about New Zealand.

The science and object lessons were usually few in number, and but moderately known.

Sewing, singing, and drill receive a satisfactory amount of attention.

Methods.—Two or three years ago I commented on certain faults of method more or less prevalent in the Board's schools. Though there has been considerable improvement since these remarks were made, there is still much to complain of. Indeed, I sometimes fear that passing the standard examination is becoming more, and training the minds of the pupils less, the aim of an increasingly large number of teachers. Throughout the schools examining or testing methods predominate over educative methods. Take, as an example, the explanation of the English lessons, as conducted in several important schools. The pupils take their slates and write out as well as they can the meaning of some words or phrases read by the teacher, often without any or sufficient context (a most grave omission); they then change slates, and the answers are marked correct or incorrect by the pupils after the teacher has heard a number of the answers read, and said whether they "will do" or "won't do." The final result is that the pupils have heard for each phrase a variety of expressions of very mixed merit, without knowing which is the best, or what are the faults or what the merits of any. The process is elaborate, wasteful of time, and, as usually conducted, yields no appreciable mental training, and leads to no definite result. Its chief merit is that it keeps the class employed, and so produces at least the semblance of attention and activity. Now, I think fresh work of this kind should always be taken orally; incorrect answers being amended by suggestions elicited from the pupils. It is by this process of eliciting emendations that mental training is to be gained, and the skill of the teacher is tested and improved. The result of skilful treatment would be an accurate definition or paraphrase drawn from the class of the word or phrase *in the sense which it bears in the particular connection given:* and it should be stated by two or more pupils, set in its proper context, or, if need be, written by them on their slates or by the teacher on the blackboard. By this line of treatment fewer words may be got over in the time available than by the other, but the benefit to the scholars will be incomparably greater. Examining methods are very useful in their own place—*e.g.*, in recapitulation and testing what has been taught, and in revising; but in dealing with new matter they are ineffective as means of educative training, and usually wasteful of time.

Another point I then complained of was neglect to work in and impress what was taught. Much of the teaching I see is still marked by this fault. A certain amount of repetition is needed to fix things in the mind of the average scholar, and exhibition on the blackboard is an important help that is not sufficiently turned to account. Recapitulation of difficulties at the end of a lesson is also most helpful, though now rarely practised. But the chief thing to be trusted to is comprehension of the matter taught. To secure this, simple familiar examples in illustration of what is remote, difficult, or abstract should be freely used, and, if possible, drawn from the pupils, to make the matter intelligible, and put it in living relation with what is already known. Skill in using such illustrations effectively should be specially aimed at by every intelligent teacher. The chief avenue to easy and firm recollection is a clear understanding of the matter; what is not understood is sure to lapse from the memory.

Again, the inductive method is too often ignored in the teaching of grammar and arithmetic. It is quite a common thing, for example, to find pupils required to learn the general rules for forming the plural of nouns or the comparison of adjectives before any examples are considered, just as if the pupils habitually referred to the rule to guide them in forming the plural or what else it may be. In the case of a foreign or dead language this is what is usually done; and the sooner the rule is known and ready to be applied deductively the better. But with one's mother-tongue the case is very different. Here all the pupils are already quite familiar with the plurals, comparatives, &c., of the words discussed, and in these circumstances the proper and educative line of proceeding is to elicit the rule by comparison of familiar examples, and so establish it inductively. Thus arrived at, it will be understood and easily remembered. This method can and should be used in teaching three-fourths of the grammar and much of the arithmetic prescribed for the public school course. In dealing with these subjects, and wherever else he can, every true teacher will guide his pupils upwards from the particular to the general, and from what is familiar to what is strange, and in so doing will find the path of progress less steep and thorny for himself, and infinitely more pleasant and more instructive for them. Teachers who err in this matter have the excuse that they follow in the lines of the text-books. Alas! that is too true. But any one worthy of the honourable name of teacher should and will never rest satisfied with merely getting his pupils to know and apply certain rules and principles, but will strive to impart this knowledge to them in the way that will best nurture and educate the powers of the intellect. Assuredly, in education the important thing is not "What do you know?" but, "How have you learned what you know?" There should be little danger of teachers losing sight of the inductive method in teaching, for not only is it much insisted on in every modern book on school methods, but it invariably makes known its excellence by its fruits, and yields to intelligent examination results that no amount of "cramming" can rival. But, in spite of all this, it is very hard to get it consistently carried out in the daily teaching.

These remarks on methods are set down in the hope that they may lead to some improvement. There are faithful and in many respects excellent teachers, who err in one or more of the matters discussed from mere thoughtlessness and old habit. I would fain persuade these to take more heed to their modes of teaching, and to make the training of their pupils their chief and ever present aim, and not mere success in passing them at the standard examinations. If they honestly try they will find that the two things are not at all incompatible. I trust that the prominence given to criticism in my remarks on instruction and methods will not leave on the minds of members of the Board the impression that education is in a bad way in their schools. The figures showing the examination results sufficiently show the contrary.

Discipline, &c.—The discipline of the schools is certainly one of their best features, and, broadly regarded, is a credit to the community as well as to the teachers. I should like to see more attention to the Board's rule directing teachers to see that their pupils' books are covered and cared for. The prominence given to attention to manners and behaviour in the new regulations should prove

beneficial to the children in many ways; and I trust that teachers will take a hearty interest in the matter. I regret to notice that maps and other appliances supplied by the Board are badly cared for in a good many schools, especially where changes of teachers have been frequent. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to sheet home a charge of neglect to individuals. It is anything but a sign of good discipline in the service that matters of this kind have to be commented on so frequently.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Education Board, Otago. D. Petrie, M.A., Inspector.

2.—Mr. Taylor's Report.

Sir,— Education Office, Dunedin, 16th March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year 1885.

During the year I made fifty-two visits of inspection, and examined seventy-seven schools—nine with Mr. Petrie, twenty-six with Mr. Goyen, and forty-two without assistance. Some considerable time was also occupied with the examination of scholarship and pupil-teacher papers, compiling annual report tables, and with other office work.

Of the fifty-two schools inspected by me, 56 per cent. may be set down as good, 28 per cent. as fair, and 16 per cent. as inferior. This record compares very favourably with the corresponding one of last year, in which 20 per cent. of the schools inspected by me were stated to be in an inefficient condition. With one or two exceptions the third group is composed of some of the smallest schools in the district, which are not likely to show much improvement, as they do not hold out sufficient inducement for teachers of any ability to remain in them. In sparsely populated districts small schools may be a necessity, but every precaution should be taken against their needless multiplication. Parents often thoughtlessly agitate for a small school at their own doors, to save their children a little physical discomfort, without considering that their mental culture will be in a great measure sacrificed by so doing, for the plain reason that such schools will never command the services of teachers of real merit. Such agitation will, of course, continue until districts are obliged to contribute largely and directly towards the maintenance of their own schools.

The gross percentages in standards and in subjects are the same as last year. In the several subjects of examination there has been a satisfactory advance, except in writing and arithmetic, where there has been a decline—very trifling in the former, but considerable in the latter. The results gained by Standard II. compare unfavourably with those of last year, while those of Standard IV. present a marked improvement. The former has fallen behind in spelling and arithmetic, while Standard IV. has pulled up in reading, and especially in arithmetic and grammar. It is very gratifying, for two reasons, to find Standard IV., which used to be considered the most backward of all, and caused greater disappointment to both teachers and examiners than any other, this year taking such a forward position. It is the standard referred to in section 90 of the Education Act, which assumes that a child is not even fairly educated until he has passed it. Its improved position also goes to show that the teaching here has become less mechanical and more intelligent, especially in reading, arithmetic, and grammar, subjects which afford so much scope for mental training. It is not easy to give a reason for the falling-off in spelling of Standard II., for this subject usually receives excellent attention, and good methods are generally employed in teaching it. Besides, in the case of Standard II., the examination in spelling is confined to words of two syllables, taken from the reading book in use, with which the pupils are expected to be quite familiar. There is, however, no difficulty in accounting for the falling-off of Standard II. in arithmetic. It arose wholly and solely from ignorance of notation. The pupils were required to work, with other sums, one in simple addition, printed in words on a card, and they were often unable to take the sum down correctly on their slates: hence the failure. If the pupils at one time had a sufficient acquaintance with notation, then it is another instance to show that a teacher can never dispense with frequent revision in every branch of his work.

Standard VI., as well as Standard IV., has made considerable advance in grammar, while Standards III. and V. have fallen back. This subject is, on the whole, well understood, and better methods of teaching it are now applied with creditable skill. Composition, taken with grammar, has made very satisfactory progress as far as the structure of sentences is concerned; but very often the exercise is so short as to afford but little opportunity for criticism. The subjects given are always familiar ones, and afford the pupils full scope for essays of reasonable length. The results gained in geography and history are generally better than those of last year. As showing the tendency to confine attention to the contents of the text-book, and to omit all reference to the subject as it affects and concerns us in this new country, I have to state in regard to the history of Standard III. that I have frequently found that the pupils did not know what history they were studying, and, if they did, they often could give no reason why the history of England should be of greater interest to us than that of other countries. A boy said, one day, quite seriously, that it was the history of China that he was studying.

I have to remark regarding reading that, although as a rule it is fluent and accurate, it is still seriously deficient in taste and natural expression. While there are some schools in which the reading is about all that could be reasonably expected, yet there is a large number in which it is nearly altogether wanting in those finer qualities which go to distinguish it as expressive and intelligent. The reason of this deficiency is not far to seek. The attention of the pupils seems to me to be so wholly taken up with the endeavour after verbal accuracy that the meaning expressed by the language read is altogether lost sight of, and hence the false emphasis, the unmusical modulation, and the dead and spiritless rendering of the whole matter. The expression "Cannot see the wood for the trees," altered to "Cannot see the meaning for the words," would pretty accurately apply to the reading that often prevails. It is not pleasant to have to "fail" a pupil when he has read with tolerable accuracy and fluency, but without intelligent expression, and I suspect that

hitherto passes have too frequently been accorded to reading that possessed the first two qualities, unaccompanied by the third. No. 15 of the new Standard Regulations will in future relieve examiners from all difficulty in this respect. It says, "No reading that is not intelligent shall be allowed to count towards a pass." As intelligent reading can only be shown by the expression given it, and as pupils can only give it proper expression when they appreciate the meaning and spirit of the piece before them, therefore such reading must of necessity not only presuppose ample explanation of all words and phrases whose meaning is obscure, but also an insight into, and an appreciation of, the mind and intention of the author read. To bring about so desirable a condition of things may appear to demand a formidable amount of labour on the part of both teachers and pupils; but, if sufficient attention is given both to explanation and the subject matter of the lessons from the earliest stages right through to the highest, the work will be found to be comparatively easy and not at all insuperable. The ability thus acquired in interpreting and grasping the meaning of language generally would become of immense service in every branch of school studies, and would lessen most materially the drudgery entailed upon both teachers and taught where it is in a large measure wanting. That it is wanting in many schools need not cause much surprise when it is stated that it is not an uncommon occurrence for a class to have to read a lesson over and over again, it may be several times, and then to be sent away without a single question being asked either about the language or subject matter, or, if questions are asked, they are put in such a feeble way as to require but the smallest modicum of thought, or no thought at all, indeed, to answer them. In cases of this sort, of course, teachers have made no preparation for giving a satisfactory lesson; but, did they only realise how much their marks for efficiency depend upon the skill they manifest in eliciting thought and cultivating the intelligence of their pupils, they would endeavour to make themselves more proficient in this most important part of their work. The day has gone by when a teacher could dispense with the previous consideration either of the manner or the matter of a lesson to be given by him. In many schools the pupils devote some time to the study of their lessons with the aid of a dictionary. This is a most useful exercise when it is rightly conducted, but I find that dictionary meanings are often selected at random without regard to their suitability in the particular connection. To make an exercise of this kind really profitable the pupils should be required to reproduce in language different from that in their books, and in a readable form, the whole or part of a lesson, omitting none of the ideas expressed. Such employment would lead, not only to the cultivation of thought and intelligence, but also to the acquisition of variety of expression and facility in the use of language.

Although fair progress continues to be made in the teaching of arithmetic, the methods employed being more intelligent and less mechanical, yet closer attention may be directed to one or two points which are well worthy of being kept more fully in view. The working of sums by first principles, as so well shown by Hamblin Smith, should receive earnest consideration. In no other way can pupils arrive at an intelligent acquaintance with the subject, and render themselves independent of rules which do so much to restrain the free exercise of their reasoning powers. They should also be required to set out the working of their sums in a neat and methodical form, and, as showing that they fully understand every step of the process, to state clearly what every line represents. I do not find that pupils can always do this, and have to conclude often that rule rather than reason is their guide, and that in consequence they miss a means of mental discipline that can scarcely be surpassed. The solution of interest and other sums by formula, however useful a formula may be in work of a more advanced nature, is certainly not well calculated to develop intelligence in elementary schools, and ought therefore to be discouraged. Accuracy, facility, and skill in working sums are promoted by frequent repetition of the reasoning processes involved in their solution, whereas a formula stereotypes these operations. Another fertile source of mystery attaching to sums arises from the fact that the pupils have not been led to distinguish clearly what is granted from what has to be found. Unless they are taught to do this, and also to understand thoroughly the meaning of the terms and language used, they must labour in the dark, and failure to make satisfactory progress need not cause much surprise.

Considerable improvement has of late been effected in the methods of teaching the infant classes. Mechanical and merely imitative methods are giving way to those that are more educative. The look-and-say method of teaching to read, for instance, is being superseded by a modification of the phonetic. The former has this to be said in its favour that it harmonises with nature, inasmuch as it makes demands on the imitative powers, which are the earliest developed in children; but it does little towards exercising their intelligence, leaves them too long wholly dependent on their teachers for increase of knowledge, and fails to furnish them with power to acquire knowledge for themselves. It is like carrying a child in arms instead of training him to walk as soon as his legs can carry him. A main principle sought to be fixed and constantly acted upon in teaching all grades, from the lowest to the highest, is to do nothing for the pupils that they can be taught to do for themselves. Now, the phonetic method, or the modification of it in use, is well fitted to give effect to this all-important principle. By it the children are taught, not only the names, but also the powers of the letters, and are at once set to build words by means of letter sounds, and also to analyse words into their simple elements. The knowledge of every new word thus gained is not only an acquisition on the part of the children themselves, but it becomes the means of enabling them to make further discoveries on their own account. Constant use of the blackboard and much trouble and patience are necessary in teaching to read after this fashion, and, though progress may at first appear to be slow, yet the power acquired by the children will by-and-by render it both easy and rapid. All the advantages claimed for the look-and-say method will of necessity, though unconsciously, be gained at the same time. In a considerable number of schools the phonetic method of teaching to read is carried out with very satisfactory results.

The discipline and control are upon the whole very satisfactory, and the good influences brought to bear upon the children in school are making themselves felt in the playground, and also

beyond the precincts of the school. The boisterous rudeness that at one time characterised their conduct in too many localities has to a great extent given way to considerate respectfulness and even traits of politeness. To the teachers is due the credit of this reformation of manners. In several instances, too, they have succeeded in enlisting the co-operation of their pupils in beautifying the school grounds by borders of trees, shrubs, and flowers. The boys, during part of their spare time, dig the ground, and plant, protect, and water the shrubs, &c., until they have made a fair start. The girls, on the other hand, attend to the flower beds. The cultivation of a taste in this direction at school cannot be too highly commended. Not only must the pupils themselves be greatly benefited, but the face of the country at large may ultimately, through their instrumentality, be made to assume an improved appearance. Committees, as a rule, do as much as the means at their disposal will allow to render the usually bare surroundings of their schools attractive and ornamental. In some cases their efforts have been successful, but in others they have been comparative failures. Possibly, if teachers and scholars took a greater interest in the means used, the Committees would more frequently see their desires accomplished.

The Board has good reason to be satisfied with the very creditable condition of its schools as a whole. The teachers, with very few exceptions, are earnest and faithful, and well qualified for their work. Cases of hopeless inefficiency have been nearly all weeded out, and suitable modes of teaching are being constantly kept before the attention of those who are new to the profession, and give promise of ultimately rendering efficient service. I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Education Board, Otago. WM. TAYLOR, Inspector.

3.—MR. GOYEN'S REPORT.

SIR,— Dunedin, 4th March, 1886.

I have the honour to present my general report for the year 1885.

The time spent by me in the service of the Board during the year was 1,883 hours—an average of over five hours a day for the whole year, Saturdays and Sundays included, or, Saturdays and Sundays excluded, over seven hours a day.

The material condition of the schools continues to be good, and in most cases the accommodation provided is in excess of that required for the attendance. Nearly all the schools are well equipped with educational appliances, but I regret to have to add that these appliances are not invariably so well taken care of as it is reasonable to expect they would be were they the teachers' own property. The school- and out-houses are generally scrupulously clean on the day of examination, but they are not seldom quite the reverse of this on the day of unannounced inspection. Very few of the country schools are swept every day, and a considerable number of them only once or twice a week.

The *morale* of the schools is, on the whole, good; but I should like to see more attention given to politeness and good manners. Class movements, though satisfactory in a fair number of schools, are but moderate in the majority, and I have seldom been satisfied with the character of the disciplinary exercises and singing in the infant departments.

I regret to be unable to report much improvement in the practical training of pupil-teachers. Of the 135 examined, sixty-one gained less—many of these much less—than 65 per cent. of the marks assigned for teaching. In a large number of schools training these youths to teach appears to be regarded as quite an unimportant matter.

A considerable number of teachers do not show much judgment in setting home lessons. I do not now allude to the length of these exercises, but to their unsuitable character. I believe the senior pupils ought to have about an hour's home work to do; but it is, in my opinion, highly improper to require them, as many teachers do, to prepare new matter for the lessons of the following day. The proper function of the exercise is to impress the explanations given in school, and not to prepare matter for lessons to be given.

A very striking improvement in methods and management in the brief space of a year is hardly to be expected, and one ought, I suppose, to be satisfied with a healthy, even if slow, forward movement in this direction. The advance made from year to year is not, to my thinking, so great as it ought to be; nevertheless it is a fact that the quality of the instruction is improving, and much more in the infant than in the higher departments of the schools. A considerable number of our larger schools continue to be ably managed, and in most respects well taught, and a similar remark applies to a fair number of our smaller ones. The percentages gained are precisely the same as those gained in 1884—viz., 77 in standards and 82 in subjects. The latter may be regarded as a fairly accurate index of the efficiency of the schools. Every child in Standard I. was examined in four subjects, every child in Standard II. in five subjects, and every child in Standards III. to VI. in seven subjects; and of course it was possible for every one to obtain a pass in every subject in which he was examined. The total number of passes obtainable in this way was 68,861, and of these the number obtained was 56,466, or 82 per cent. Gained as it was under rigorous examination, this result ought to be an assurance to the public that they are receiving a fair equivalent for their liberal educational expenditure.

In the majority of the schools examined by me reading is, upon the whole, well taught in the junior, and fairly in the senior classes. The taste with which a great number of Standard I. pupils read is most creditable. Meanings of words receive more skilful treatment than formerly; but there is little improvement to report in the treatment of the subject matter of the lessons read. In many schools the separate facts or statements of each paragraph are fairly questioned out singly, but nowhere have I seen the children trained to gather up the answers and express them as a connected whole. They deal from beginning to end with fragments of thought, and gain but little conception of the relation of these fragments. This gathering-up process is a highly educative one, and it is to be regretted that it is so generally neglected. School libraries would certainly do much to improve the reading and comprehension of the senior pupils. If the Government could see its way to spend the money now voted annually to public libraries in assisting to establish school

libraries, more would be done, I feel sure, to induce and foster a taste for general reading than could be effected by any other means; and every adult colonist would, no doubt, yield the most ready acquiescence to a scheme that would afford so much pleasure and advantage to the rising generation. Spelling continues to be good. Copy-book writing is in the main good, but slate writing often quite the reverse, and a similar remark applies to that of the exercise books. Most of the children in the junior classes continue to write with short blunt pencils, a practice that gives their teachers no end of trouble when they begin to write with a pen. I do not think sufficient attention is given to pen drill in the earlier stages of writing in copy-books. Grammar is intelligently taught in a fair proportion of schools. Less prominence is given to definitions, and much more to the functions of words, phrases, and sentences. There is great improvement, too, in the teaching of composition. Geography is for the most part worked up by the pupils. I do not know that there is any serious objection to this, provided the children are trained to learn it in an intelligent manner. After the teacher has given a lesson in the geography of a country, the pupils ought certainly to be made to fix the lesson in their minds by their own personal effort; but they ought not to be allowed, as they often are, to grind up all that the text-book says without localising the information by constant reference to the map. It is no uncommon thing for a child to be able to repeat quite glibly the names of places and what the places are famous for, without having any but the vaguest notion of the exact position of them. The results gained in history continue to be unsatisfactory in Standard III. In many cases the inferior answering is certainly due to unintelligent teaching. I regard it, for instance, as certain evidence of improper methods if the children cannot point out on the map the localities in which the events they have learnt took place. A great number of children are unable to do this. The senior standards generally show very fair acquaintance with the periods assigned to them for study.

The character of the work done in arithmetic is still highly unsatisfactory. An inordinate proportion of the time devoted to it is consumed in the manipulation of figures—in transforming from one denomination to another, and in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing mere symbols, behind which lies not the ghost of an idea. The majority of children in Standards I. to IV. are, in fact, occupied during the greater portion of the year in mere ciphering, and the study of arithmetic is postponed till within two or three months of the examination. If the aim of arithmetical teaching were to make calculating machines of the children this plan might, perhaps, succeed, but it can never succeed in making them arithmeticians. It ought, in my opinion, to be reversed. From Standard II. upwards the children should spend not more than one-fourth of their time in mere ciphering. As soon as a process is fairly known, abundant exercises in its application should be given. In this way the process becomes fixed in the mind, and in the fixing thereof a sound knowledge of its application to the practical concerns of life is acquired, besides which the pupil's intelligence is cultivated and his reasoning power strengthened. The traditions of arithmetical teaching are bad, and it is really surprising how little modern scientific method has affected this part of primary school work. See to the ciphering and let arithmetic take care of itself has been, and appears still to be, the motto of a great many teachers. This absurd method of grinding at rules and unmeaning symbols for the greater part of the child's school life cannot, in my opinion, be too severely condemned. Such work, as Mr. Fitch justly observes, does more to deaden than to invigorate the thinking faculty of any one who practises it.

Standard II. broke down badly in notation. The first question given in every paper was an addition sum, the addends of which were written in words. More than two-thirds of the children examined by me failed in this sum. The decline in the percentage gained by this Standard is, I believe, wholly due to this general breakdown in notation. The notation of Standard III. was equally weak, and large numbers failed to work correctly the sum that had to be notated. We gave an additional sum—a problem—in Standards II. and III. last year, but a very small proportion of the children succeeded in working it correctly. It is worth recording, as we have always strongly advised teachers to make their pupils do it, that those children that took the trouble to explain what each step of the work represented almost invariably succeeded in solving the problem. I may mention a remarkable instance of this. In a class of forty-two pupils (Standard II.) only four obtained the correct answer to the problem. These four explained what each line of the work represented; the others did not do so, and every one of them failed to work it correctly. Again, I have to report that the addition and multiplication tables are very imperfectly learnt in the junior classes. These tables are the foundation of rapid and accurate calculation, and ought to receive a large share of attention in Standard I. and the classes below it. The practice that commonly obtains of giving children easy sums to do before the tables are well known induces counting by units, a habit that is most difficult to eradicate when it has taken firm possession of a child. Tables, and exercises on the tables, ought to constitute the major portion of the arithmetic of these classes.

It is gratifying to be able to report fair improvement in the method of giving object lessons, but I regret to be unable to make a similar observation respecting elementary science teaching. The schools in which science is taught in a rational manner might be counted on one's fingers. Children for the most part learn it from books, or work up notes of what their teacher tells them about the subjects of study. They are not trained to use their eyes, and to reason upon what they see, and science teaching that fails to do this is well nigh worthless as an educative instrument. The lessons given may be termed information lessons, and, of course, are much better than none at all, but they are not worthy of any higher name. Science is the foundation of technics, and, though I am not sanguine enough to think it possible to give technical training, except drawing, either in primary or secondary schools, I do think that boys ought to leave school with a knowledge of the principles upon which technical and industrial processes depend sufficient to be of real use to them in their subsequent career. The application of these principles must, however, be studied in the workshop; it cannot, I believe, be successfully taught in our schools.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Education Board, Otago. P. Goyen, Inspector.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Invercargill, 8th March, 1886.

I have the honour to lay before you my fourth general report on the condition of the public schools of Southland.

The results of the year's work, as far as these can be represented in statistics, are shown in the following table (Table I.), which, as required by the Orders in Council, I have compiled :—

TABLE I.

—	Gross Number of Scholars presented.	Excepted.	Net Number of Scholars.	Passed.	Per-centage.	Per-centage in 1884.	Number of Schools presenting the Standard.	Number of Schools presenting the Standard in 1884.
Standard VI. ...	80	14	66	44	66·7	62·7	22	16
Standard V. ...	194	21	173	96	55·5	43·5	43	38
Standard IV. ...	480	82	398	216	54·3	51·1	60	60
Standard III....	889	148	741	532	71·8	55·8	67	68
Standard II. ...	894	111	783	685	87·5	76·1	67	69
Standard I. ...	899	76	823	777	94·4	88·5	68	67
Infants ...	2,534	...	...	...	...	...	68	69
Totals ...	5,970	452	2,984	2,350	78·8	68·4	68	69

The table shows that this year, as last, sixty-eight schools have been examined; for, although the report last year spoke of sixty-nine schools, this arose from the fact that one school was examined twice. These sixty-eight schools, however, include six new ones, examined for the first time this year and added to the list—viz., those of Fernhills, Spar Bush, Nightcaps, Croydon, Redan Valley, and East Forest Hill. It also includes one of two schools omitted last year—viz., the Waikiwi School, now the Makarewa. On the other hand, from various causes, the examination of eight schools had to be postponed to the new year, so that their names do not appear in this list—viz., those of Limehills, North Forest Hill, Pinnacle, Otama, Ferndale, Gummie's Bush, Ryal Bush, and Otaria. The table further shows that this year 3,436 scholars were presented for examination in one or other of the standards—an increase of 155 on the preceding year. In calculating the percentage of passes, however, 452 scholars must be deducted from this gross number, as scholars included in one or other of the following classes and therefore "excepted": (1) Scholars absent through sickness, or other imperative cause; (2) scholars who have already passed Standard VI.; (3) scholars presented for examination in a standard already passed; (4) scholars who have made less than 250 attendances during the year, and failed at the examination.

Of the net number of scholars (2,984) thus attained, 2,350 satisfied the Inspector at examination, so that the percentage of standard passes this year for the whole district is 78·8, as against 68·4 of the previous year, or an apparent improvement of 10·4 per cent. I say "apparent improvement," because there is a small misleading factor to be eliminated before the comparison between the two years can be made with perfect fairness. Throughout the year just closed the Order in Council has been in force allowing scholars to be re-examined in a standard already passed; and also the resolution of the Board, exempting from computation all scholars who failed at examination if their attendance had been below a certain minimum; whilst in the previous year neither of these came into operation until half the schools had been examined. It is easy, however, to reduce the number of scholars exempted this year (452) by the number exempted (178) in those schools in which no such exemption was made last year; and if this be done a percentage (74·4) will be obtained which may with perfect fairness be compared with that of last year. In this way the schools will be seen to have increased in efficiency during the year to the degree of 6 per cent. of standard passes, a result on which, I think, the Board may be congratulated. It is satisfactory, too, to note that the improvement recorded is common to all the standards, though greatest in Standard III. Standard IV. appears to be the least strong, and the one that has made the least improvement.

The figures just quoted show that the teaching in the schools is more efficient than formerly; and the same table also reveals another satisfactory feature—viz., that in several schools a higher education is being given than before. This appears from the circumstance that twenty-two schools this year presented scholars in Standard VI., and forty-three in Standard V., as against sixteen and thirty-eight respectively last year. Too much, however, must not be made of this fact, as the very slight increase in the number of scholars presented in those standards shows that the new classes consist of only two or three scholars each.

Without entering at length into the causes which, in my judgment have contributed to the improvement here chronicled, I should like to mention two which have repeatedly forced themselves on my attention—(1) the better selection made from candidates for appointment as teachers, in consequence of the Board taking the duty more completely into its own hands; and (2) the greater publicity given by the Board to the Inspector's reports on the condition of the schools. I think it is highly desirable that as much publicity as possible should be given to the Inspector's criticism on a school, whether favourable or otherwise; that in this way the efficiency of a school will be promoted; and that even teachers in the long run will benefit by the practice, although temporary annoyance may arise from it at times. In saying this I am aware that a contrary opinion has been expressed, and several reasons have been urged by teachers and others

against the practice of publishing Inspectors' reports: it is a little suspicious, however, that these objections are never urged by teachers on whose schools the Inspector has reported favourably. On the other hand, it is quite touching to read the anxiety expressed by the teachers of unsuccessful schools, lest by the publication of his report the Inspector should fail in boldness of criticism on the occasion of his next visit. As to the first of the causes just mentioned, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the appointment to the teacher's office being in the hands of competent and impartial persons, as otherwise the best efforts of the Inspector to insure efficiency in his district may be neutralised, and his time be largely occupied in merely chronicling the failures of incompetent teachers.

I need hardly say it is a matter of satisfaction to myself to be able, as I have here done, to announce improvement in the work of our schools, and to be called upon to account for it. I must not, however, be understood to mean that I am in all cases satisfied with the degree of efficiency yet attained, or to imply that there are not schools still in an unsatisfactory condition, where the teaching is weak and the results poor; but I believe these are fewer than they were, and less inefficient. The conviction I have come to as the result of my visits to the schools agrees with the evidence of the figures just given—that better work is being done throughout the district, and greater diligence shown by teachers in their attempts to educate the children intrusted to their charge. That there are in the Board's employ highly qualified and devoted teachers, who are imparting a really valuable education to their scholars, and with whom it is a pleasure to be associated, I affirmed in my last report, nor have I seen any reason to alter my opinion.

TABLE II.—Percentage of Passes in each Standard Subject.

Subject.	Percentage in 1885.	Percentage in 1884.	Percentage in 1883.
Reading	95·6	91·2	86·2
Spelling	83·7	77·5	70·0
Writing	99·5	97·6	96·6
Arithmetic	65·4	53·7	50·8
Grammar	61·1	67·6	59·3
Geography	69·8	76·9	66·8
History	70·4	69·0	53·0

Table II. is not less instructive than the preceding one. It refers to the subjects taught, and shows in which of them progress has been made, and *vice versâ*. Here, too, the information conveyed is, on the whole, encouraging, especially in the fact that the subject in which the greatest advance has been made is the important one of arithmetic, the results obtained in it being 11·7 per cent. better than those of last year, and nearly 15 per cent. better than those of the year before. I believe this improvement is very greatly due to the thorough grounding in the first principles of the science which the junior classes now receive. I am of opinion, too, that accuracy in results is now more insisted upon by teachers in these classes. I fear, however, that mental arithmetic is still a neglected subject in many schools, nor is it ever likely to be a popular one with those teachers who dislike mental exertion.

Next in order in the degree of improvement made comes the subject of spelling, which shows an advance of 6·2 per cent. With regard to the more mechanical subjects, the high percentage obtained in writing may be regarded partly as the fruit of the more systematic way in which the subject is now taught, and the greater amount of attention and thought thereby bestowed upon it. The percentage of passes obtained in reading is also a high one, and an advance of 4·4 per cent. on that of last year. Certainly, in the majority of schools this year I have found the reading boldly and correctly rendered; nor do I call to mind any case of a school exhibiting general weakness in this part of its work. I cannot, however, approve of the practice which obtains in many schools of presenting only a portion of the reading book for examination, and sometimes a small portion; and I take this opportunity of making it known that in future the classes will be expected to show acquaintance with the whole of the reading book. In view, however, of the new regulations, and of their probable effect upon the schools, I shall no longer insist on Royal Reader No. II. (or its equivalent) being made the reading book of Standard I., or No. III. that of Standard II. It will suffice if Standard I. presents the sequel to No. I., and if Standard II. presents Royal Reader No. II., and so on.

I regret to find a great falling-off this year in the results obtained in grammar, the percentage being 6·5 below that of last year. Again and again has the fact been forced upon my attention during the past year, whilst assessing examination papers, that the children of our schools cannot parse the words of a sentence with any degree of correctness—at all events, of any sentence requiring the exercise of a little independent thought. This is to be regretted, because parsing affords us a most valuable mental discipline by which to cultivate the discriminating faculties and judgment of our scholars—almost the only resource for this purpose, in fact, with which our curriculum supplies us. I am referring more particularly in these remarks to the parsing required of Standard IV., which is nothing more than distinguishing the different classes of words in a sentence, or parts of speech, as they are unfortunately called. In such a lesson the sentence for parsing should be carefully selected by the teacher from the reading book of the class, and should, of course, be written on the blackboard. It need not be the easiest sentence to be found in the reading book, but one the words of which cannot be classified correctly without the exercise of a little thought on the part of the scholar. The words should then be parsed orally by the class, each child being called upon in turn to determine the classification of a word, and give his reason for his decision;

and subsequently the class may be required to reproduce the whole exercise in writing. In this way the child will become familiar with abstract ideas—will learn to recognise the nice distinctions between them, and will obtain, in fact, mental eyesight: his intelligence will be increased, and he will find pleasure in the exercise of the new faculty he has obtained. But this will only be the case if the teacher handles his subject skilfully, discusses it with the scholar, and, by questioning him, obliges him to give a reason for every statement that he makes. If, however, a parsing lesson be conducted in this way, not only will a knowledge of English grammar be imparted to the child, but education in the best sense of the term. Only, to do this the teacher must have a thorough knowledge of grammar himself, so as to be able to solve the little problems as they arise, and not be obliged to shirk them. The man who has not thought the whole subject out for himself cannot teach English grammar.

The table shows that the study of geography, as well as that of grammar, has declined amongst us. In respect to the geography, however, my knowledge of the results obtained on examination days enables me to say that the lower percentage arises, not from any general neglect of the subject throughout the schools of the district, but from the fact that in a few schools it has been almost entirely neglected—perhaps in view of the fact that it was soon to become a class subject, as if the teachers of these schools were anxious to adumbrate the fate that awaited it when that much-desired consummation should be reached.

Object Lessons.—Of the subjects not pass subjects the one most generally neglected is that of object lessons. It appears to me that in many schools this subject is really hardly taught at all, though the form of doing so occasionally may still be kept up. A pretty good guess at the amount of attention bestowed on it in these cases may be made from what takes place on examination day, when the Inspector asks for the list of object lessons given throughout the year. The teacher has no list prepared; but, seizing a pencil—seldom a pen in such cases—he hastily jots down the names of half a dozen subjects or less, and hands the paper to the Inspector with the air of a man who has at length acquitted himself of all his obligations. By a singular coincidence the subjects thus written down are generally found to be the names of domestic animals treated of in the reading book of the class, a coincidence which, it is supposed, the Inspector will not notice. The whole thing is perfunctory in the extreme; and one feels much more respect for the teacher who honestly owns that he has done nothing in the subject. There can be no doubt that object lessons are an essential part of primary education, and an important part, both on account of the useful knowledge which may be imparted through them—though some, I see, are disposed to disparage this view of the matter—and also for the opportunity thus given to the teacher of calling out the observing faculties of the younger children—doubtless a most important part of education. The conscientious teacher will therefore allot a definite time to the subject in the time-table, and scrupulously observe it. One or two such lessons, at least, might be given every week throughout the school year in every school; whilst in large schools, with a teacher to each class, more than this might be done. In addition, the teacher must give some thought to the selection of his subject, and still more to the preparation of the lesson beforehand, which, under these circumstances, is likely to become exceedingly interesting to the scholars, and a part of the school work they will look forward to with pleasure. In future object lessons are to be treated as class subjects, and marks awarded for them as such; and I may say that I do not propose to award any marks for object lessons of the kind referred to at the commencement of this paragraph.

General Methods.—The case of one or two schools during the year in which the failure at examination has been very signal makes necessary some general remarks on school method. Some teachers seem not to have realised the fact that more is required of them, if they are to be successful in their work, than merely giving an oral lesson, or setting their classes a task. The teacher must see for himself that the work he prescribes is actually done by the pupils, and done correctly; and the failure to do this is, I believe, the cause that general disaster overtakes some schools on examination day, revealing the fact that the teacher, who has perhaps been congratulating himself on having carried his classes over all the ground prescribed, and a good deal more, has in reality only been beating the air. Entering such a school on an unannounced visit, one sees something of this sort: A class sitting in desks has been engaged, say, in writing out a grammar exercise on slates. The time arrives for dismissing school, and the pupils are directed to change slates (perhaps) with a view to a revision of the work done. The teacher then gives out the correct version of the exercise, and bids errors be marked. The slates are returned to their owners, each scholar is called upon to say how many mistakes he has made, and, no one, wonderful to say, having made more than the excusable number, the class is dismissed. No personal inspection of the slates, or of any of them, has been made by the teacher at all, and it needs very little knowledge of school life or of human nature to be aware that, in the case of many of these scholars, no genuine work has been done. Absence of supervision on the part of the teacher naturally and inevitably begets carelessness on that of the scholars; and the more backward ones make no effort to learn what they will never be discovered not to know. The teacher spends his days in pleasant delusion as to the state of his school until the results of examination day disclose the real condition of affairs. Strict personal supervision of written work by the teacher can never be dispensed with if he is to teach successfully. That such supervision involves much extra trouble cannot be denied; but such a consideration will have no weight except with teachers who have mistaken their profession. Exercise books must be carefully examined—out of school hours if need be—in order that the scholar may understand that no perfunctory performance of duty will be tolerated. Nor will the benefit be altogether one-sided; for the teacher, whilst inspecting the pupils' exercises, and noticing the character of the mistakes made, will get many a useful hint as to the direction his future instructions should take. He will learn, for one thing, how much need there is for repeating the same lesson again and again—a truth only to be learnt, perhaps, in this way, and one of the last importance to the teacher. To sum up what I have said

on this subject, the true teacher will be thorough in all that he does, and will not be content with anything less than thoroughness on the part of his pupils. Before passing from this subject I should like to refer to an erroneous notion that prevails—I fear even in the minds of some teachers—as to the results which may fairly be looked for from our scholars, and the character of the education to be given in our schools. Because these are described as elementary schools, it seems to be thought by some that only the barest elements of any subject need be taught, and that for an Inspector to look for thorough knowledge in any subject is unreasonable. I am sure this is the thought that exists half-recognised in the minds of many who should know better. Such a theory is in my judgment erroneous and mischievous in the highest degree. Our schools are elementary schools in the sense that only English subjects are taught in them, not in the sense that only a very little is done in any subject. No man of well-trained mind will be content to put before his pupils only the simplest and easiest cases of his subject. If he teaches arithmetic, for example, he will not rest until he has made the theory of it clear to the youngest or dullest mind, so that, within the limits prescribed, the child shall be able to answer any but exceptionally hard questions. No lower ideal than this should satisfy any of us—anything less will be felt to be unworthy of him by the true teacher. And we may go even further, and say that, to those scholars who stay their full time in our schools and complete their course, our teachers may reasonably be expected to teach the subjects they profess with some degree of completeness, so that in any examination in English subjects merely our scholars should be able to hold their own even against competitors from schools of greater pretensions. Unless we are prepared to take up ground as high as this we must acknowledge that we are not really educating the youth of the colony, but only raising up a crop of smatterers, who know nothing thoroughly, not even their own ignorance.

Discipline.—In most of our schools a spirit of order prevails suggestive of good discipline. In only one or two is there that want of combined movements on the part of the scholars that betrays the unsystematic or feeble teacher. I should like, however, to see the practice of the children marching in and out of the schoolroom more generally adopted, as nothing tends more to promote discipline and bring before the minds of the scholars the important fact that the school forms one body, of which the teacher is the head, and which moves only at his command. A readiness to recognise lawful authority, which is the very lifeblood of a nation, may thus be early infused into the nature of those who are to be the future citizens of this colony, and hold its destinies in their hands. Time forbids we should make them acquainted with Roman story and the triumphs of Roman discipline, but we should do what we can that they may learn the lesson in another way. It is very desirable, too, that children should be trained at school to little acts of courtesy and good manners. Thus, I have been pleased to see lately in some schools the formal salute of the classes to their teacher at the close of the day, as well as the precedence given to the girls when the scholars leave the desks. In respect to more important matters it is gratifying to notice the diligent spirit of work that evidently prevails amongst the pupils of a large number of our schools, and the conscientious way in which the scholars act on the day of examination. Not often now have I to regard the contents of examination papers with suspicion from the fact that scholars were seen communicating with one another during the examination. These are the little straws that indicate the way the current is setting, and I look for still clearer results in the formation of character when our teachers shall have recognised more completely the obligation that lies upon them, in virtue of their office, to instil correct moral principles into the minds of their pupils, as the foundation of a useful and happy life for them on their entrance into the world.

Irregular Attendance.—My report would hardly be complete without some reference to the chronic difficulty under which our schools labour of irregular attendance on the part of the scholars. This is the one evil that is everywhere neutralising the best efforts of the State to educate the generation now growing up. It is not easy, without going more into detail than I am able to do, to show from figures the real character and magnitude of this evil; but, from statistics obtained from the Secretary's office, I find that, whilst the average quarterly roll number of pupils for the past year was 6,770, the strict average quarterly attendance was only 5,002, showing that the actual attendance was but 73·9 per cent. of the possible attendance. This may be interpreted in various ways. Strictly, it means that the attendance is such as would be equivalent to one child in every four stopping at home altogether; or, what would come to the same arithmetical result, but would much more nearly represent what actually takes place, to every child stopping at home one day in four; or, still better, to every second child stopping away half his time. It is not necessary, however, to say more in order to demonstrate the existence of an evil which is too notorious and too clamant to be gainsaid. The problem is to find a remedy for it—a problem I have often pondered. There is no doubt that, whilst the high price of labour, the poverty of parents, and bad roads in winter time have something to do with producing the mischief, the root of the evil is the indifference of many parents to the educational welfare of their children. Parents who are naturally indolent or without habits of reflection permit their children to stay at home on the most frivolous pretext, or no pretext at all; and it does not appear that there is any direct means of interfering with such people and compelling them to do their duty. The compulsory clause of the Education Act seems inoperative, chiefly because Committees will not incur the odium of putting it in force against their neighbours; and, if this problem is to be solved by the exercise of compulsion, it is, I believe, the Parliament of the colony, and not the Committee of the school, that must take upon itself the responsibility of enforcing attendance. Another reason, however, for the present compulsory clause failing to reach the evil, at least, in country districts, lies in this: that it applies only to those families that reside within two miles of the schoolhouse, whereas in most of our country schools a large proportion of the scholars come from a greater distance than this. Indeed, in this education district there is one school where every family attending it, save one, resides more than two miles from the schoolhouse. In view of these facts it has been suggested that some good might be done by modifying the present compulsory clause so as to make it apply to all scholars

residing within three miles of the schoolhouse. The thought has even suggested itself to me at times that it might be well that School Boards should be intrusted with powers to close any school for a year or more where the attendance bears no proportion to the school roll. I must confess, however, that I have little faith in the appeal to compulsion in this difficulty, and I believe the practical remedy, as far as there is one, lies in the exercise of the powers of persuasion and remonstrance on the part of teacher and Committee. Certainly a great deal can be done by the teacher towards influencing parents to send their children to school regularly, and nothing makes me take a more hopeful view of a school on the morning of examination day than to find, on reference to the roll, that there are no absentees that day. Some teachers in this district, whose hearts are in their work, and whose delight is the efficiency of their schools, simply will not stand irregular attendance on the part of their scholars, and make so much remonstrance about it that indolent parents find it saves trouble to send the children regularly. The simple plan of sending a printed form of inquiry to the parent of every child absent from school, on every occasion of absence, seems the most efficacious in keeping down the evil, always excepting that best plan of all, of making the teaching so efficient and attractive that both scholars and parents will be unwilling to lose the benefits of it. A visit from the teacher to the parent who is remiss in sending his children will often have the desired effect; and, when this fails, a visit from one or more members of the Committee has been tried elsewhere with good results. An additional plan has been tried here and in other places, and, though it involves the outlay of a little money, such money seems to be well spent. I refer to the custom of awarding to every child who has made a certain maximum of attendances a handsomely ornamented card or certificate of attendance, signed by the Chairman of the Committee, and presented on the annual *fête* day of the school. The great need is to call public attention to the enormity of the evil, and to bring the pressure of public opinion to bear powerfully on culpable parents, so that a man who continues to offend shall find himself outside the sympathies of his neighbours. This, I believe, will be the surest way of overcoming the evil complained of.

Registers.—At my annual visit to the schools I have made it an invariable practice to supervise the attendance registers and verify some of the calculations in them. My experience teaches me that this practice is a very necessary one, from the tendency that exists to keep these returns carelessly and incompletely unless they are subject to revision. I am glad, however, to be able to affirm that a considerable improvement has taken place in the way in which the registers are kept; so that in most schools it is now easy to verify the result. Inaccuracies, too, are by no means so numerous as they used to be, whilst in some schools the records are kept with a correctness, clearness, and neatness altogether admirable.

I append to this report—(1) A table (Table III.), for which I am indebted to the Secretary, showing the average age of the children presented for examination in each standard class; (2) a table (Table IV.) showing the percentage of passes (in subjects) obtained in each school at the annual examination of the Inspector; (3) my annual report on the extra classes at the Riverton District High School. [Appendices not reprinted.]

I have, &c.

JOHN GAMMELL, B.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Southland.

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