

by law has been carried out; and, although these examinations should be conducted with the greatest care, yet the results, as shown by numbers, are not and cannot be a thorough criterion of the state of a school as a place for education as well as instruction, for training as well as teaching.

I have not yet found that the new standards, which came into force at the beginning of the year, have made any great change in the work of our schools. It has become easier, no doubt, to pass in Standard IV., now that history and geography have been withdrawn from the list of pass subjects; and the regulation restricting the Inspectors to problems requiring the application of only one principle has, of course, made the arithmetic in standards below the Fifth lighter. But with these exceptions I do not consider that the work either of pupils or teachers has been materially lessened. The class and additional subjects are now absolutely compulsory. I regret that in the case of small and half-time schools no discretionary power is apparently allowed the Inspector to permit, in cases of real necessity, the omission of one or more of these subjects. I have had but little to do with these schools this year, but I have a vivid recollection of the utter inability of some teachers in very small schools to comply in full with the regulations relating to extra subjects as laid down in the standards in force prior to 1886.

In my report last year I drew attention to defects in the results of the instruction given in certain subjects. I am glad to say that in most of those subjects an improvement has taken place. Reading has been, on the whole, good, and free from such defects as mispronunciation, hurry, and neglect of stops. The work shown in grammar is certainly superior to that of last year. The composition papers, I am sorry to say, still exhibit in many cases gross errors in spelling. That this proceeds from carelessness, and not from ignorance, I am convinced, as the words misspelt are nearly always short and simple ones, and the same classes rarely fail in dictation. The arithmetic work is steadily improving in the direction both of accuracy and intelligence. The concrete mental arithmetic introduced into Standards I. and II. will, I think, have a good effect in preparing those classes for the work of the higher standards. Physical geography is more skilfully taught. In Standard V. I notice a falling off in the knowledge of places of importance on the European Continent. I must repeat what I said in my last report about writing. It certainly is not so good as it was. I notice this in Standard III. particularly. I consider that in almost every case bad writing in the pupils is the direct effect of negligence in the teacher. Very few children will write well without strict supervision: with such supervision few children will write badly. In elementary science more has been done this year than last. In some of the larger schools experimental instruction has been given with fair results. Taking into consideration the great number of separate subjects of instruction now made compulsory, it cannot be expected that in this branch much ground can be covered: it is far more important that the scholars should undergo the intellectual discipline inseparable from the study of natural science. The teaching of agricultural chemistry is attended with many difficulties: many teachers know little or nothing of practical agriculture, and their lessons, being derived from books only, are not likely to be of much value to their pupils. The results in singing and drawing are satisfactory: credit is due to Mr. Robinson, instructor, for the great improvement in scale and geometrical drawing.

The methods of teaching pursued in the schools under notice are, generally speaking, skilful. The classes are handled with firmness, and the teaching—mainly oral—is intelligent. In the smaller schools the defects in teaching and organization arise principally from the failure of the teachers to appreciate the advantages of a judicious grouping of the classes for instruction in certain subjects, and from their not being sufficiently alive to the great distinction between teaching and practising lessons: in many cases time is wasted by the teacher doing for the pupils what they are perfectly able to do for themselves.

As I have, in all my visits of inspection, spoken fully to the teachers upon such faults in organization and teaching as my experience enabled me to detect, I do not think it necessary to extend this report by commenting in detail upon the numerous shortcomings to which young and inexperienced teachers are subject. So far as I have been able to judge, I believe that our schools are doing real work; that the teaching is good in quality and tends to develop the minds of our children. I trust I am not taking too sanguine a view; but it must be remembered that I have no means of comparing the work in our schools with that in any other educational district.

In most of the schools I have found good discipline and behaviour. I have had in one or two instances to call the attention of head teachers to laxity in this respect in the lower classes, in charge of junior teachers; but these cases have been few.

The drill and gymnastics in the town and suburban schools are under the general superintendence of Lieut.-Colonel Mahon. To that officer credit is due for the general proficiency of the children in these departments. Apart from military drill and formal gymnastics, the desk and interior drill of the schools deserves mention: the unseemly scrimmage of boys and girls in lobbies, struggling to reach their places in the class rooms, is a thing of the past; and even on the day of the annual examination, when the ordinary arrangements of the school are somewhat disturbed, I have very seldom indeed had to complain of disorder.

I have, as before, received every assistance from teachers when examining their schools.

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.

I have, &c.,

JOHN S. GOODWIN, Inspector.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 10th March, 1887.

I have the honour to submit report on the schools of the district for the year ending 31st December, 1886.

On the requisition of the settlers at Waiongona one of the old school buildings at Inglewood