

scholarships and eighteen candidates for three junior scholarships. Twelve of the Board's schools, and one secondary school, Wanganui Collegiate, were represented. The examination showed that practical arithmetic—entailing merely multiplication, addition, &c., of money—and geography were very weak. At the same time some most creditable work was sent in. A few candidates, however, were presented whose papers were very far indeed below the scholarships' requirements. It seems a hopeless task to get pupil-teachers, scholarship candidates, or standard pupils to discriminate between such words as "rise" and "raise," "lie" and "lay," &c. In geography also the majority of candidates either fail, or do not attempt, to answer questions requiring them to name geographical features from one point to another. Further information regarding these examinations may be found in my special reports thereon. During March and April, in addition to paying inspection visits, I examined eleven schools. From the 5th August to the 15th December I was engaged almost daily in examining fifty-eight schools. The examination schedules, together with exhaustive reports, were sent, in duplicate, to the Board and the Committees within a week of the examinations. The work was thus very heavy, extending over the seven days of the week, generally until after midnight. Also, to get through some of the larger schools in the allotted three days, the examination went on from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., continuously for the Inspector, but not so for the children, as various classes had their recesses at different times. From the 15th to the 21st December I supervised the Government examination of teachers in Wanganui.

ATTENDANCE.—At the close of the school year seventy-five schools (including two half-time schools) were in active operation, having an average weekly roll number of 6,221 and a working average of 4,644, or 74·6 per cent. The roll number shows an increase of 251 and the working average an increase of 211 on the corresponding numbers of 1885, while the percentage of attendance has been much the same for the past three years. Last year I pointed out the serious loss to the Board's revenue on account of the irregularity of pupils, and from the Minister's Report it will be seen that Wanganui occupied a lower position as regards attendance than any other district except Taranaki. Now, this year has seen no improvement. A good deal has been said and written against the syllabus, but undoubtedly one of the greatest difficulties in the way of the success of the present system is irregular attendance. Of course some parents have at times to keep their children at home to help on the farm, and in a few cases bad roads are responsible for irregularity; but truth compels me to state that many parents make no effort to secure the regular and punctual attendance of their children at school. Indeed, parents in some cases appear to be "slaves to the liberties of their children." Again, some parents who have taken an unmerited dislike to a teacher keep their children at home in order to injure him not only with respect to his salary, but also at the annual examination. I know of one large school where, although the instruction is good, seventy children are almost daily absent out of a roll number of under two hundred. Now, what is the effect of this irregular attendance? Children waste not only their own time, but also that of others. In a small school the teacher has to-day six standards; to-morrow Standard I., Standard II., Standard III., and Standard VI., but no Standard IV. and Standard V.; the following day Standard III. and Standard IV. are absent and the remaining classes present; and so on. Or, again, to-day a new rule is commenced in arithmetic with all the pupils in the Standard (VI.) present; to-morrow two, and the next day three, pupils are absent, and so a fortnight goes by before the very first rudiments of the rule are grasped. But how can fairly regular attendance be obtained? Some of the best means are undoubtedly, as I stated in former reports, to intensely interest the children by making the school in the highest degree attractive and the lessons as interesting as possible, to teach well, and to let each pupil see that regularity is a duty which he owes to himself and to others, and that it is closely connected with success. I have known children almost broken-hearted because they were compelled to stop away from school for one afternoon in the year. But, in addition to the above, it will be necessary to interest the parents also, by showing them how the irregular pupil falls behind his class-fellows, becomes discouraged, and loses his self-respect. Again, no cases of absence or unpunctuality should be passed over, and punishment should be inflicted where advisable. It will be found a good plan to give pupils marks for their work and conduct during the week, and on each Monday to place pupils in their seats in the order of the total marks. For irregularity or other breaches of discipline during the week pupils would lose one or more places. With place-taking in oral work I do not at all agree, for it is entirely opposed to teaching, as distinguished from examining, a class by questioning. The issuing of a neat certificate, such as I asked the Board some time ago to supply, to pupils that have attended regularly would, I think, improve the attendance. From the compulsory clauses of the Act little benefit can be derived, so much trouble is there in obtaining a conviction under them, to say nothing of the natural dislike of Committees to put them in force against their neighbours.

EXAMINATION IN STANDARDS.—All schools in the district open for twelve months were examined. The aided schools at Mars Hill and Moutoa were closed for a considerable portion of the year, and Upper Tutaenui was closed at the time set down for its examination owing to the sudden departure of the teacher. These three schools, consequently, were not examined; but I purpose to take them early in the autumn. New schools were opened during the past year at Paraekaretu and Cardiff, and these were inspected, and they will be examined before midwinter. A half-time school was opened at Cheltenham, and with it Kimbolton Road, formerly a full-time school, was made a half-time school. On the days appointed for the examination there were 5,874 children on the rolls of the sixty-nine schools (the six additional schools above mentioned bring the roll number for the district up to 6,221), of whom 3,704, or 63 per cent. (3 per cent. more than in the previous year), were presented for promotion in the six standards, 2,146 were in the preparatory classes, and 24 had passed Standard VI. Of the 3,704 children presented for promotion, 3,449, or 93 per cent., attended and were examined, and 255 were absent; 249 were excepted, 955 failed, and 2,245 passed the requirements. The percentage of failures was 29·8, and the percentage of passes