1888.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:
REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.-1B, 1887.]

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

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

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AUCKLAND.

1. MR. FIDLER'S REPORT.

SIR,— Auckland, 15th February, 1888.

I have the honour to submit my report on the work of the schools in the central district for the year 1887. Owing to illness I did not begin work till the 1st April.

Nineteen of the schools in this district were examined by Mr. Heriot—whose skill and experience will have made his visits very serviceable. The rest of the schools—forty-six, including the town schools—were examined by me. The majority of the schools of this district have been inspected.

I submit the following summary of results for central district, Auckland, as required by the department:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	47	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	219	4	3	52	160	14 8
S 5	582	37	37	197	311	13 8
S 4	1,151	69	72	346	664	12 9
S 3	1,612	93	155	449	915	11 5
S 2	1,752	91	149	206	1,306	10 3
S 1	1,524	81	83	125	1,235	9 4
P.	4,205	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	11,092	375	499	1,375	4,591	*

* Mean of average age, 12 years.

On the whole, I consider the work done to be fair. In about half the schools the work ranged from satisfactory to excellent; in a third it was uneven, or, though not bad, showed a want of thoroughness; in the rest—eleven—it was so unsatisfactory as to be the subject of special report. The above table shows that the greatest percentage (38) of failures was in Standard V., the next greatest (34) in Standard IV., and that the percentages in Standards III., VI., II., and I. were 32, 24, 13, and 9 respectively.

The reading, all things considered, was fair, though hardly enough attention is paid to the meanings of the parts read. The writing, too, was fair, though a number of the papers sent in lacked neatness. I have in a number of cases had to refer to the bad spelling, in some cases in strong terms. Much more attention to this subject is needed.

The excellent method of correcting dictation by causing the scholars to open the books when the piece of dictation has been read, and causing them to correct their own errors, is now being neglected. Where this method is adhered to the teacher should select slates here and there to see that the corrections are being properly made. The method very frequently adopted now of allowing children to mark their neighbours' errors is strongly condemned in the Board's Instructions for the Guidance of Teachers.

More care should be taken to see that the errors marked by the teachers in the home-work

books have really been noted by the children. Thus I frequently find that words misspelled have been underlined by the teacher, but that the scholar has evidently begun the succeeding exercise without any regard to the corrections of the previous lessons, and has gone on repeating his error. Children should be made to rewrite correctly what has been marked for incorrectness. The home work in some schools would have been better done and better corrected if there had been less of it. The arithmetic is good. There is, I think, a falling-off in the character of the compositions sent in. Many of those from Standard III. consist of one string of unpunctuated material, in one long, rambling, ill-spelt sentence. In these cases the children ought to have been drilled to express their ideas on very simple subjects in a few very short sentences, free from such forms as "their are," "we seen," &c. Young teachers need more guidance from the headmasters in the giving of such lessons. Notwithstanding this, there were many excellent compositions from Standard VI., and in a number of schools from Standards IV. and V.

In many of the schools grammar is not taught well. There is evidence that the subject is treated without system, that there is a want of a prearranged plan of lessons, that one lesson is little connected with the previous one, and that the teacher devotes insufficient attention to the preparation of these lessons overnight. Most of the work in geography was satisfactory.

Due attention is generally paid to the class subjects, though in a few cases the competition for percentages causes the attention to be concentrated mainly on the pass subjects.

Junior teachers are not always sufficiently guided as to the subjects and treatment of their object lessons. There is a decided improvement in the teaching of elementary science in Classes IV. to VI.

The mechanical drawing of Standards V. and VI. in the schools visited by the drawing master is very good. Freehand is taught in the lower standards by the regular teaching staffs, and in many schools is well taught. Very much of the drawing master's time is now taken up in teaching drawing in the higher classes of large schools where the staffs are fully competent to do the work. I think it would be much better if he were regarded as a skilful director of the drawing throughout all the standards in such schools, and furnished the Board with a quarterly report on the work done in them; he would then be able to devote more of his time to the suburban and country schools near the town.

I think more inducement should be held out to teachers to acquire something beyond a common school education, and to qualify themselves for the higher grades of certificates. Such inducement would be given if only those teachers holding certificates higher than E were eligible for appointments of a certain value: for any good appointment I am sure sufficient thoroughly suitable candidates holding certificates higher than E would be forthcoming. Scholarly teachers are particularly useful in the larger country schools, where, after hours, they can educate the brighter youths of the district in useful subjects beyond the reach of less-educated men. The influence of well-informed teachers on all about them is so much greater.

The regulations for the employment of pupil-teachers which have been in force for a long time need revision. The instruction of pupil-teachers has now been relegated to their proper educational guardians, the headmasters. It was high time. The defective arrangements for their instruction which have been in force for some time past will continue to tell seriously on the work of education in this province for some years to come. The replies to the Board's circular of December last *re* the instruction of pupil-teachers show that in only one of the town schools (Mr. Hart's) was any instruction other than in method given at all systematically to pupil-teachers by the headmasters, and the success of Mr. Hart's pupil-teachers was guaranteed by his considerateness. With regard to the country schools no teacher not well qualified to give such instruction should be in charge of a school having a pupil-teacher attached.

Until some such general provision as the establishment of one good training college for the colony or the closer connecting of the University colleges with the training of teachers is made, the pupil-teachers in this province on completing their apprenticeship should, as far as practicable, be brought to work in the town schools for a time, where they might help in the school work in the morning, but be allowed on some of the afternoons to attend the University classes. Those who do not care to avail themselves of the privilege (and only a limited number of those finishing their apprenticeship each year would care) could, at the end of their third year's pupil-teachership, by taking the E or D certificate, become at once eligible for most positions in the Board's service.

The number of lady teachers is excessive; some of our very large schools have each only one male assistant. If there be not a supply of male teachers from within the province, vacancies that arise can be filled with thoroughly competent men by advertising in the *New Zealand Schoolmaster*.

I have at the foot of recent reports requested the Chairmen of School Committees to show them to head teachers, as in most cases they are intended to be suggestive. This course has been adopted because several teachers have complained that they do not know the nature of the reports on their schools.

Unless the staff scale recommended by the Inspectors is adhered to much more closely than the old one was, the scale recommended will be of little value.

The wise counsels, the genial manner, and the kindly nature of Mr. O'Sullivan will be missed amongst us who are engaged in the work of education here.

I have, &c.,

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

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2. MR. GOODWIN'S REPORT.

SIR,— Auckland, 24th February, 1888.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year 1887. My work for the past year has been confined to the schools in the northern division of the Auckland Education District. I have

examined eighty-seven schools and presented sixty-seven inspection reports. In some cases, where the schools were small or remotely situated, I examined and inspected on the same day.

The following table shows, in addition to the particulars required by section 13 of the "Standards," the percentage of failures in each standard. The other particulars required with respect to each school in this division will be found in the returns prepared for the whole district:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Percentage of Failures in Standards.
						Yrs. mos.	
S 7	4	...	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	74	1	2	31	40	15 6	43·6
S 5	189	13	13	78	85	14 10	47·8
S 4	356	20	22	87	227	12 2	27·7
S 3	478	34	35	116	293	11 9	28·3
S 2	514	34	34	140	306	11 0	31·3
S 1	511	28	26	72	385	9 0	15·7
P.	1,199	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	3,325	130	132	524	1,336	*	28·1

* Mean of average age, 13 years 4 months.

An examination of this table will show that the highest percentages of failure were in Standards III., V., and VI. In the other standards the work done was on the whole fair.

Most of the schools north of Auckland are small, only five having more than one hundred scholars on the roll. In a large number the attendance does not justify the employment of more than one teacher. Of the eighty-seven to which this report relates thirty-four were half-time schools. In many of these schools all the standard classes were represented.

Taking into consideration these circumstances, the irregular attendance of the children, and their frequent absence from school on the plea of home duties, it is not surprising that the results of the teaching are somewhat inferior to those obtained in schools conducted under more favourable conditions. In saying this I do not intend to offer any excuse for negligent or incompetent teachers. I have during the year specially reported fourteen schools as "unsatisfactory." In some cases the teachers were able to show cause why they should not be held accountable for the bad results; as, for instance, where they had been but a short time in charge, and were not therefore responsible for the year's work. In applying the tests prescribed by the "Standards" I have not, I believe, erred on the side of leniency, but I have endeavoured to keep strictly within the programme.

I have brought no pressure to bear upon teachers to induce them to present children for the First Standard. I have always been of opinion that no child should be presented in that standard unless fit to pass with ease. Under existing regulations, Standard I. once passed presentment becomes compulsory in the succeeding standards, and, although the regulation as to exceptions may prevent a school from being credited with failures due to absolutely bad attendance, still a pupil may attend very irregularly and yet not come under that head.

I have already, in a memorandum to the Board, stated my opinion that the syllabus is not excessive in schools where more than one teacher is employed; but, from what I have observed in the smaller schools, I think the character of the work would be much improved if some of the class and additional subjects were omitted.

I will now make a few brief remarks on the several subjects of instruction.

Reading and Spelling.—These subjects require much more attention: the former, though not positively bad, was in many cases characterized by want of expression, hurry, or a dull monotonous style; the latter shows great lack of vigilance on the part of the teachers in the frequent mistakes made in simple words. I am convinced that this proceeds from the careless correction, or, rather, want of correction, of the transcription exercises. I have known children to make mistakes in copying the printed questions set before them on the day of examination.

Arithmetic.—I consider that, on the whole, arithmetic is very fairly taught: it is weakest in Standards II. and V. I have noticed that in many schools the P. classes are able to do the arithmetic of Standard I., though much below that class in other work.

Writing.—In the higher standards I have had to call attention to want of care and disregard of the head lines in the copy books. There is great room for improvement in Standard II. The writing on slates in Standard I. was in most cases very good.

Grammar and Composition.—There were a good many failures in these subjects in Standards V. and VI.; in the lower standards fair work was done, but more lessons in composition should be given. There is plenty of practice, but too little teaching.

Geography.—In many schools good marks were awarded for the geography of Standard II. In Standard IV. the knowledge of this subject was often very meagre; but in Standards III., V., and VI., where it is a pass subject, I found better work. Some very good specimens of map-drawing were shown.

History.—This is not required for a pass in any standard, and, possibly as a consequence, has received but little attention.

Drawing.—I find that in many instances direct instruction is not given in drawing or the proper of the drawing book. The distinction between the teaching and the practising lesson in this, in other subjects, seems not to be understood. Frequently the lesson consists in placing a copy

before the pupils, and leaving them to go on at their ease. I have, however, even in small schools, seen some very creditable specimens of freehand, model, geometrical, and mechanical drawing; but, generally speaking, nothing has been attempted beyond freehand. Some teachers do not seem to be aware that drawing is not to be taught as an accomplishment, but as the initiatory step to technical education.

In nearly all the schools easy questions on the laws of health were fairly answered, but nothing further in the direction of elementary science was attempted except in a few schools, where an effort had been made to comply with the requirements of the Education Department in that subject. The object lessons would have had much better results if they had been more carefully prepared.

The work in additional subjects may, I think, be deemed fair, taking into consideration the circumstances attending each school and the difficulties experienced in teaching some of these subjects.

The school-buildings were, with few exceptions, clean and in good condition. I was glad to see that teachers had in some cases taken trouble to make their schools pleasant and attractive to their scholars. This should not be a difficult matter: a few coloured prints, flowers, shells, minerals, &c., tastefully arranged, effect a wonderful change in the appearance of the most dingy schoolroom, and there is certainly no reason why children should not do their work with as cheerful surroundings as possible.

I have had but little cause to find fault with the discipline in the schools under notice: the behaviour and manners of the scholars are in most cases creditable to both parents and teachers.

The North of Auckland is now well supplied with schools. I have no doubt that if the parents could be induced to send their children more regularly, and allow them to profit by the instruction placed within their reach, they would in no long time show results equal to those obtained in any part of the provincial district. Idle, unskilful, and careless teachers are being gradually replaced by young and energetic persons, some of whom have passed through our larger schools, and who, it is hoped, carry to their work in the country that knowledge of their business and those habits of order, neatness, and accuracy in which some of their predecessors were decidedly deficient.

I have, &c.,

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

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3. MR. O'SULLIVAN'S REPORT.

SIR,— Board of Education, Auckland, March, 1888.

I have the honour to submit this report for the year ended the 31st December, 1887.

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

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	79	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	444	14	9	118	303	14 11
S 5	1,128	68	68	363	629	13 10
S 4	2,159	122	133	560	1,344	12 9
S 3	3,063	176	252	723	1,912	11 6
S 2	3,254	169	236	485	2,364	10 5
S 1	2,996	142	146	271	2,437	9 2
P.	7,507	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	20,630	691	844	2,520	8,989	...

Things go on much as they did before my last report. The Board persist in refusing to consult the Inspectors on the appointment of teachers and probationers, and on other matters which anywhere out of this district would be considered in the province of the Inspectors. Appointments are made, and the Inspectors know nothing of them except when they are advertised in the newspapers: the Board still insists "on putting out their own eyes." On what principle the appointments are made to the smaller schools, which are not advertised, I am in the ridiculous position of knowing nothing whatever. It is the same about the appointment of probationers—a subject of vital importance. This I know: that the probationer system, as it is now, is but a travesty on the system which I set on foot. Meanwhile the building of hurtful schools goes merrily on. I shall give but one instance—the latest. The Board have resolved to build a school at New Lynn. This place is less than two miles from the Avondale School, and about two miles from the Waikomiti and Henderson schools. The neighbouring Committees declined to recommend its being built. This is very significant when it is borne in mind how prone Committees are to give a helping-hand to anything which will bring about the spending of money in their districts. The Inspector who was asked to examine the site reported against it. The very Board themselves once decided against building there. Yet the thing was carried by means of what I will call a private arrangement. And this in the very height of all this "pother o'er our heads" about retrenchment. What I will call the teaching department is at present a body without a head. The Board, the Secretary, and the Committees—now one, and now the others—try their turns at driving. The Board have the least portion of this work. Every one but the Inspector is consulted. I am aware that some of the Board hug the notion, like the fly on the chariot-wheel, that they guide the vehicle. It is needless to point out that they labour under a lamentable delusion. The whole thing strongly reminds one of the saying about the effect of the plurality of cooks—qualified by the fact that in this instance these artists

know nothing of cookery. Any one can figure to himself the results that are likely to follow. There should be a Chief Inspector, who should have, among other duties, a general supervision over the whole system. There has been a good deal of talk about undue punishments in schools, and various charges against teachers have been made, which, by the way, were all shown to be baseless. But nothing has been said of the injuries inflicted on teachers by their pupils. Yet these have been inflicted, and very serious ones too. Why do we hear nothing of these? I would remark that the Board is entirely losing sight of one of their most important duties—the regulating of the number of pupils to be allowed to attend each school. They cannot get rid of their responsibility by hiding their head in the sand—by shifting the duty on to Committees. Some of the appointments recently made by Committees are notoriously bad. The effect of all these things I have mentioned, and of many which I have not mentioned, may not be apparent at present. The foundations of the system have been too firmly laid. But a persistence in the ignoring of Inspectors in the making, or consenting to, bad appointments and the like cannot go on very long without making the whole system, not merely to totter, but to tumble down.

I have, &c.,
R. J. O'Sullivan,
Senior Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Auckland.

The Board submits for the information of the Minister of Education the following notes on the report of the Senior Inspector of Schools:—

1. Division of District.—The schools visited by the Senior Inspector during the year 1887 were those in the southern division of the education district, being about one-third of the whole number. The reports of the other two Inspectors, Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Fidler, deal with the schools in the northern and central divisions respectively.

2. Appointments of Teachers.—Except in small schools, for which a duly-certificated teacher cannot be obtained, no teacher is appointed who does not hold a certificate of competency from the Minister of Education. In the promotion of teachers the Board is guided by the written reports of the Inspectors upon their teaching, and in the promotion of assistant teachers the Board has a further guide in the quarterly reports which head teachers are required to furnish upon the members of their staff. The report speaks of "appointments recently made by Committees." This is an error. Committees have the right to recommend any teacher for appointment, but all appointments are made by the Board.

3. School at New Lynn.—The circumstances of the building of a school at New Lynn are widely different from those stated by the Senior Inspector in his report.

4. Employment of a Chief Inspector.—Until three years ago a Chief Inspector exercised a general supervision over the whole system. The Board then determined to alter that arrangement, and to hold each Inspector separately responsible for the district under his inspection. The change has effected a large saving in the cost of inspection, and the Board sees no reason to revert to the old system.

Auckland, 20th April, 1888. J. H. Upton, Chairman.

TARANAKI.

Sir,— Education Office, New Plymouth, 22nd February, 1888.

I have the honour to submit my report on the schools of the district for the year ending 31st December, 1887.

The visits required under the existing regulations have been complied with in the case of each school. In carrying out these visits I am placed somewhat at much personal disadvantage and hardship by the arrangement and position of the schools. Without lateral communication in many instances, I am compelled to take many daily journeys of from twelve to fourteen hours from New Plymouth as a centre. The schools, open only for four and a half hours a day, must be reached in time—or the children's working day be unreasonably lengthened—to overtake the yearly increasing labours of the Inspector. Teachers, also, are continually removing; consequently inspection, to be thorough and complete, demands more than a formal visit, if it is to be beneficial alike to teacher and scholar. The day, or several days, have invariably been given to the work of inspection, or the examination of each school; and occasionally, when at inspection I have been unable to speak favourably of a teacher's work, the report has been withheld until a subsequent visit. Year by year, as the attendance and the number of the schools advance, the expense required to efficiently perform the duties of inspection will increase. Additional visits have also been paid to a fair number of the schools where the work was either doubtful or the teachers showed a desire to obtain any practical advice.

In the latter part of the year a course of lessons was undertaken by a number of teachers who had kindly offered their services. The lessons were given on the Saturday at the Central School, New Plymouth, and were well attended by teachers, and also by the pupil-teachers, to the latter of whom the actual travelling expenses were allowed. An average attendance of thirty showed that the lessons were appreciated, and the hints on processes and methods gained have been introduced with good effect into the teaching at many schools. Much care was taken to provide classes of children to whom the work of the lesson was unknown, as well as to adapt the teaching to the condition of the scholars. The time-table, also, was arranged to afford model lessons in various subjects, and these were in a few instances, when required, illustrated by simple experiments and handy apparatus. Lessons were likewise given by the pupil-teachers, and their efforts afterwards criticized by the teachers present. In addition to the supervision of the lessons I was able to make good progress in introducing the study of model-drawing, which appeared to interest all attending. Time did not allow of any attempt to give singing lessons, but I hope that before long a class will be formed with

the intention of introducing the subject generally into the schools of the district. I desire here to express my sense of obligation to those teachers whose efforts enabled me to carry out the course so successfully; and I am certain that many practical difficulties of method, questioning, and illustration have been made clear by these lessons, while the comments made incidentally when these lessons were in progress will be invaluable to the young and less experienced teachers, who cannot but be better able, in future, to deal more confidently and successfully with similar difficulties as they occur in their own teaching. The following is a copy of the time-table, showing the model lessons given at the Central School during the course:—

Date.	Lesson.	Standard Classes.	Teacher.
Sept. 10 ...	Grammar: The Adverb	Standard IV. ...	H. Dempsey.
" 17 ...	Geography: Definitions	Standard II. ...	G. W. Potts.
" 24 ...	Drawing: Collective	Standards II. & III.	W. Dickie.
Oct. 1 ...	Arithmetic: Ratio	Standard V. ...	J. Grant, B.A.
" 8 ...	Science: Introductory	Standard IV. ...	J. Young.
" 15 ...	" "	Standard IV. ...	J. Young.
" 22 ...	Arithmetic: Number	Preparatory ...	Ed. Evans.
" 29 ...	Grammar: Noun, Definition of	Standard III. ...	J. J. Campbell.
Nov. 12 ...	Science: Barometer	Standard V. ...	J. Grant, B.A.
" 19 ...	Writing	Preparatory ...	Isa Blair.
" 26 ...	Object lesson: Coral	Standard IV. ...	Ed. Evans.
Dec. 3 ...	Reading	Standard IV. ...	G. Whitelaw.
" 10 ...	Recitation	Senior	Teachers.

Considerable improvement was noticeable in the work done by the pupil-teachers at their annual examination, which took place on the 22nd June and three following days. Three have now completed the term of four years, and will in all probability prepare for the next certificate examination. Altogether, twelve succeeded in passing for promotion, while two or three failed through weakness in their instruction.

Coming to the information connected with the year's attendance, the roll number—2,395—at the 31st December does not show the usual increase of the past few years; the mean increase, however, of the four quarters is eighty-seven. The explanation lies in the fact that for one quarter of the year the return was 2,616, and, but for the serious epidemic, or, rather, succession of epidemics, which have visited the district, causing many withdrawals, the roll number would have stood higher than on any previous occasion. For similar reasons the working average shows a gradual decline, falling from 1,915 in March to 1,800 in December, or fourteen less than that of the 31st December, 1886, which return was the highest for that year. If the returns of both years be compared, a decided improvement of 4 per cent. is apparent, thus putting beyond question the constant increase in the number and quality of the attendance. This percentage of increase has augmented the revenue of the Board for the year by the sum of £500. While it is very gratifying to direct attention to this result, or to the steady rise of the Board's income from £5,726 to £7,369 during my four years' connection with the district, there still remains much to be done to bring the attendance to a satisfactory basis, because the reductions of the present year will press very heavily, and cannot but seriously affect the Board's relations with the teachers, whose incomes will now depend to a very great extent upon the regularity of attendance at their schools. The greatest credit is due to the New Plymouth School Committee for the very active measures used to enforce better attendance, through the compulsory clauses of the Education Act. Were several country Committees, in whose districts a great deal of indifference exists, to move in the same direction, there would be less refusals to meet their numerous applications for assistance. I notice in the quarterly returns the names of 134 scholars that in no single instance made sixty attendances in any one quarter of the year. In order to influence an improved attendance, the mean percentage of attendance on the mean roll number for the first three quarters is given in table form. [Not reprinted.] It is to be hoped that the low returns in several instances will not be repeated, nor call for any further comment on this subject be required.

Tables 1 and 2 show the necessary information required by the department. In standards 1,527 were presented, and 863 in the preparatory classes, or a total of 2,390 presented. There are 130 returned as absent and 416 excepted. The passes of the year, 876, exceed 765, those of last year. The failures are nearly alike, 416, against 413 for 1886. Better results were expected, but for the reasons already given the work has suffered much interruption, especially during the last four months of the year. A slight advance, showing improvement, of 2 per cent. is made both on the percentage of failures and the percentage of passes. As a test of the quality of the work, I was able, through the courtesy of Mr. Inspector Petrie, of Otago, to use questions that had been given in that district. The results are satisfactory, and to some extent show the character of my marking and treatment during the past few years. A percentage of 67 per cent., as against Otago's 77 per cent. on the number examined, is at least hopeful; and, though some of our best schools have rather lowered than raised it, there can be no doubt but that the teaching in many of the country schools is surely improving in the methods best fitted to develop the intelligence of the scholars.

Class and additional subjects have been more fully recognised in the work of the year, and with results beyond my expectation. The returns of the first show an increase of 11 per cent., and the latter 16 per cent. In two or three cases only was the work avoided in one or more subjects,

generally those in which the teachers themselves were but poorly informed: it has been my practice in like cases, when known to me, to encourage such to take those subjects only which they felt themselves best able to deal with. In a very fair number of the schools considerable skill is indicated in the systematic treatment of these subjects, whilst the interest taken by the scholars in the lessons so effectively treated dispel any fear of their neglect or value in promoting the mental condition of the children.

In past years I have referred to the defective methods used in the teaching of reading, which, unfortunately, retard that real progress so desirable to see. Again, it is needful to call attention in my report to the requirements of the syllabus on this subject, and insist upon more earnestness and better preparation from teachers, who in many cases are solely to blame. As long as the present standard of quality is reached, under those to whom I allude, all further effort appears to cease; hence I have marked this subject more heavily than formerly, with the view of urging its importance. Writing has also been treated similarly, though there have been but few cases of carelessness to reprove; yet the neglect of teaching details is obvious in the specimens throughout a few schools, where system and habits of order and neatness receive scant attention. There are few schools now in which spelling is not well taught: in this subject, and the three remaining pass subjects not yet referred to, the percentages of passes run from 10 to 18 per cent. increase on the returns of last year. The arithmetic of Standard II. was the weakest part of the year's work. The poor results can, however, be fairly put down to insufficient practice, caused by the absence of a large number through sickness. In the lower standards better preparation of the addition and other tables would well repay the time given to their study, as the want of these is very manifest in the limited number that show any degree of expertness. Much time, also, is generally spent over the ordinary mechanical operations through inability to work readily; so that the problem-tests are overlooked in the instruction, and, consequently, not attempted at examination. Grammar has been better treated than formerly: good methods and improved teaching power are driving away the old technical difficulties, which had effectually stopped any clear knowledge of the subject. Geography has shared in the improvement: locality and incident are more vigorously taught in the upper standards, whilst the work of Standard III. continues to make steady progress. Satisfactory results were obtained in drawing, which is, as yet, confined to freehand alone: the best work was obtained where the instruction had been given in class. Instruction in needlework is now given in every school. The examination of the specimens extended over two days, owing to the largely increased number. Several schools showed work of most excellent quality. This subject is now faithfully and well taught in the greater number of the schools. The suggestions made by the ladies' committee have been conveyed to the teachers, and there is every reason to conclude that this important subject will, with occasional exceptions, be treated most successfully.

The scholarship examination took place on the 8th and 9th December, when eighteen out of the twenty-one nominated were in attendance. Only seven succeeded in obtaining the marks required by regulation. The best papers were done by the country competitors, who were only fairly represented; but, owing to home circumstances and the low value of the scholarships, which is insufficient to provide for the expense of residence in town, the successful candidates from country schools decided to decline their acceptance. Another examination took place during the present month to award these; but I trust the Board will no longer delay the proposal to increase the value of the scholarships, as practically the country scholars are shut out from participation in this grant.

Before concluding, I refer to a few points that are certain to influence the future success of the educational work of this district. The aim of the Board has been to improve the teaching power, and so far it has succeeded in securing the services of several competent teachers, who are by their efforts steadily improving the attendance and the work of instruction in their schools; but I fear the much higher scale of payments in other districts will check and tend to hamper the supply for any future vacancy. Would it not be well to reconsider the separate scales of payment for male and female teachers? Were the payment to both alike, at least for schools with an attendance of under seventy, a greater number of applications would be received from young female teachers capable of carrying on the work as well as it is now done elsewhere, or in a few schools of this district where recent appointments have shown similar success.

Again, the so-called bonus on classification does not work fairly here; some teachers, placed high in their class, fail to give satisfactory evidence of teaching ability. Judged by their success of the past few years, the bonus, so far as the public interest is concerned, is not deservedly earned. To divide a yearly sum equal to the amount now assigned, according to a classification scale, amongst the teachers that give good results would be an incentive to more diligence, and create a healthier tone.

Another, and then I close. Your teachers labour under the disadvantage of a short school-day, which in other districts extends to not less than five hours. An additional half-hour a day might readily be added to the attendance of all from Standard III. upwards, because I am sure the Board is simply adding to instead of lessening the yearly effort of preparing so many subjects in each standard. Unquestionably this burden of forcing so much into a given time is the chief cause of the endless agitation against the syllabus. Although I personally object to the reduction of the syllabus by any curtailment of its subjects, I protest against their present distribution over a fixed and unalterable number of years in every child's case. Given the course of instruction over seven years, and leave to Inspectors to except in special cases, less would be heard of "cram," "pressure," and "percentages."

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board. WILLIAM MURRAY, Inspector.

SUMMARY of RESULTS for the WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
S 7	1	...	...	..	...	...
S 6	21	...	1	9	11	14·6
S 5	67	3	5	35	24	14·7
S 4	210	20	12	77	101	13·2
S 3	454	36	32	159	227	11·8
S 2	414	44	41	100	229	10·3
S 1	360	27	13	36	284	8·9
P.	863	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	2,390	130	104	416	876	*

* Mean of average age, 12 years 3 months.

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Education Board Office, Wanganui, 21st February, 1888.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ended 31st December, 1887.

WORK OF THE YEAR.—The work of the year commenced with the usual heavy compilation of statistics, and with the writing of the annual report. As the number of schools in the district is increasing each year, the time at my disposal did not admit of my inspecting every school. I, however, managed to pay sixty-six inspection visits, principally during the autumn and winter months. This number would have been increased by eight had it not been for exceptionally severe weather on the days set apart for visiting certain schools. During the last week of June I examined thirty-eight pupil-teachers for promotion, and four candidates. Fourteen pupil-teachers presented themselves for the first class, or third year, examination, and thirteen passed; twelve for the second class, and eleven passed; and twelve for the third class, and six passed. That the work of the pupil-teachers is improving is shown by the fact that at the last teachers' examination in this district two out of the three teachers that obtained a full pass in E, and three out of the five teachers that obtained a partial pass, were pupil-teachers. At the same time with the pupil-teachers I examined the candidates for the six scholarships offered by the Board. Only twenty-two pupils competed, fourteen boys and eight girls, and only eight of the Board's schools were represented, and two secondary schools. For the three senior scholarships there were twelve competitors, and two were won by Alfred Innes and Bertha Dixon, both of Hawera School; but the remaining ten candidates failed to obtain the 65 per cent. of the possible marks required by the regulations. The three junior scholarships were won by John McIntyre, Wanganui Boys'; Matthew McNicol, Warrengate; and Mary McGovern, Manaia. The money still in hand after the apportionment of these scholarships allowed of the candidate next in merit, Arthur Ward, of Wanganui Boys', receiving a scholarship for one year. During the autumn and early winter months of the year, in addition to paying visits of inspection, I examined eighteen schools. And here I may say that, if more inspection visits and more examination visits alternated in this manner, my work would be lighter than it is at present. When the schools were few in number it was convenient that they should be examined quickly one after another; but they have continued to increase year after year until now, from the beginning of August to Christmas, examination work is unceasing almost daily from early morning to midnight. But I do not see how to change this unless some schools are for once allowed only nine months from one examination to another, and such a course I should not like to recommend. From the first week of August to the 23rd December I examined fifty-seven schools, being engaged in actual examination on all days but four or five. In the case of every school but the Wanganui Boys' and the Wanganui Girls' I forwarded within a few days of each examination the schedules and my reports to the Board's office, and also duplicate copies thereof to the Committee interested. Also a monthly summary of results was posted in time for each meeting of the Board. I find that it takes about six months to examine all the schools in standards, and that over two months are occupied in preparing questions for standard, scholarship, and pupil-teachers' examinations, supervising the two last and examining the work done by the candidates, and in preparing the statistics for the year. Allowing, then, for office correspondence, for attending meetings of the Board, and for odd school holidays, little over three months is available for inspection visits.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS. ATTENDANCE.—At the close of the school year seventy-seven schools (including two half-time schools and eleven aided schools) were in active operation, having an average weekly roll number of 6,772, and a working average of 5,265, or 77·7 per cent. The roll number shows an increase of 551, and the working average an increase of 621, on the corresponding numbers of 1886. With regard to the percentage of attendance, it is gratifying to see that it has now taken a turn for the better. In the last report of the Minister of Education it was shown that the working average for the year, calculated as a percentage of the mean average weekly roll number, was lower in this district than in any other in the colony, Taranaki excepted. I now find that it has risen from 74·7 in 1886 to 77·7 in 1887. This 77·7 is, I believe, the highest percentage of attendance that has yet been reached here; but even still it is less than was obtained by five districts in 1886, and 6 per cent. lower than was obtained in Otago in that year.

EXAMINATION IN STANDARDS.—Of the seventy-seven schools in operation at the end of the school year, seventy-five had been open for twelve months or over, and all these were examined. The number examined in the previous year was sixty-nine. The schools at Paraekaretu, Cheltenham, Pihama, Cardiff Road, and Eltham were examined for the first time; while Moutoa, which was closed for several months in 1886, was examined again last year. New schools at Hunterville, Pohangina, and Te Roti were not examined, as they had not been open for six months at the end of the year. On the days appointed for the examinations there were 6,503 children on the school rolls (629 more than in 1886), of whom 4,102, or 63 per cent., were presented for promotion in the six standards, 2,372 were in the preparatory classes, and 29 had passed Standard VI. Of the 4,102 children presented for promotion in standards, 3,874, or 94 per cent., attended and were examined, 228 were absent, 286 were excepted, 971 failed, and 2,617 passed the requirements. The percentage of failures was 27·06, and the percentage of passes 40·24. With regard to the latter percentage it must be remembered that, according to the new regulations, it is calculated on the number on the rolls; not, as formerly, on the number examined in standards. The percentage of passes on the number examined in standards was 67·5, and on the same number but omitting exceptions 72·94. For the uninitiated the last is the fairest calculation upon which to judge the work done, and, as may readily be seen, it is the difference between 100 and the percentage of failures. The number of pupils excepted owing to irregular attendance, expressed as a percentage of the number examined in standards, was 7·3; but several pupils passed their standards who would have been counted excepted on this groupp of irregular attendance if they had failed to reach the requirements for a pass. The attendance upon examination days was very good, and it was pleasing to see how the children at well-conducted schools thoroughly enjoyed their work. At many schools in bush districts, where the roads were very bad, I found every child present even on very wet days. Unfortunately, however, the attendance at several schools is very irregular, except when the examination is near at hand. Indeed, it is a common complaint with teachers that immediately after the examination many children are kept at home for weeks, and even for months. The following table (Table A) gives a condensed summary of the examination results during the past two years. Table B shows the results in each standard. Table C [not printed] gives every information with regard to individual schools.

TABLE A.

—	1886.	1887.
Number on rolls on days of examination...	5,874	6,503
Preparatory classes	2,146	2,372
Above Standard VI.	24	29
	2,170	2,401
Presented in Standards I. to VI., inclusive	3,704	4,102
Percentage of roll number presented	63·0	63·07
Examined in Standards I. to VI.	3,449	3,874
Absent in standards	255	228
Excepted in standards	249	286
Failed in standards	955	971
Passed in standards	2,245	2,617
Percentage of passes (calculated on roll number)	38·2	40·24
Percentage of failures	29·8	27·06
Percentage of passes on number examined in standards ...	65·0	67·55
Percentage of passes on number examined in standards, omitting exceptions	70·2	72·94

TABLE B.

No. of Schools examined in each Standard.	Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Percentage of Failures in Standards.
							Yrs. mos.	
15	S 7	29	...	...	...	...	...	...
42	S 6	164	13	7	50	94	13 11	34·7
57	S 5	313	16	22	97	178	13 5	35·3
71	S 4	642	39	47	219	337	12 9	39·4
69	S 3	838	65	68	253	452	11 9	35·9
72	S 2	1,107	51	77	212	767	10 6	21·7
70	S 1	1,038	44	65	140	789	8 10	15·1
74	P.	2,372	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Totals ...	6,503	228	286	971	2,617	*	27·06

* Mean of average age, 11 years 10·3 months.

Upon looking at these tables it will be seen that the number of children examined last year exceeded the number examined in 1886 by 629, being higher in every standard but Standard V.; that the number below Standard I. was 2,372, as against 2,146 in the previous year; and that the number of pupils presented expressed as a percentage of the roll number was the same as in 1886—namely, 63. With regard to the comparative results of the two examinations as far as percentages are concerned, there has been an improvement in every class but Standard III. (falling-off of 0·9); for the percentage of failures has decreased in Standard VI. by 2·5, in Standard V. by 8·5, in Standard IV. by 6·4, in Standard II. by 2·5, and in Standard I. by 2·5—that is, the percentage of passes on the number examined in each class, omitting exceptions, has increased by the above amounts respectively. For all classes the percentage of passes, omitting exceptions, is 72·9, and the percentage of failures 27·06—that is, an improvement of 2·7. The seventy-five schools examined may be classified as follows: (1) two infants' schools, (2) two half-time schools, (3) forty-five schools each officered by only one teacher, (4) nine schools each officered by one teacher and one pupil-teacher, and (5) seventeen larger schools. At the two half-time schools I found that in no class could the pupils approach the requirements. Of the forty-five schools in class 3, at ten the work was very bad, and at eleven only moderate; while at fourteen it varied from fair to very fair, and at ten from good to very good. Of the ten schools in this class at which the work was very bad, four were aided schools. Of the nine schools in class 4, three showed very poor, five very fair, and one very good work. Of the seventeen larger schools it may be said that at two the work was bad, at two poor, at twelve varying from moderate in some classes to excellent in others, and at one school—Hawera—very good throughout all classes. The following table (Table D) shows the number of children examined and the percentage passed in each of the seven pass-subjects.

TABLE D.

Subject.		Reading.		Dictation and Spelling.		Writing.		Arithmetic.		Grammar and Composition.		Geography.		Drawing.	
Class.		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 VI.	...	151	92·0	151	88·7	151	98·0	151	61·6	151	52·3	151	65·5	...	...
Standard V.	...	297	79·5	297	69·0	297	95·2	297	62·3	297	65·3	297	65·3	...	...
Standard IV.	...	603	75·9	603	66·9	603	91·3	603	57·0	603	55·7	...	...	...	...
Standard III.	...	773	77·5	773	73·1	773	90·6	773	56·8	773	59·2	773	73·3	...	...
Standard II.	...	1,056	78·8	1,056	82·2	1,056	92·4	1,056	70·6	...	...	...	...	1,056	82·3
Standard I.	...	994	78·1	994	81·8	994	90·3	994	82·3	...	...	...	...	994	82·3
Totals ...	1887	3,874	78·5	3,874	78·0	3,874	91·8	3,874	67·7	1,824	58·5	1,221	70·3	2,050	82·3
	1886	...	75·5	...	76·2	...	89·0	...	66·3	...	51·8	...	64·4	...	81·0

Possible number of passes in subjects, 20,591; actual number of passes in subjects, 15,829; percentage of passes in subjects, 76·9.

In the preceding table I have, for purposes of comparison, included the total percentages gained in the various subjects in 1886, in addition to the total percentages gained last year; and that the latter are higher in every case than the former may readily be seen. Upon looking at percentages in individual standards, however, it will be found that, while many were higher last year than in the previous year, a few in certain subjects were lower.

INSTRUCTION.—*Reading.*—This subject was of very varied quality, not only in different schools but also in different classes in the same school. The percentage of passes was highest in Standard VI. and lowest in Standard IV. For all classes the percentage of passes was 78·5—that is, 21·5 per cent. of the pupils examined failed to obtain 60 per cent. of the possible marks. But in judging of the quality of the reading, in addition to taking the preceding percentages into consideration, it must be borne in mind that many of those that passed obtained just the requisite number of marks and no more. In Standard I. and Standard II., considering the simplicity of the requirements, the ages of the pupils, and the time the pupils have been at school, 78 per cent. of passes, many of which were by no means strong, is a poor result. I think 90 per cent. might well be expected—in the lower class, at all events. In Standard I. I found that the results varied from almost total inability to read monosyllables in some small schools, and even in one or two large schools, as at Halcombe, to almost perfect reading in so advanced (for Standard I.) a book as Nelson's Sequel to Standard II. Reader, as at Western Rangitikei. Yet at the former school many of those that failed badly were over nine, and even ten, years of age, while at the latter school the average age was only eight years two months. In the lower classes reading by rote requires to be guarded against. I am inclined to think that, though the accuracy, ease, and expression of the reading of many pupils in Standard I. at some schools were all that could be desired, the term "recitation" would be more correctly applied than "reading" to the work done; for I am afraid the book was known by heart, and that few children could have read the same words correctly in different connections. In the upper classes the most common defect I found in the reading was lack of intelligence, pupils plainly showing not only that they did not understand the general meaning of the passages read, but also that they did not recognise the predicates in the sentences. Now, the intelligence of a school will depend in a large measure upon its teaching as a whole. Whatever exercises the mental powers of children, whatever enlarges their vocabulary, will at the same time improve their

reading. There is no doubt that one of the greatest difficulties with which our primary-school teachers have to contend in teaching reading arises from the limited vocabulary of the children. The language which many of the children speak and the language which they read are necessarily two different tongues. The words which the children are asked to read are often new to the ear as well as to the eye, and call up no ideas in their minds. It is therefore highly desirable for the teacher to extend the vocabulary of his pupils by every means in his power. All new words found in a reading-lesson should be written (or printed) on a blackboard and carefully explained. But columns of dictionary equivalents are of little use. The children should be asked to write the words in different combinations in sentences on their slates, showing their living organic relations to other words in the sentences. In the upper classes analysis of sentences would be found a valuable help in teaching intelligent reading. On the grammar and composition cards at the late examination I required pupils in Standard VI. to write sentences in which simple equivalent words were substituted for words of Latin origin on the cards, and pupils in the other grammar standards to write sentences using words on the card which were taken from the reading-books of the respective standards. Of course such sentences were required as would bring out the meanings of the words. But questions of this kind were often not attempted, and generally, when attempted, showed very poor answers. I call to mind a Third Standard of seventy-two pupils where fully half the class used the word "guests" in the sense of "guessed."

In Standard IV., and even in Standard V. and Standard VI., it was a very common experience to find pupils unable to make out and read words after several attempts, mainly because they were ignorant of syllables. Such ignorance is partly the result of faulty teaching in the very lowest classes, to be referred to later on. The blackboard should be freely used in educing from, and explaining to, the higher classes the derivations, meanings, &c., of unfamiliar words. Owing to the importance of this, I will now give an example in full. Supposing the word not understood to be "superscription:" after a few minutes' intelligent questioning of the class the blackboard should present something like the following, the number of columns depending upon the attainments of the particular class being taught:—

writ-e	*scrib*-ere	*script*	*graph*-o	*gramma*
writ-er	a-*scrib*-e	*script*-ure	*graph*-ic	*gramma*-r
writ-ten	de-*scrib*-e	de-*script*-ion	auto-*graph*	*gramma*-rian
un-*writ*-ten	sub-*scrib*-e	sub-*script*-ion	geo-*graph*-y	*gramma*-tical
under-*writ*-er	pre-*scrib*-e	pre-*script*-ion	ortho-*graph*-y	un-*gramma*-tical
&c.	tran(s)-*scrib*-e	tran(s)-*script*-ion	para-*graph*	dia-*gram*
	circum-*scrib*-e	SUPER-SCRIPT-ION	tele-*graph*	tele-*gram*
	in-*scrib*-e	post-*script*	photo-*graph*	mono-*gram*
	in-de-*scrib*-able	manu-*script*	photo-*graph*-y	epi-*gram*
	&c.	&c.	&c.	&c.

What grand opportunities for educating his pupils are presented to the good teacher in this little table! No doubt, the usual objection, "No time," will be urged against such a style of teaching; but I can say from personal experience that the teacher will be well repaid in the end. Also, it must be remembered that "getting through" a book is not teaching reading, and that the pupil that thoroughly understands a few pages of his reading-book will probably read matter before unseen in better style than the pupil that has merely skimmed over his book in an unintelligent fashion will read matter which he has before "got through" in class. Teaching that enables a pupil to read with comfort only matter already gone over is not worthy of the name.

I am afraid the reading-books generally in use in Standards IV., V., and VI. are partly responsible for lack of intelligence in reading, for the mechanical difficulties presented by some of the pieces therein, outside the ordinary difficulty of reading itself, are often very great. Many of the pieces teem with difficult and pedantic words; and of how little help to the pupils are the meanings given the following, taken at haphazard from the book, will show: "luxuriance" = "prolificness," "civilising" = "ameliorating," "predecessor" = "precursor," "gigantic" = "stupendous," "illustrative" = "expository," "reflecting" = "animadverting," "receptacle" = "repository," "invincible" = "invulnerable." What a feast here for the lover of the "high-polite" style of English! but what terrible words to inflict upon a poor, harmless schoolboy, and, too, for no fault of his own! I trust the new "Southern Cross Readers" will not be so "prolific" in "stupendous" words as their "precursors." To my mind, most publishers of reading books make a great mistake in endeavouring to teach by means of the reading lesson too many subjects, as history, science, and geography; for these subjects tax the attention of the pupil so severely that the chief object of the lesson—the teaching of reading—is put in a secondary position. In the higher reading books there is not a sufficient amount of interesting narrative and dialogue.

The limited vocabulary of children was mentioned as one great difficulty which our teachers encounter in teaching reading; but in small schools officered by only one teacher, with all, or nearly all, the standards, another great difficulty is the finding of as much time for reading in every class as the importance of the subject demands. In many schools of this kind when pupils leave the primer class for the class preparing for Standard I. they can read only a few of the simplest sounds, and consequently by the end of the year they cannot read the First Standard book well. In the lower classes I am sorry to say that many teachers still continue to teach reading by the alphabetic method alone. This is a great mistake: the syllabic and look-and-say methods should be largely employed. The long and short sounds of vowels should be carefully treated, and children should be taught the powers or functions of letters, as the effect of consonants before and after the vowels. Also, straight laths, ovals, &c., could be used for forming letters, after the kindergarten system. Thus, an upright lath would form "I," two laths at an angle "V," a lath and an oval "b" or "d," &c. Also, considerable time should be devoted to word-building, with the help of the blackboard and the word-builder. At one time or another I asked most teachers to make a word-builder, but few have yet done so. Indeed, I find it very difficult to get anything made in the way

of aids to teaching. When a word-builder is employed in teaching reading in the preparatory classes, I generally find that the children not only read well, but also spell well. If teachers would visit each other's schools in a proper spirit they might pick up useful hints in method and in making aids to teaching.

Spelling.—Spelling, I am afraid, is a decidedly weak subject throughout the district, more especially in Standards III., IV., and V. In dictation, words presenting any difficulties were seldom spelled correctly, and the pupils in the upper three standards very often showed that they had no idea of the sentence and punctuation, as required by the syllabus. Sometimes in Standard IV. ten or fifteen lines were written without one capital letter, or capitals were written in absurd positions, though the passage was read once by myself and twice by the teacher. How can children that send in dictation of this class write composition? It is, above all, important that the sentence should be understood. In Standard III. pupils often came to grief at ridiculously easy words; and "there" and "their," "were" and "where," "to" and "too," and suchlike were almost invariably confused. I noticed that some teachers read the passages for dictation very poorly, and in such cases the papers showed that the children could not follow the reading. A strange class of error by no means uncommon at the worst schools was the writing of the wrong consonant at the beginning or at the end of a word, as "pop" for "shop," "bag" for "bad." In the lower classes children failed as often in phonetic sounds as in peculiar combinations of letters. The teaching of reading by the method recommended should improve spelling in these classes. At Hawera, where the children in the upper preparatory class had been carefully taught by the phonic system, they could spell the most difficult monosyllables when the vowel combination was shown. Here the subject was not attempted to be taught by merely hearing spelling lessons, but children were trained to recognise the powers of the letters, as well as to know their names. Any one can hear lessons, but it takes at least a modicum of intelligence to employ the latter method. Slate transcription in Standard II. was often very well written; but absolute accuracy should be insisted upon, not only in spelling, but also in paragraphs, punctuation, use of "'s," &c. For dictation I would recommend that sentences made by the teachers, or by the pupils in answer to questions given at the time of the lesson, embodying words required to be learned, should be frequently given. And it is not sufficient to keep exclusively to the words at the bottom of the lessons in the reading-books; for, apart from the fact that many words in every-day use are not there, and that such words when given are often misspelled, the teacher should endeavour by means of dictation lessons to extend the vocabulary of his pupils. But to insure good spelling it is absolutely necessary that purity of enunciation and distinctness of articulation should be carefully cultivated at all times in school. If children are allowed to mispronounce even words that are phonetically represented—if, for instance, they are allowed to say "ketch" for "catch," "winder" for "window," "savidge" for "savage," "wich" for "which," "were" for "where," "laid" for "lay," "peninsular" for "peninsula," "Gibberraltar" for "Gibraltar," "Glascow" for "Glasgow," "Copenagen" for "Copenhagen," it is not surprising that they misspell these words when they come to write them. It is strange, but nevertheless true, that children from one end of the district to the other, from Foxton to Mount Egmont, make, when reading the same page of a reading book, exactly the same mistakes in the text. Now, this would not be so if such mistakes were not passed over during the year. Indeed, at inspection visits I have often noticed them let go uncorrected. Ignorance of the sounds of the vowels, or carelessness in the use of the vowels, appeared to be the cause of many errors in spelling. Thus, of a very large number of children from various schools that sent in composition exercises on "flowers," fully three-fourths wrote "voilets" for "violets." Errors in spelling, however, were sometimes the result of ignorance, but often of sheer carelessness; for the very words on the cards were frequently copied incorrectly, and in dictation the same words were spelled in different ways on successive lines. It is strange how few children look over their work: a large proportion of the few that do have eyes but see not.

Writing.—At the majority of schools writing is fairly well taught, and on the whole it may be called a strong subject in this district. Transcription on slates in Standard II. was often very well written, but in some cases it was spoiled by poor, greasy slates. The transcription on paper in the higher standards was generally very neatly done. In some schools more attention should be paid to the manner in which the pen and also the slate pencil are held. A gradually increasing tendency to write in a cramped fashion, and also the habit of lifting the pen during the writing of a word, should be carefully guarded against. Where these faults were observed, I found that, while the writing in copy books and on transcription papers was good enough to admit of pupils passing in the subject, the writing on examination papers was very poor. In such cases, some practice in fairly large hand would be found advantageous. The writing at many of the schools is really very good in several classes; but for clever handling of rulers and nice arrangement of work on slates and paper, coupled with firm bold writing in all classes, no school in the district can compare with Waverley.

Arithmetic.—Table D shows that arithmetic, as far as passes are concerned, has improved by 5 per cent. in Standard I. and also in Standard II., by 7 per cent. in Standard IV., by nearly 4 per cent. in Standard V., and by over 5 per cent. in Standard VI., but that the average percentage for all classes is still only 67·7, or lower that in any other subject but grammar. In Standard III., though the papers were of the same style as those in former years, and not more difficult, there was a falling-off in the number of passes of no less than nearly 12 per cent. With regard to arithmetical rules in this class, the most failures were found in simple long multiplication and in simple long division, sometimes through ignorance of notation, sometimes through ignorance of tables, and very often in the former rule through placing the figures of the second or third line in the wrong denomination (as hundreds under tens), and in the latter rule through omission of cyphers in the quotient (as 754 for 7054). In the money rules in this class failures were generally the result of ignorance of tables and of inaccurate working. In division of money pupils often came to grief in the reduction; and here, again, when a cipher was needed in the pounds of the quotient it was

frequently omitted. In the upper standards there was a great deal of inaccurate working, especially in multiplication of money and in practice. Fractions also were poorly known in Standard V. and Standard VI., and in interest the slightest variation from the ordinary stock text of an interest sum was sufficient to puzzle many. The almost universal habit of multiplying money by large numbers in one line is, I think, conducive to inaccuracy. If, instead of multiplying by, say, 165 in one line, the numbers $10\times10+10\times6+5$ were used, pupils would not only have more practice in tables, but also they would, when the sum was completed, more readily detect any chance inaccuracy. At some schools, where the former method was employed, it was nothing unusual to find the product in the pounds column made less than the multiplier. I have in former reports frequently mentioned the importance of arguing out problems from data first correctly written down; but still at few schools is this practice properly carried out, while at some schools pupils absurdly enough write the data after the working of the sum. Tables of weights and measures were frequently not known in the upper standards. Lineal measure and square measure were often confounded. In Standards I. and II. arithmetic has continued to improve, but the manner in which the work was put down varied very much—from disgraceful at a few schools to excellent at several. At many schools the figuring in the upper classes was far from what it ought to have been. Mental arithmetic does not receive the attention which it deserves. In Standard III. and Standard IV. I seldom found children able to divide pounds correctly when any reduction was needed. Thus, to the question, "Divide a pound amongst three people," the answer "6s. 2d." would be given. In mental subtraction also pupils were very weak. There was great reluctance shown above Standard II. to make any effort to find an answer, the majority of children in a class preferring to leave the work to a few bright and industrious ones. Counting on fingers, I noticed, was very prevalent in many schools, not only in Standard I. and Standard II., but also in Standard III., and occasionally even in Standard IV. Such a practice should not be allowed above the preparatory classes.

Grammar.—Grammar, with composition, shows a lower percentage of passes than any other subject, though there is an improvement of nearly 7 per cent. on the numbers for the previous year. The results are lowest in Standard VI. and highest in Standard V. In grammar, inflexions often were not well known; and parts of speech were judged from the appearance and sound, rather than from the functions of the words. In Standard III. pupils seldom picked out nearly all the parts of speech asked for, and the requirements of the syllabus with regard to pronouns had apparently not been taught at many schools. In the upper classes analysis had improved. If analysis were begun earlier than at present, I think grammar would be much benefited. I consider that a pupil in Standard IV. cannot have an intelligent idea of case unless he understands something of analysis and of government by a preposition. Composition improves slowly, but there is still much to be desired. I am afraid several pupils wrote composition from memory. The frequent use of pronouns and of the conjunction "and" to begin sentences should be avoided. In letter-writing pupils still continue to be very careless with regard to endings and addresses.

Geography.—In Standard III., Standard V., and Standard VI., where geography is a pass subject, the percentage of passes has improved; but there is a great deal to be desired yet, especially in Standard V. and Standard VI. When examining papers I have often wondered whether it was laziness on the part of pupils, or their inability to mentally picture a map, that led to some questions being either disregarded or very poorly answered. Thus, I generally found that if the question were, "State the exact position of each of the following mountains: . . . . ." it would be fairly well answered; but if it were, "Name the mountains of Asia running from west to east," it either would be passed over or but a poor attempt would be made to answer it. One reason for this was, I am afraid, that the latter question required a little more thought and trouble to answer it than the former. In Standard V. commercial maritime towns seldom were well known. Intelligent teaching should lead even Standard II. pupils to observe the fact that at the mouths of rivers towns are generally to be found, and the reason for this should be adduced: later on the names of towns not already picked up incidentally would be learned. Another matter I would lay before teachers is, that sufficient attention is not paid to the relative importance of geographical features. To give an example, I noticed that pupils throughout the district had a strange weakness for the Guadiana and Guadalquiver rivers, and for the Eastern and Western Ghauts ranges; but they omitted, as beneath their notice, the Volga and Danube rivers, and the Hindoo Koosh and Altai ranges. It would be better to omit altogether the less important features than to have them remembered at the expense of the more important. Indeed, I am of opinion that children's brains are burdened with far too many names in geography. In the use of the terms "continent," "country," and "colony" more care should be shown. North America was almost invariably spoken of as one country, and it was not unusual to find pupils looking upon the United States as part of the British Empire. In physical geography at only a very few schools were questions at all fairly answered. From the work in this subject in Standard V. I am certain that the requirements—river-systems, mountain-systems, and distribution of land and water—were not taught at many schools. Mapping, more especially mapping of the district, was generally poor; but at Hawera and Wanganui Boys' excellent maps were shown. Lines of latitude and longitude should be drawn before the outline, and names should not be printed in capital letters. Marking in the lines after a map is drawn is of like absurdity with writing down the data after the working of a problem in arithmetic. New Zealand geography was seldom well known. It will hardly be credited that to mark in the chief rivers, towns, and mountains on this coast in anything like proper order was beyond the power of very many pupils in Standard V. and Standard VI. Geography is a class subject in Standard II. and Standard IV. In Standard II. the mechanical work was exceedingly well known. I would recommend teachers to interest their pupils in this class with a little very general information regarding the peoples of the various continents, and the climate and productions of the zones. In Standard IV. the mapping was very poor, and the rest of the work moderate.

History.—History is a class subject in all standards in which it is taught—namely, Standards

III., IV., V., and VI. In the larger schools moderate results were obtained; in the smaller, knowledge of the subject was meagre and ideas were confused. Standard V. I generally found to be the best-prepared class, and Standard III. or Standard VI. the worst. I certainly think that history should be omitted from the work of Standard III. In Standard VI. it is important that pupils should understand something about the government and constitution under which they live; but at examination the answers in this connection were generally very ridiculous. One pupil at Wanganui, for example, wrote an elaborate treatise upon the heavy rainfall on the west coast of the South Island in answer to a question on the Constitution of New Zealand. As Mr. Fitch points out, it is absurd to find children prating about the Feudal System, or about the Constitutions of Clarendon, and yet not knowing how our Parliament is constituted, and what are its duties and functions. I am, however, inclined to the opinion that in schools officered by only one teacher, in order to give more time for reading, history might well be an optional subject, or it should be treated only in reading lessons from an historical reader.

Extra Subjects.—*Science.*—So far from any progress having been made in science, the time devoted to it was at most schools merely wasted. And for this there are many causes, not the least of which is the extended nature of the syllabus. I think if the science at present laid down were subdivided into several divisions, each division to count one subject, and each with a clearly-defined syllabus, some satisfactory results might be produced in the larger schools. Science certainly ought to be retained in the syllabus, but I think it should be optional, not compulsory. There can be no doubt that there is little use in having it compulsory in a small bush school, with from, say, four to eight pupils in the higher standards, and with one teacher, who, unaided, has to teach all classes, and who himself has little knowledge of, and no taste for, the subject. I should like to see drawing, physics, physiology, agricultural chemistry, botany, history, needlework, &c., classed as extra subjects, some of which would be compulsory and some optional. Then, in all schools—except, perhaps, those with only one teacher—one optional subject (or more, according to the staff and the class of the school) would have to be taught; but the choice of the subject would be left with the teacher, who could then select whatever one was most congenial to his tastes. Of science-teaching as a valuable educative and disciplinary power I have a high opinion—to say nothing of the value which acquaintance with some of the branches of science possesses from a utilitarian point of view; but I object to give my assistance to carrying out shams, and the attempted teaching of science in the class of small bush schools already mentioned is a decided sham. But even at some of the largest schools, where teachers took an interest in science, the answering was poor. This, I think, was partly the result of so little time having been given to the subject, and partly because pupils were told too much and were not led to investigate and discover for themselves. And for the latter reason in the preceding sentence object lessons do not exercise the useful influence they might with better handling. Of what use, for instance, is an object lesson on the "pin" if pupils are told why a pin is rounded, why it is pointed, why it has a head, &c., as I once heard at a school, in place of the reason for each being educed by means of experimental illustrations. In these lessons several teachers start with the idea that children know many things of which they are in reality ignorant, and, in consequence, many of the properties of a body are not educed. Questions, too, are put in such a manner that no thought is required to answer them—*e.g.*, "Is it rough or smooth?" "Is it a curved or a flat surface?" Such subjects might frequently be treated as would admit not only of the pupils seeing them, but also of each pupil handling them throughout the lesson—*e.g.*, stalk of wheat, stalk of oats, wool, different coloured strings, &c. I would recommend all teachers to read Mr. Rick's book on object lessons.

Recitation.—In some schools pupils recited very nicely, but I am afraid I must say such schools were rather the exception, for sing-song was very prevalent. That the piece should be thoroughly understood is absolutely necessary before good recitation can be obtained, and this was seldom the case. The learning and reciting of poetry may be made a valuable means of cultivating the imagination, improving the delivery, and extending the vocabulary.

Subject-matter of Reading-lessons.—In this subject I very rarely could give even half the possible marks. Sometimes pupils could substitute one word for another, but often even this was beyond them. Now, while it is very desirable that pupils should know the meanings of words, something of a higher intellectual value is required. Teachers should endeavour to get their pupils to express in statements, in their own words and of their own making, the meanings of passages. The very common habit of jerking out disconnected words in answer to oral questions I consider to be one of the worst in our schools. Written composition would be much benefited if children were trained to express themselves well at all times in answer to oral questions. In a special report on "Education on the Continent" Mr. Matthew Arnold pointed out that the schools in Germany, France, and Switzerland struck him as being superior to the English schools especially in this: that the teachers in those countries took more pains than the teachers in England to make the children sure of their ground, and to train them to answer in a finished manner oral questions put to them in any and every subject of the school course. "A child," he says, "is apt to answer a question by a single word, or a word or two, and the questioner is apt to fill in the answer in his own mind and to accept it. But in Germany it is a regular exercise for children to be made to give their answers complete, and the discipline in accuracy and collectedness which is thus obtained is very valuable."

Needlework is generally well taught at all schools were female assistants are employed.

Drawing as a pass subject in Standard I. and Standard II. was very fair in many schools; but there were some bad exceptions, where the books were very dirty, and where little had been done during the year, and that little did not show any real teaching or supervision. The work in these lower classes was often better in the small schools than in the large ones. In the remaining classes drawing has been taught in all schools as a class subject, but not, as a rule, in the advanced books. I am now convinced that as a pass subject in the upper standards drawing never can be a success,

for there will always be some masters unable to teach it, some pupils with no taste for it, and some pupils who cannot or will not obtain the necessary books and instruments. Also, some of the books authorised for use in the schools are now, and always will be, quite beyond the powers of ordinary boys. I think that drawing should be made an optional class subject.

Buildings. Playgrounds.—Several of the buildings will, I am afraid, shortly need roofing with iron, as the shingles are in a bad state of decay. Additional accommodation is much required at Palmerston, Terrace End, Eltham, Bunnythorpe, and some other schools. As a rule, playgrounds and fences are fairly well looked after; but there are some very bad exceptions. In some cases the playgrounds are far too small for the number of children's horses. In future districts sufficient land to enable a teacher to graze a cow and horse ought, if possible, to be set aside; for the salaries of teachers in the bush are small, and such land would not only be a great convenience, but also a monetary help. Some Committeees have done a great deal during the year towards clearing bush playgrounds. A few teachers have laid out flowergardens, and these are kept by the children. I am, however, surprised that more teachers in the country districts do not improve their grounds by the planting of flowers, shrubs, &c. The difference in appearance between Government grounds in this country, where flowers grow like weeds, and shrubs and trees spring up in a few years, and similar grounds in the Home-country, where so much trouble and time are required to make a nice place, is very marked. Broken swings give a very untidy appearance to some playgrounds: wire ropes to swings are the only ones that last.

This report has already overstepped the limits to which I had intended to confine it, but I cannot conclude without drawing attention to what I consider is partly the cause of poor work in the case of some teachers—viz., neglect of instructions and suggestions in various reports. That this neglect is intentional, except in a few bad cases, I do not for a moment believe, for it is to be found amongst earnest as well as amongst apathetic teachers; but it is none the less very noticeable. Thus, at one examination of a particular school certain weaknesses—say dirty drawing books and copy books, in which the work shows no supervision—are pointed out; but at the next examination exactly the same weaknesses are to be found. Or, again, in an annual report certain faulty methods are pointed out and better recommended; but when my inspection visit takes place I find that not only has no attempt been made to introduce the better method, but the teacher is absolutely unaware that the old method was condemned. I recollect a certain very earnest teacher who informed me with evident delight that he had discovered what he proved to be an excellent method for teaching some subject; but this teacher was unaware that this particular method was recommended in three successive annual reports lying at the time in his school cupboard. Again, at standard examinations some teachers take an interest in the oral examination of their classes, but it is indeed rare to find a teacher taking notes. Let me give one more instance in this connection. At some schools I have seen "Fitch's Lectures on Teaching" and other valuable books of the same class on the teacher's shelves; yet the methods especially recommended in these books were not attempted, and the evil practices condemned were rife. During the last few years eminent men in the educational world have given us such methods as they have proved to be the best for cultivating the intellectual faculties of a child, not for merely making him the passive recipient of another's ideas; and it behoves every teacher with love for his profession to become acquainted with these methods. But it must be remembered that good methods are of no use unless they are properly carried out. Of far more importance than the method is the intelligence of the teacher that employs it. As Herbert Spencer points out, the success of every appliance depends mainly upon the intelligence with which it is used. An unskilful workman, though having the choicest tools, will botch his work; and bad teachers will fail even with the best methods. Indeed, the goodness of the method becomes in such case a cause of failure; as, to continue the simile, the perfection of the tool becomes in undisciplined hands a source of imperfection in results.

In conclusion I may say that the order and discipline, except at a few schools, are generally very fair throughout the district, and really bad conduct is almost unknown. Sometimes upon examination days I found a tendency to talk, especially after a paper was finished, and at a few schools the work was hindered by the teacher's lack of power of control. But such schools were the exception, and at the majority the pupils did their work in a diligent and businesslike manner. In the paper work the larger schools had somewhat of an advantage over the smaller; for, while the latter had to take all the papers in one day, the former took only one paper at each sitting. To counterbalance this in some respect, the cards were so drawn out that those for the smaller schools did not entail so much mechanical work as those for the larger. I seldom took up any pupil's papers before he had quite finished his answers. In school the manners of the children are generally pleasing—in some cases exceedingly so; but outside school this is too often not the case. "Hello!" is occasionally the only salute on the road or street, or a boy stares open-mouthed when wished "Good morning." Many pupils, however, are brilliant exceptions to this class, more especially the pupils of this town. I generally find that the pupils of those schools where they are daily taught to say "Good morning" and "Good afternoon" to their teachers treat their teachers and others with like courtesy when they meet them on the road. When a visitor enters the classroom the children should stand; if they are at work, only when bidden by the teacher; if waiting to be set to work, as when an Inspector enters on examination day, unbidden. In some schools this rule is observed, in others not.

I beg through this report to convey my thanks to the teachers for the manner in which everything was got ready for the examination, and for their hearty co-operation while I was conducting the examination.

I have, &c.,

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

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,— Wellington, 28th March, 1888.

I have the honour to present this year a brief report on the primary schools of the district. The report is brief, because the Board generously gave me leave of absence during the latter half of the year to visit the Old Country. In the early part of the year I examined more than one-half of the schools—that is to say, thirty-five of the smaller outlying country schools—and then, by direction of the Board, I made arrangements whereby the head teachers of the remaining larger schools could examine, towards the end of the year, the work of their schools in the five lower standards. The examination-cards and other tests were prepared by me, and distributed by the Secretary on an appointed day. The arrangement was faithfully carried out, and I am satisfied that the head teachers conscientiously discharged the duties intrusted to them. On my return from England I completed the examination of candidates remaining for Standards VI. and VII. Of course I have not been able to overtake the work of the larger schools in the class and additional subjects. I have revisited most of the larger schools since my return from England, and I am well pleased with the evident desire which has existed among the teachers in charge to keep up the efficiency of their schools. The working energy of the district is unimpaired, and the general condition of the schools was never more satisfactory.

The total number of children presented for examination in 1887 was 9,411, an increase of 575 on the number last year. There were in all sixty-six schools in operation—two more than last year. One is the Otaki School and the other the aided school at Otahuao. The results of the year in standard work are thus compared with those of last year:—

—	Number of Passes.		Percentage of Passes.		Average Age.			
	1886.	1887.	1886.	1887.	1886. Yrs.	1886. mos.	1887. Yrs.	1887. mos.
Standard I.	1,167	1,171	96	98	8	10	9	0
Standard II.	984	1,195	88	90	9	10	10	0
Standard III.	872	1,043	74	85	11	4	11	4
Standard IV.	574	736	83	84	12	2	12	4
Standard V.	318	399	76	78	13	2	13	3
Standard VI.	152	177	56	78	14	0	14	2
Total	4,067	4,721	83	88	11	6⅔	11	8⅓

These figures show an increase of 5 per cent. in the number of children who have passed standards on the number presented; also, the average age is two months higher. These higher numbers are partly accounted for by the fact that many larger schools were examined a month or two later than the ordinary date, and consequently they had more time allowed them for preparation. The difference in the average age is mainly, if not entirely, due to this cause.

For the past three years the total number of children passed in the standard examinations has exceeded 80 per cent. of the number presented; and, when we consider the great differences which exist in the capacities, dispositions, and attendances of children, and the drawbacks to which some schools are from time to time subjected by change of teachers and other causes, the work of the schools, judged by standard passes, must be looked upon as satisfactory.

After seeing many English and Scotch schools in operation I am persuaded that the general character of our schools, as to system, buildings, teachers, management, instruction, and the physique of the children, compares very favourably with that of the Home country.

I am pleased to find that all our larger schools are under good management, and the head teachers, in most instances, have seen long service, and have now the satisfaction of seeing the experience and work of years bringing forth good results. Several of the Wairarapa schools are not at all behind the best of the city schools in general efficiency; and I must again commend the teachers of these schools for the admirable order of their classrooms. In this and in some other respects also I notice this year considerable improvement in the Terrace, Mount Cook Boys', and Newtown Schools; and of the Thorndon School my inspection report this year states that I had never seen that school to better advantage. We also appear to be especially fortunate in having masters who are much above average teachers in some special subjects. In the city alone we have two or three good scientists, two or three good music teachers, and two or three good teachers of drawing. Several of the schools have got up, from time to time, very creditable musical entertainments, which have been much appreciated.

The schools in Class B which were at all weak last year show improved work this year. The school at Otaki is one of good promise, now that it is satisfactorily classified.

The schools in Class C did fairly well this year, except those at Mauriceville and Eketahuna, in which there were changes in the teachers. The Kaitara School did very well this year, and those at Fernridge and Waihekeke have done very creditably for several years past.

The schools under one teacher present the greatest diversity of results, and work under the greatest difficulties. Those at Whiteman's Valley, Tauherenikau, Kaiwaiwai, Taueru, and Wallaceville showed very poor standard work this year, though the class work at Kaiwaiwai was good. All in this list, with a percentage of failures not exceeding 20, I consider in a satisfactory condition, and this applies to eighteen out of the twenty-five schools.

There is often some anxiety in the minds of teachers in charge of small schools as to the amount of work expected of them in the syllabus, and sometimes, I think, they attempt too much. Although the programme is extensive, it is largely permissive, and no undue pressure is put upon teachers by me to undertake the teaching of more subjects than is practicable and wise. I am willing to permit any proper grouping of classes in two consecutive standards, and I do not require

teachers to take up more subjects than fairly meet the syllabus. Some simplification of the syllabus would be looked upon as a boon to small schools, and would lead to better class-teaching of some subjects in large ones. In the meantime, until such change is made, I intend to examine drawing, formal grammar, and geography largely in class, and to do all I can in this direction to ease the difficulties caused by the crowded nature of the syllabus. In standard work I advise teachers to pay special attention to arithmetic, reading with explanation, and composition with good writing and spelling. If I find these subjects well done and the intelligence of the class good, I shall be disposed to view more leniently individual shortcomings in the rest of the standard work.

In all the schools examined by me this year geography was taken *vivâ voce* in class for Standard III. This may also be done another year in all standards, except that I am unwilling to discontinue map-drawing. It must not be supposed that geography ranks as an important subject, nor do many pupils fail in that subject. Most failures are scored in arithmetic and English (including spelling). I wish once again to call attention to the importance of teachers giving prominence to good reading and writing, the most useful parts of our programme.

I trust the teacher who has the interest of education at heart will never be satisfied with a bare pass in these subjects, but that he will aim at making really good class-teaching in them distinctive features of his school. There is an immense difference between what is an Inspector's minimum for a pass and what is positively good in this work. I am pleased to say that in several schools lately visited for the purpose of examining higher standard work I have commended the teachers for the excellence of the reading and writing. For the first time I have set papers this year in grammar and arithmetic for any pupils who passed Standard VI. a year ago. Owing to the examination being held after Christmas, only a few presented themselves, of whom seven passed—two at the Hutt, two at Mount Cook Girls' School, and three at Masterton.

The infant schools continue to work very satisfactorily. Nowhere have I seen a school for young children better conducted than the Tory Street Infants' School, and nowhere have I seen a building better planned for its purpose. About three-eighths of the total number of children on the books are below Standard I. Now, in towns in which large infant schools are properly organized, children may be well admitted at five years of age. In England the age is three. But, whilst I think five years of age is not too young for the children of the industrial classes to begin school life, I am also of opinion that the school hours for children under seven years of age should be very short. They are now limited in this district to four hours; but I think two hours or two hours and a half, making only one half-day's attendance, would be quite sufficient. Now, if all the children under seven years of age in any school were divided into two sections—upper and lower—and the older children attended the morning classes and the younger attended in the afternoon, I think a desirable change would be made, and one which would be economical and beneficial in many ways. In the first place, it would relieve the buildings very much. In the six large infant schools, representing 1,475 children, less than two-thirds the teaching power would suffice. One or two of them now so much overcrowded would be immediately relieved. The schools under one teacher would much appreciate the time given them for special attention to the higher classes, as in these schools all the pupils under seven might be absent for the same half of the day. I should not be prepared at once to go further than suggest a trial of this plan, as there may be difficulties in practice which might impede its working. On the other hand, it might commend itself very much to the parents of the children, who in that case would see the wisdom of sending their children to school at an early age, and with greater regularity.

After seeing so much of what is done in the course of education in other colonies and in other countries, I am more than ever impressed with the value to this colony of our present system of education, and I feel that it would be a national misfortune if it were suffered to fall into decay. There is at present everywhere throughout this district a keen interest felt in the cause of education; and I hope that the system, as an efficient and comprehensive one, will be fully maintained. To starve it now is to undo the work of the past, and to fall back in the march of progress. I feel sure the good sense of the industrial classes will tell them that a liberal education for their children is the best inheritance they can leave behind them, and that they had better maintain their schools efficiently at any cost than surrender the privilege they now enjoy of seeing their children grow up day by day more rational-minded, more intelligent, better informed, and more humanized.

I have, &c.,

J. R. Blair, Esq., Chairman, Wellington Education Board. ROBERT LEE.

SUMMARY of RESULTS for the WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	11	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	231	2	2	50	177	14 2
S 5	545	14	21	111	399	13 3
S 4	942	26	41	139	736	12 4
S 3	1,340	50	67	180	1,043	11 4
S 2	1,426	47	56	128	1,195	10 0
S 1	1,254	36	22	25	1,171	9 0
P.	3,662	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	9,411	175	209	633	4,721	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 8⅛ months.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,— Education Office, Napier, 31st January, 1888.

I have pleasure in submitting for your information this, the tenth annual report which I have had the honour to write on the condition and general progress of the schools in the Hawke's Bay Education District.

To those unacquainted with the extent of the district which is subject under the Education Act of 1877 to the control of the Board for education purposes, it may be well, perhaps, to explain that the Education District of Hawke's Bay embraces an area of more than 8,500 square miles, or about one-twelfth of the entire area of the colony. The district extends from Cape Runaway, north of Cook County, to the Waimate River, south of Cape Turnagain, in Patangata County, the distance between these extreme points being about four hundred miles. The distance between the most northern and southern schools is 275 miles. Throughout this widely extended district, which geographically is divided into a number of small isolated districts, forty-five schools, containing sixty-nine departments, were in operation at the close of the year. For the December quarter these schools had an average weekly roll number of 5,549 pupils, and an average attendance of 4,453; the attendance in each case representing an increase of 10·5 per cent. over the corresponding returns for 1886. The teaching staff provided for the instruction of the pupils consisted of forty-five head masters and mistresses, thirty-six assistant masters and mistresses, and sixty-four pupil-teachers. Thirty-four of the principal teachers and twenty-eight of the assistant teachers hold certificates of competency from the Education Department; and of the total number, eleven have been trained as teachers in Great Britain and Ireland. The following table gives the number of teachers and pupils according to the several counties. The average attendance for the December quarter of 1878 is also given. [Not reprinted.]

ACCOMMODATION.—In most of the districts sufficient school accommodation is provided for present wants, and the only demands now to be met in the way of accommodation are those that have arisen during the year by the growth of old districts or by the establishment of new ones. The only old districts where accommodation is called for are Port Ahuriri, Makatoku, Danevirke, Woodville, and Ormondville, where the attendance exceeds the present school provision. In the new district known as Makauri the erection of a suitable school building is sadly wanted. During my visit to that district forty-two children were being taught in a room 26ft. by 12ft., the height of the wall-plates being only 8ft. I need hardly say how unsuitable such a room is for the instruction of so many children, and how poisonous the air in the room becomes in a short time after the children have been at work. I shall not soon forget my own experience at this school on a hot day in November. At Blackburn, also, where a schoolhouse has so long been promised, the number of children of school-age makes it very necessary that a schoolhouse should be provided as soon as possible. The Blackburn district is situated on the eastern flanks of the Ruahine mountain chain, miles away from the nearest public school, and the children in the settlement are growing up ignorant of the simplest rudiments in learning. Settlers in an outlying district like this deserve, it seems to me, special consideration in a matter so near to them as the instruction and education of their children. At Te Karaka, in the Cook County, and Matamau, in the Seventy-mile Bush, where schools have been opened during the year, the attendance is not sufficient to warrant the erection of a building at present in either district.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS WELL ARRANGED.—All the school buildings and additions which have been completed under the direction of the Board's architect are in my opinion admirably suited to meet the special requirements of the different districts. Careful attention has been paid to the arrangement of the school grounds, and the out-offices are so ordered as to meet all the requirements of mixed schools such as are established throughout the district. With few exceptions, the schools are also supplied with apparatus and appliances of the most modern description, and such as might be expected to be found in the best schools at Home. If, therefore, the school results in any district excluding those named above are not satisfactory, it cannot be in consequence of bad buildings or bad appliances, for, as remarked above, these are in every respect satisfactory.

SCHOOL APPLIANCES NOT USED BY TEACHERS.—I could wish, however, that the appliances in the several schools were more frequently used by teachers than they too often appear to be. I have listened to a lesson in one of our large schools on the "movements of the earth." The school is provided with a "tellurium," which illustrates in the simplest way I know the earth's axial and orbital motions, and children, simply by observation, can see for themselves these movements. Still, the teacher in question, without diagram or any illustration whatever, preferred to tell all he knew instead of letting the tellurium tell its silent but effective story to the children. This is only one of the many illustrations I might give of the non-employment of valuable appliances which are specially provided for the benefit of the schools. The results cannot be satisfactory under such conditions.

MODES OF CONVEYING KNOWLEDGE.—It would indeed be well if all teachers realised the fact that there are three modes of presenting knowledge to children, the first being by means of objects or concretes, the second by pictures or illustrations of the objects, and the third by word descriptions. A bird, a picture of a bird, and a word description of a bird represent the three forms of conveying knowledge as explained here. The object is necessarily better than an illustration of it, and the illustration is better than the word description: hence it follows that, whenever possible, knowledge should be conveyed to children by the exercise of the perceptive faculties.

INCREASE OF DISTRICT.—During the year my work has been extended by the opening of six new schools and by the great increase which has taken place in the school attendance. The schools are so situated that in visiting them I have mostly to travel on horseback, and a good deal of extra time is taken up in this way. The great increase in the work of the past nine years will be better understood when it is stated that there were only 1,985 children in the district schools at the close of the year 1878, and among these there was a large percentage of children under five years of age,

who have since then been excluded from the Board schools. As shown by the latest attendance returns, there are now over 5,500 children under instruction, and these are scattered over a district for travelling purposes nearly twice the extent of that which had to be traversed in 1878. Notwithstanding the heavy additional work which has been annually thrown upon me by the wonderful increase in the school population of the district, I am pleased to report that every school has been visited at least once during the year, and with a single exception every school was examined in the work of the standards before the midsummer holidays began. The exception was the small subsidised school at Mohaka; and the work at this school would have been finished had not exceedingly bad weather prevented me from reaching it in my overland journey from Poverty Bay to the Wairoa. My examination of the schools, together with the examination of the pupil-teachers, and the special examination of the children in Standards V. and VI. in the month of November, could not have been finished so early had not the plan been adopted of examining papers, and reporting upon the condition of each school, on the same day or days during which the examination took place. My report and the examination results were posted to the Education Office, and duplicate copies were at once made out and sent to each School Committee concerned. I have to compliment those at the office upon the manner in which their portion of the work was carried out.

Changes in Dates of Examination.—In order to lessen the press of work which becomes so great towards the close of the school year, it has been found necessary to alter somewhat my old examination arrangements, and I have intimated to a number of the smaller schools my intention of examining them for results in the earlier months of the year, during the period which has hitherto been set aside by me for visits of inspection only.

The number of pupils who were entered on the examination schedules as belonging to the schools at the date of my examinations was 5,221, of whom 3,350, or a little over 64 per cent. of the whole, were presented in standards. The corresponding numbers for the year 1886 were—on the roll, 4,788; presented in standards, 3,113. The following table contains full information as to the numbers presented, examined, excepted, failed, and passed in each standard, in accordance with the departmental regulations. The average age of the pupils for each standard is also given.

Standard Classes.	Number presented.			Absent.	Examined in Standards.			Excepted.	Failed.	Number passed in Standards.			Average Age.
	M.	F.	Total.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	Total.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	Yrs. ms.
S 7 ...	11	6	17	7	60	52	112	...	20	54	38	92	14 3
S 6 ...	55	47	102										
S 5 ...	136	147	283	22	122	139	261	1	76	75	100	175	13 2
S 4 ...	245	193	438	11	241	186	427	12	116	149	121	270	12 6
S 3 ...	365	340	705	17	356	332	688	36	154	209	211	420	11 6
S 2 ...	423	419	842	20	411	411	822	29	129	290	294	584	10 4
S 1 ...	498	465	963	32	479	452	931	35	163	324	329	653	8 9
	1,733	1,617	3,350	109	1,669	1,572	3,241	113	658	1,101	1,093	2,194	
Preparatory	1,008	863	1,871										10 8
	2,741	2,480	5,221	Pupils attending new schools classed for standards only								276	

Increase in Presentations in Higher Standards.—The increase in the school attendance and in the number of presentations for the year may be regarded as satisfactory; but one of the most encouraging features in connection with the school work is to be found in the increasing number of those who remain for examination above Standard II. I have watched with special interest the increase in the number of standard children in this direction, because to me it is a sure sign that the district schools are gaining ground in public estimation. In the year 1880 there were in the whole district only 198 children, or 12·7 per cent. of those examined for that year, presented in a standard higher than the third, whilst last year 843 pupils, or 25·5 per cent. of those presented in standards, were above the third. But this increase in the number of children in the higher standards is even more satisfactory in another respect, inasmuch as it shows better than any other data that the average duration of the school life of the children throughout the district is showing signs of improvement, though even now the average school life of the children is very much lower than I think it should be. Nothing has surprised me more, when dealing with school returns, than the remarkable fluctuations that take place in the school attendance in the course of a single year. Taking the year under notice as an example, I find that the schools opened in the month of January with a roll number amounting to 4,857 pupils. In the course of the year 3,390 new names were enrolled, making altogether 8,247 children as belonging to the schools for the year, and at the date of sending in the December returns only 5,462 names remained on the school roll. What has become of the 2,784 children who are shown to have left during the year, and were they children from the preparatory classes, or were they the standard children who were withdrawn from school? No doubt many of the "lefts" had only attended school for a short time, but the evidence is only too clear that a large proportion of the children who are annually withdrawn from the schools is made up from the children in the lower standards, and who are far from having received even a fair amount of training. To make this point clear the following facts will suffice: Since the close of 1883 this district has increased its school population by 2,000 children. In that year 532 children were presented for examination in the Second Standard. Had those children remained at school they would have been presented in Standard III. in 1884, in Standard IV. in 1885, and last year

they would have completed their standard course. Notwithstanding the fact that the schools show such a large increase in the attendance during the period, the 532 children who were in the Second Standard in 1883 were represented by 486 in Standard III. in 1884, by 373 in Standard IV. in 1885, by 252 in Standard V. in 1886, and by 102 in Standard VI. for the year under notice. These figures point out in no uncertain manner how short the average duration of the school life of a child really is in this district, and how very few of those who attend school remain after the Third or Fourth Standard has been reached. Even to-day, after ten years' work under the Education Act, there are not more than eight children in every hundred attending the Board schools who have passed the Fourth Standard. I do not pretend to know the cause of this early withdrawal from the schools of so many young children who are certainly below the exemption age of thirteen years, as stated in the Education Act, but the question is too important to pass by without calling the Board's attention to it. In England home necessities too often call for the older children in a family to enter at an early age the factory, the brickyard, or the farmyard, in order to add a few shillings to the weekly income of a home; but I am not aware that cases like this have any existence here. It is difficult to estimate the great pecuniary and educational loss to the country by the early withdrawal of the children from school, but I estimate that at the present time half the effective teaching power in the schools is absolutely lost in consequence of parents not availing themselves of the many opportunities offered for the instruction of their children in the public schools.

Regularity not Satisfactory.—The regularity of children at school has not shown any improvement whatever in this district for the last three years; indeed, the tendency in the attendance at some of the schools has been a retrograde one. Two years ago, for every hundred children on the school rolls 78·8 were in daily attendance each time the schools were opened. Last year there were only 78·3 in daily attendance for each hundred names on the rolls; so that the regularity shows a falling-off of 0·5 per cent. since the year 1885. The school-attendance clause of the Education Act Amendment Act of 1885 requires all children between seven and thirteen years of age to make at least sixty attendances during each "quarterly term;" but there is really no machinery in operation to enforce either the attendance clause or the age clause of the Act. Some Committees there are who nominally enforce attendance; some there are who object to a police officer and a Magistrate being called in to decide a question relating to education; some find that a Police Court case disturbs the relations existing between business men and their customers; and there are other Committees who consider that the question of compulsion should not be relegated to Committees at all. The question of school attendance is certainly beset with difficulties, and in some of the school districts compulsion is not needed; but there are districts where something should be done to improve what is at present a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. Take the case of the schools in the four boroughs in the district—viz., Woodville, Hastings, Napier, and Gisborne. Last year, at Woodville, out of every hundred children attending school sixty-eight were in average attendance; at Hastings the average was 74·1 per cent. of the roll number; at the Central School, Napier, it was 79·4 per cent.; and at the Hastings Street School, Napier, it was 73·6 per cent. At Gisborne, however, the remarkable regularity is shown by the fact that 86·3 children in every hundred on the rolls were in daily attendance throughout the year. Thus the difference in the regularity of the children attending the borough schools is shown by the fact that in every hundred children attending the several schools, Gisborne had 18·3 more in attendance throughout the year than were present at the Woodville School, 12·2 more than were present at Hastings, nearly seven more than were present at the Napier Central, and 12·7 more than were present at the Hastings Street School. The difference in the regularity of the children attending these schools tells its own tale in the wide difference between them in the thoroughness and general efficiency of the standard work. It appears to me that the whole difficulty which now besets the working of the age and attendance clauses of the Act could easily be met if the Inspector or Inspectors in each district had the necessary powers to deal with cases of irregular attendance in each school district on their half-yearly visits of inspection. Were this plan adopted I am satisfied that the attendance at the schools would be greatly improved, and this without the exercise of harsh or unnecessary punishments, such as are certain to follow the enforcement of the attendance and age clauses through the Police Court of the district.

Character of Schools.—Considered as a whole, I am able to report that there has been a steady improvement in the tone and general management of the schools during the year. Several capable teachers have lately come to the district, and the schools under their charge give great promise of success; but the losses by the deaths of Mrs. Bull, for some years head mistress of the Gisborne School, and of Mr. Corker, who was master of the Waerenga-ahika School, have marred and in some measure have counterbalanced the gains.

Preparatory Classes.—The improvement in the work of the preparatory classes to which I referred in my previous report still continues. It is in the junior departments of the schools where the individuality of a teacher has free play, and where the "State's writ" in the matter of a fixed and unbending syllabus of instruction has no existence. It is here also where one sees intelligent and educative methods adopted in the instruction and training of the children. As long as this plan continues I have hope that at least some of the elementary work in the standard course will be satisfactory. The infants' schools at Gisborne, Napier, Hastings, Waipukurau, Norsewood, Clive, and Waipawa are in an efficient state; but the teachers in several other schools are doing well, and in all cases where a separate infants' department is at work I may say that, if not always successful, at least faithful work is being done by the teachers. In some schools kindergarten training of a kind is adopted, and, although Froebel's Gifts are not always available, a knowledge of things occupies a most prominent place in the instruction of the little ones. Without exception, the upper preparatory classes in each school receive instruction in form, colour (primary, secondary, and tertiary), drawing, recitation, singing, and physical exercises, and some of the kindergarten games, such as are taught at Waipawa, are carried out with much care and precision. These subjects are in addition to the instruction given in reading, writing, and arithmetic, which form a portion of the work of all children attending the schools.

Conversational Lessons Important.—A most interesting feature in the work of the junior classes in several schools is the conversational lesson which is held each morning as soon as the children assemble, as to what they have seen on their way to school. The little ones are encouraged to tell in their own pleasant ways all they have seen, and the teacher, adopting a conversational style, fills in by means of word-picturing points of interest for the benefit of the class. The curiosity thus aroused among the children in this way is very great; besides, the combination of "things with words" is in my judgment the highest form of all school training. It is the Socratic method applied to the training of infants. I hope to see the plan here described introduced into all the infant schools at no distant date.

Standard Work and Moral Training Improving.—In the work of the standard pupils commendable progress in most of the schools has taken place, and it is pleasing to report that much more attention is being paid to the training of the children in good manners and right conduct than was customary a few years ago. The new regulations of the department may have something to do with the improvement in this direction, combined with a higher tone perceptible among the teachers themselves. But there is still wanting in most schools a harmony between the mental, physical, and moral training of the children, and it is very desirable that the teachers in the service of the Board realise that upon them rests the responsibility as to the harmonious training of the children. A man who has bad habits is not the proper person to train children in good ones; and, if physical, mental, or moral defects are found in some schools, I think they may safely be set down to the possession of similar defects in the teachers concerned. My experience in the work of the different schools daily strengthens the conviction that each school is the reflex of the mind and character of the teacher in charge, and that one of the highest, if not the highest function to be discharged in connection with the schools is that which relates to the choice of the teachers. The following remarks made by Mr. Locke on this subject in his "Thoughts on Education" are as appropriate to-day as when they appeared, nearly two hundred years ago, and I venture to quote them here even though an official report. He says, "Under whose care soever a child is put during the tender and flexible years of his life, this is certain: it should be one who thinks Latin and languages the least part of education; one who, knowing how much virtue and a well-tempered soul are to be preferred to any sort of learning or languages, makes it his business to form the mind of his scholars and give them a right disposition, which, if once got, though all the rest should be neglected, would in due time produce all the rest, and which if it be not got and settled, so as to keep out ill and vicious habits, languages and science and all other accomplishments of education will be to no purpose, but to make the worse and more dangerous man." I commend these wise remarks to the favourable consideration of Committees who have the selection of teachers for the schools in their own hands.

The condition of the schools in each county, and the changes which have taken place during the past ten years in the accommodation provided and in the general efficiency of the schools, will be gathered from the following description of each district: [Not reprinted].

From this brief review of the Board's schools it will be gathered that most of them are well organized and staffed and give good promise for the future. Although some of the schools fared badly under the new standard regulations, I have at no previous time felt so encouraged in my work as during the past year. Improvement is perceptible in many directions in the preparation of the standard subjects, and my only regret is that the syllabus, admirable though it is in many points, is not better adapted to meet the special wants of the districts. I am satisfied that were the syllabus modified in the direction suggested the effective and permanent work in the schools would be far greater than it now is, and that a horror of reading and of books after leaving school would not be one of the chief characteristics of our growing youth.

With regard to the various subjects taught in the schools, I shall only refer to certain of the class subjects and additional subjects, such as drawing, elementary science, military drill, calisthenics, singing, and sewing. Drawing is becoming a favourite subject in the schools, and it is taught with rare skill and success in several cases. I have it on the authority of an Art Master, a former examiner of the Science and Art Department, South Kensington, London, that the majority of the freehand drawings inspected by him from the Gisborne and Norsewood Schools would have passed as "Second grade" in England, and some of them would have gained the mark "Excellent." The drawings were simply the ordinary class work of Standards V. and VI., and a number of other schools are doing nearly as good work. To me this statement from an outside competent authority is very encouraging. Singing continues to be taught with great success at Napier Central, Gisborne, Hastings, Norsewood, Hampden; and in a number of other schools the results vary between good and fair. The concerts which are held annually in some districts are very popular with the children; but there is the growing danger of taking away too much time from the other school work whilst preparing a cantata or other piece for public rehearsal. Singing for a special purpose should not occupy any of the hours set aside for ordinary instruction, and I hope that this hint will suffice to stay a growing abuse. A fife and drum band has been formed at the Ormond district school, and the children have made good progress under the guidance of the master. Elementary science is well taught at Hastings, Woodville, Gisborne, Napier, Norsewood, and Kaikora, and a fair beginning has been made in most of the other schools. Military drill is excellently taught at Gisborne, where there is a cadet corps, at Napier, Hastings, and Waipawa; and in a number of other districts, including Woodville, Norsewood, and Waipukurau, the progress made is satisfactory. The teaching of calisthenics to the girls is only carried on at Gisborne, Waipukurau, Waipawa, Woodville, and Wainui; but the results are so beneficial to the girls, and the subject is so much appreciated by them, that I look forward to the time when the training of the girls in calisthenics will be considered as necessary as is the training of the boys in military drill. It seems to me that every lady teacher in the service of the Board should be required to gain a knowledge of this valuable means of physical training.

SEWING.—Sewing continues to be taught in a majority of the schools with rare success. The examiners who give so much of their valuable time and attention to the examination of this work speak in the highest terms of the great progress made by the children. The suggestive reports of the examiners will, I trust, meet with the approval of the Board. It would be well if the modification suggested by them with respect to the sewing syllabus could be carried out. In the sewing examinations thirty-three schools competed last year, from which 1,154 specimens were received at the Education Office. The number of specimens examined in each standard was—Standard VI., 30; Standard V., 104; Standard IV., 155; Standard III., 259; Standard II., 288; Standard I., 318. The schools where sewing is not taught are mostly small ones, and would each be in charge of a mistress instead of a master were the regulations dealing with the appointment of teachers carried out, and of course sewing would be taught in each. I can only express the opinion that Committees of the smaller schools who select a master for their school in preference to a mistress should be required to find some one capable of teaching sewing to the girls.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—My special reports upon the examinations of the pupil-teachers and upon the work of the Fifth and Sixth Standards have already been received by the Board. On the whole the training of the pupil-teachers is carried on with care and success by the principal teachers, and their efficient preparation is beginning to have its full effect upon that portion of the school work which the pupil-teachers are mostly required to do. The "Standard Lesson-book," that has to be kept by every pupil-teacher equally with every adult teacher, is a source of much good, and is the most important adjunct to systematic teaching which the Board has introduced into the schools.

TECHNICAL AND EVENING CLASSES.—For a number of years I have ventured in my reports to direct the attention of the Board to the desirability of establishing evening continuation schools for the benefit of those who desire to carry on their studies after leaving the ordinary day schools. I would again point out that the "coping stone" to our education system depends upon adapting the education to the special needs of districts, and to the establishment of similar evening classes, where all children who leave schools before completing their Sixth Standard course shall be required to attend, and where those who have finished their standards may attend to pursue the study of some technical subject. I desire to emphasize the need of something being done in the direction indicated here. I believe that a large portion of the work done in the schools is entirely lost to the vast majority of children within two years of their quitting school simply because of the too superficial character of the preparation. The children are hurried on much too rapidly through the standards, and the subjects are so numerous that thoroughness is impossible. As pointed out by me, in my report for 1885: "Within the school compass of a thousand hours, which constitute more than the average school year of a pupil, it is impossible to crowd the many subjects which are now required to be taught, 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 standard syllabus will be required, in which technical examinations and literary examinations will follow one another in alternate years." After two more years' experience in the work of the schools my opinion has grown stronger that evening continuation schools for useful and technical training are a necessity, and I venture to hope that the Board will endeavour to consider this important question during the coming year.

I have, &c.,

H. HILL, B.A., F.G.S.,
Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS for the WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	17	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	102	7	...	20	92	14 3
S 5	283	22	10	76	175	13 2
S 4	438	11	41	116	270	12 6
S 3	705	17	114	154	420	11 6
S 2	842	20	109	129	584	10 4
S 1	963	32	115	163	653	8 9
P	1,871	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	5,221	109	389	658	2,194	*

Mean of average age, 10 years 8 months.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,— Blenheim, 5th March, 1888.

I have the honour to lay before you my annual report on the public schools in the district of Marlborough for the year 1887.

There were 1,666 scholars on the rolls of the twenty-nine schools examined, 1,511 children being present. It is satisfactory to find that no more than fifty-two standard candidates absented themselves from examination, sickness being almost invariably the cause of absence. The percentage of failures (17·8) compares favourably with last year's percentage (19·6). On the other hand, the percentage of passes, compared with the roll number, falls short of last year's record by about 4 per cent. This latter test, however, is almost valueless as a measure of the general efficiency of the schools. Although I have invariably protested against a percentage of passes and failures being accepted as the sole criterion of the success of any school, it must be conceded that it forms a factor in estimating the year's work that cannot safely be disregarded. I cannot but regret, therefore, that a fourth of the candidates for standards should have failed in eight schools; and that, in six of these, the failures should amount to more than a third of those presented, after deducting scholars whose failures were not recorded, on account of the irregularity of their attendance. Wherever it has been possible to do so, I have set forth extenuating circumstances. In several cases none appeared to exist. On this occasion I have thought it best to confine myself almost exclusively to pointing out wherein the teaching of two subjects of the first consequence seem to me defective, and I will merely state in general terms that both "pass" and "class" subjects (with these two exceptions) are on the whole well taught throughout the district.

At the risk of being charged with a wearisome iteration, I must for the third time express my dissatisfaction with the progress made in the art of reading. In few of the Marlborough schools can the reading, even of the most advanced scholars, be fairly termed good, a third of them do not rise above the barest mediocrity, while in several even mediocrity is far from being attained. It would seem as though the multiplicity of subjects introduced into the course of instruction for the higher classes has caused teachers to lose sight of the supreme importance of good reading. The root of the mischief is apparently to be found in the imperfect training of the younger scholars, who, until they have passed the First Standard, are often taught in a perfunctory and slipshod fashion. But by this time many of them have acquired such bad habits as may well have become inveterate and well-nigh incurable. And yet it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the framers of the syllabus, in exacting so slight a modicum of attainment in other subjects as is prescribed for the First Standard, intended to set free children until their ninth year, mainly in order that they might master the art of reading. In this matter, indeed, in spite of all the vaunts that have been uttered about the superiority of the modern methods of teaching, our schools have still something to learn from the dame schools of bygone days, where children were at least taught to read, if they were taught little else. And yet, unless I am greatly mistaken, the measure of efficiency that I should consider satisfactory is by no means unattainable. It has certainly been easily attained in some of our schools, and it would be difficult to show why it should be out of the reach of any one of them. When a class of scholars in their tenth year can read fluently at sight, and so as to be readily understood by an examiner who has no book before him, a simple narrative, all that is required will have been done. With less than this one ought not to be satisfied.

Although the handwriting on the whole is not nearly so good as it would be if anything like the skill and pains which the importance of the subject deserves were bestowed upon it, some improvement has undoubtedly been made during the past year, especially in those schools which were formerly the worst offenders. It is still, however, far from being generally understood that no subject demands more minute and undivided attention on the part of the teacher, especially at the outset, than writing. He who habitually attempts to deal with anything else while a writing lesson is going on has himself to thank if he fails to turn out a good penman. Yet it is not uncommon to meet with time-tables in which provision is made for giving a reading lesson simultaneously with a lesson in writing to another class. Instead of adopting this dangerous device for saving time, it would be almost better for a teacher who is really hard pressed by the demands of many classes to cut down the time set apart for writing by one-half, but to attend to nothing else during the shortened period. I believe that no real injustice would be done in the long run if an examiner were to take round with him a few specimens of the average handwriting turned out in well-taught schools, steadily rejecting all copies that compared very unfavourably with the standard thus set up. One such sharp lesson would, I believe, go far towards raising the quality of the penmanship throughout the district.

It is to be regretted that head teachers do not take more pains to master the regulations laid down by the Education Department for their guidance. An unfavourable impression is naturally created when an examiner discovers that a teacher has either misunderstood or, what is worse, has disregarded certain directions as to the school course which have been laid down expressly for him. It must be distinctly understood that these directions cannot be treated in an eclectic fashion, and that no teacher is at liberty to omit any portion either of the "class" or the "pass" subjects simply because he has come to the conclusion that what he leaves out is not essential. A single instance will show my meaning. Among the regulations for the work of the First Standard it is clearly laid down that candidates must know the relative values of current coinage and the aliquot parts of a pound sterling. But in a full third of the Marlborough schools my late examinations have disclosed the fact that this part of the work has practically not been taught. A similar laxity prevails as to the teaching of drawing, a pretty general impression seeming to prevail that, provided the subject is taught at all, it is a matter of comparative indifference how far the quality of the work or the grade of the drawing book used corresponds with what is prescribed in the syllabus. Neither in drawing nor in history will any excuse be admitted in future for deviations from the authorised programme. I have observed that in two of our schools—and those amongst the best conducted—

history is entirely omitted from the course of instruction, simply because, as I have been given to understand, some of the parents object to the teaching of this subject. Although an exemption from the learning of history in certain cases is undoubtedly allowed by the Education Act, it has always appeared to me that a conscientious objection was the only one to which such exception was intended to apply. It is obvious that, if either School Committees or teachers were permitted to cut out this subject at their mere pleasure, history might in no long time drop altogether out of the school course. It seems to me that this is a matter as to which a definite rule might well be laid down by the Board for the guidance of teachers and Inspector.

It is disappointing to find that yet another year has gone by without anything effectual having been attempted to supply the dearth of books and school material which so seriously hampers teachers and scholars in this district. How grievous the evil is may be shown by a single instance: In Picton, a place in constant communication with the outer world, the scholars, on examination day, when called on to read, had to resort to the wretched expedient of passing the same tattered volume from hand to hand, the proportion of books to scholars in one class being as six to seventeen. If this is the state of things in a seaport, it may easily be conjectured how the remoter schools fare. In a by no means out-of-the-way place I have noticed that four different kinds of copy books, of the most diverse styles, were in use. Of the costliness to parents of even this insufficient and unsuitable supply I will say nothing, as that is, after all, by no means the most serious aspect of the matter. Private enterprise, it is clear, has in this case broken down utterly. The remedy, as I have more than once pointed out, is at once simple and effectual. In the neighbouring district of Nelson, for some years, every school has been amply supplied, at intervals of six months, and within a few weeks of the issue of the requisition from the School Committees, with everything applied for, at a cost of 25 per cent. below the English publishing price, without causing any loss to the Board. The machinery works with the regularity of clockwork, and easily admits of the introduction of new and improved books. It is impossible to say to what extent the poor reading and writing of which I have been so often compelled to complain is due to the poverty of the supply of the necessary implements of the teachers' craft. In this respect the Marlborough teachers are certainly sorely handicapped.

In the yearly educational stock-taking which is the main object of a report of this kind, a more prominent place has latterly been justly assigned to such weighty matters as the discipline of the schools and the behaviour of the scholars. So far as my own observation extends, both on my visits of inspection and of examination, there is little to find fault with in Marlborough, either with regard to the order maintained or the manners of the scholars. The single school that was notoriously wanting in both these respects has lately been thoroughly reformed, so that it may now be fairly affirmed that the school children throughout the district are under adequate control within the school room, obeying promptly and cheerfully all the orders given them, going through their tasks without unnecessary noise, and treating their teachers with a respectfulness that has no taint of servility. In the play ground the scholars, without being deficient in spirit, show an absence of the brutality and bullying which form so painful a feature of many schools in the Mother country. When the notorious laxity of parental control in the colonies is taken into consideration, together with the corresponding want of reverence on the part of children, it speaks well for our teachers that they have been able to achieve so much in the face of surroundings so unfavourable to the maintenance of good order. The stern discipline of the monastery or the barrack would be quite out of place in a school, and might result in crushing all the manliness out of the scholars; but there is a certain wholesome restraint, stopping far short of severity, which is the golden mean to be aimed at, and this the majority of Marlborough teachers have succeeded in fairly attaining.

The subjoined detailed account of the state of each school when it was examined is intended to supplement and make clearer the tabulated statements appended to this report. . . . . .

I have, &c.,

W. C. Hodgson, Inspector.

The Chairman, Marlborough Education Board.

Summary of Results for the Whole District.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed. Yrs.	Mos.
S 7	8	...	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	61	4	2	23	32	8	9
S 5	118	7	7	26	78	9	11
S 4	193	15	14	25	137	10	8
S 3	218	13	17	43	145	12	...
S 2	265	9	21	14	201	13	1
S 1	206	4	11	36	175	14	1
P.	597	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,666	52	72	167	768	*	

Mean of average age, 11 years 5 months.

NELSON.

SIR,— 31st December, 1887.

I have the honour to lay before you my report on the Nelson public schools for the year 1887. I have examined eighty-four schools, as against seventy-nine last year, the normal annual rate of increase in the number of schools for several years having been five. There were 5,343 children on the rolls of the foregoing schools on examination day; 4,965 children were present at examination; the number of absentees—378—being much larger than it has been for some time, and, indeed, larger than it ought to be. Of the absentees, 121 were standard scholars. The roll number for this district at the end of the year, including several small schools recently opened, was 5,419.

Taking the standard criterion for what it is worth, the schools as a whole seem to have done somewhat better than they did last year, the proportion of passes to the number on the roll being as 52 per cent. in 1887 to 49·9 in 1886. But the preposterous regulation which excepts from the record of failures those scholars only who have made less than half attendances during the three quarters preceding that in which the examination is held, vitiates any conclusion that might otherwise be drawn even from this crude test. The element of chance enters too largely into a method of computation which makes it imperative to record the failure of a scholar whose total attendance during the year may have amounted to less than six months. Until the wholesome system is restored which cut out of the list of failures all scholars who had made fewer than 260 half-day attendances between one examination and another, all inferences drawn from the mere percentage of passes should be regarded with distrust.

After reviewing the work of the past twelvemonths, and comparing it with that of preceding years, the outcome seems to me, on the whole, reassuring. To this not unfavourable estimate there are, however, one or two important exceptions, which will subsequently be dealt with. As a rule, the spelling of the older scholars is as good as can reasonably be looked for from children whose vocabulary and reading are alike limited—that is, they do not often go astray with words in common use. They have a moderate acquaintance with formal grammar, though the technical knowledge thus displayed seems to be of little practical service to them either in speaking or writing their own language. They can describe fairly well what they have seen, their power of doing this having been tested lately by their being set to give an account of some indigenous plant or bird; though the results of unskilful teaching are, even here, too often seen in the clumsy prefaces and roundabout endings of their letters, against which I have so often and so vainly protested. Little fault can be found with the attainments of the scholars in geography, the teaching of which is now far less loaded with useless details than it was in bygone days. Considerable familiarity is usually shown with the broad outlines of physical geography, and the causes of such phenomena as tides, winds, and currents are fairly well understood. The geography of these Islands is also thoroughly well taught. Of history, which is generally taught orally, it may be said that the minority, who have a natural liking for the subject, more than satisfy the demands of the examiner, the majority barely passing muster. The same is generally true of drawing, though the proportion of those who take kindly to this art is somewhat larger than obtains with history. There is every reason to be satisfied with the attainments of the bulk of our scholars in arithmetic, although I cannot help regretting that it should still be found necessary to devote so large a portion of the scanty school hours to this subject. The antiquated and clumsy system of weights and measures that still holds its ground throughout the British Empire—in spite of the mass of reasons that has been brought to bear against it, and in spite of the decisive examples of France and America—is largely accountable for the slowness with which the mystery of ciphering is acquired. It is not inopportune to remark that both Inspectors and teachers appear to me to have erred in too persistently decrying what they term "mere mechanical expertness." This mechanical expertness is the very thing that will stand our scholars in good stead in after-life, and, it is to be feared, is just that in which they will find themselves most wanting when put to the proof. To add up columns of pounds, shillings, and pence quickly and correctly, or to calculate on the spur of the moment the contents of a piece of earthwork, will be found worth more to them than the power of simplifying the most involved series of complex fractions. Although the more pressing demands of other subjects leave comparatively little time for the teaching of elementary science, something has been done in this direction. Many of our scholars can explain the principle of the thermometer, the barometer, or the hydraulic press, and can illustrate their explanation by a well-drawn diagram. The properties of light, heat, and sound are also not unknown to them. The increased attention paid to both school and military drill ought not to pass unnoticed. The various movements necessary to the orderly conduct of school work are now carried out in most of our schools with a precision that leaves little to be desired. In several schools well-trained cadet corps have been formed, and in others, where the numbers do not admit of such an organization, the ordinary company movements are gone through with commendable promptitude.

What has been written so far may fairly be termed satisfactory, and if, as will be gathered from the detailed report of each school, this summary is not universally, it is, at least, pretty generally true. But there is a reverse side to the picture. In the two subjects that may be termed the very foundation of education, reading and writing, there is unquestionably much to be done before the best attainable results are reached. It is not too much to say that fully one-half of our children do not write nearly so well as they ought to do—not nearly so well, in fact, as children of like age and standing actually do write in some of our more carefully-taught schools. There is nothing unfair in taking as a standard that ought to be attained everywhere the work shown at these establishments, which are to be met with indifferently in town or country, and which may be either large or small. They possess no special advantages except that of having teachers who know their work, and do it. To quote individual examples may seem invidious; but I can discover no reason, except the art of taking pains, why children of seven or eight years old at Richmond Girl's School

should, year after year, turn out better writing than scores of children of ten years old for miles around. Yet teachers are not ashamed to put before me—occasionally not without complacency—such ill-spelt, blotted, and misshapen scrawls as deserve to be torn up on the spot. It seems absurd at this time of day that teachers, often certificated, should neglect or should know so little of the rudiments of their business as to make no use of the blackboard or of simultaneous teaching in giving a writing lesson, or that they should disregard the proper position to be assumed by a writer. Nor is it creditable that it should be left to an Inspector to point out in a public report that very young learners who cannot even form their letters properly should not be set to attempt running hand in advanced copy books. In spite of the introduction of a better style of copy book, the handwriting has, on the whole, fallen off during the year. A fair warning being now given that a sharp remedy will be applied, it will be safe to predict that those who do not mend their ways in this respect will find a heavy record of failures placed to their account at next examination.

Last year I had the pleasure of reporting a marked improvement in the reading, especially that of the town schools. As regards these, there is certainly no falling-off. In two of them, indeed, there is a decided advance. But in all save a few of the best of our country schools, and especially in some of the smaller ones, much reading is still allowed to pass muster that would try the forbearance of the most lenient examiner. On my visits of inspection I have observed that every one of the stock faults condemned by examiners is habitually committed with hardly a check. A boy of ten is suffered to read without making the slightest attempt to group his words, to pause quite irrespectively of the sense of the passage, and to disregard all proper inflection. The American fashion of unduly emphasising the small words, leaving the more important ones to take care of themselves—a fashion ridiculed by Dickens nearly fifty years ago—has unaccountably got a strong hold upon our scholars, who by hundreds read about "*a* boy meeting *the* dog." The voice of the teacher, if heard at all, is too often heard only for correction, and not, as it should be, for example. In few of the schools that I refer to does the teacher read in turn with the scholars, nor is simultaneous reading—a valuable help when not overdone—made sufficient use of. A notion has got abroad—whence derived I know not—that an examiner is stretching his powers who asks a class to read out of any book but that over which they have been poring for twelve long months. Nay, objections have been raised by teachers—who are quite unconscious that they are self-condemned—to any passage being selected that lies beyond that portion of their class book which the children have prepared. A stranger would, indeed, be quite misled who should judge of the reading powers of our children by listening to their fluent rendering of a carefully-prepared passage from their solitary reading book. Two things, at least, should nowadays be insisted on—that every standard scholar should use alternately at least two reading books during each year, and that he should have such a practical knowledge of the art of reading as to be able to read at sight any portion of either of these books. The first of these rules has for some time been universally enforced in England. I propose a simple test, by applying which to his scholars any teacher may judge for himself whether they read as well as they ought. If a child in his tenth year cannot read at sight fluently and intelligently the first volume of Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather" (written, I believe, for a boy of seven), he has made poor use of his four years' schooling. The stereotyped excuse about the multiplicity of subjects required by the syllabus does not hold good at this stage. Reading, spelling, drawing, writing, and arithmetic are the only pass subjects for Second Standard scholars, who ought to have mastered the mechanical difficulties of reading. Whatever else may be left undone, reading shall not, if I can help it, go to the wall.

Needlework.—The good custom, begun in the city of Nelson, but subsequently followed by many of our country districts, which secures to our schools the valuable help of committees of ladies who annually examine and report on the sewing, has done much to popularise and bring into notice this art. And, although sewing is no longer included among the subjects necessary for a pass, it has not on that account been neglected, as is amply shown by the favourable nature of the reports generally given by the examiners, to say nothing of my own observation, taking it for what it is worth.

Home Lessons.—The nuisance of excessive home lessons, as to the revival of which I complained in last year's report, has, I have reason to believe—though it is not easy to get at the exact truth in this matter—been considerably abated. The help for which I appealed to School Committees has been promptly and effectively given in several quarters, notably by the town Committee, who issued a stringent circular to their teachers on the subject. If, therefore, any child within the city of Nelson public schools suffers from excessive night work, the injury is being inflicted in contravention of the express injunctions of the Committee. No falling-off in the quality of this year's work can be detected that can be fairly attributed to the diminution of the hours of work thus insisted on.

Aided Schools.—The difficulty of finding qualified teachers for these small establishments, which have increased so much in number that they now form a fourth of our roll of schools, is becoming a serious matter. It was hoped that vacancies would be readily and efficiently filled up by those probationers who had completed their three years' term of service. Most of these are well suited, both by natural aptitude and practical training, for the work of teacher of an aided school. Several, indeed, of our most promising probationers have taken, and have filled admirably, such posts. But the supply of those who are at once qualified and willing to go forth into the remote districts still falls short of the demand. Two difficulties stand in the way. The first, which has been shown not to be insurmountable, is the natural reluctance to leave the comforts of home, and, it must be added in fairness, the abundance of means of studying for the now almost indispensable certificate afforded in a town or village. The second difficulty is harder to grapple with. The remuneration offered in many of our remoter aided schools—a remuneration that will be still further reduced by the cutting down of the education grant—is so scanty that it scarcely gives a bare subsistence to teachers who must pay for their board and lodging. Unless, therefore, those more immediately interested in the maintenance of such

schools can see their way to supplementing by local contributions their teachers' incomes, the choice of a teacher must in many cases be limited to such more or less qualified persons as may happen to live in the neighbourhood, and may thus be enabled, by living at home, to put up with a smaller rate of pay than a thoroughly competent person coming from a distance could afford to accept. It may, of course, be urged that "half a loaf is better than no bread;" but there can be no doubt that the want of either natural aptitude or of technical training—in some cases the want of both—has told heavily against the success of some of our aided schools, which have but a sorry record to show this year.

Discipline and Manners.—Little fault can reasonably be found with the discipline of the vast majority of our schools. There are not, indeed, at the outside, half a dozen where the teacher has not full control over the scholars. Where no attempt is made, owing to the scantiness of the numbers, to give military drill, class drill is usually effectively taught, and during the daily school routine, so far as my own observation extends, the instructions of the teacher are punctually and readily obeyed. As to the wider subject of the manners of the children, from the very nature of the case, as I have explained before, I cannot speak with the same confidence, but it may be affirmed that there has certainly been no general falling-off of late in this respect, and that in some instances, especially in the larger schools, such as those in Reefton, Westport, and the City of Nelson, there has been a distinct improvement.

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

* * * I have, &c.,

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

Summary of Results for the Whole District.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	87	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	318	9	12	61	236	14 0
S 5	408	15	12	78	303	13 0
S 4	650	19	35	90	506	11 11
S 3	767	29	29	114	595	10 9
S 2	700	24	34	87	555	9 9
S 1	676	25	23	41	587	8 7
P.	1,737	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	5,343	121	145	471	2,782	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 5 months.

GREY.

Sir,— Education Office, Greymouth, 7th March, 1888.

I have the honour to submit my second annual report upon the schools in this district.

The number of schools examined was eighteen as against seventeen last year. Dobson school represents the one extra, it having taken the place of the Wallsend side school. The following table will furnish (as far as mere figures can do so) a means of comparing the work with that of the two previous years:—

	1885.	1886.	1887.
Roll number on day of examination	1,383	1,484	1,513
Number of above who have already passed the standard course	14	28	13
Within standard classification	872	994	1,058
Number enrolled in standard classes present at examination	828	830	972
Number promoted to a higher standard ...	579	594	676
Percentage of Promotions—			
On roll number of school	41·87	40	44·6
On roll number of standard classes ...	66·4	59·7	64
On number present in standard classes ...	69·93	71·5	70
Mean of average age in standards ...	...	11yrs. 1mo.	11yrs. 4mos.
Mean of average age of those who passed ...	...	11yrs. 6mos.	11yrs. 5mos.
Average of attendances for year	...	239	254
Percentage of passes in standard pass subjects	...	85	78

Reading.—The defects referred to in my last report still exist, though in one or two schools decided improvement has taken place. In small schools, where the teacher attempts the whole or

the greater part of an extensive programme, this subject must, I think, necessarily suffer, from the inability of the teacher to give undivided attention to it.

WRITING in some schools shows decided improvement, though our schools can never reach a high standard in this respect until greater care is exercised as to posture and the manner of holding the pen in the lower classes: I say the lower classes, because if bad habits are acquired in the earlier stages they will be difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate in the later. Very few schools are exempt from this objection; and it needs only to be present at a writing exercise to be struck by the ungainly and awkward postures assumed by the scholars, with an accompanying incorrectness in the manner of holding the pen. Before a class of young scholars should be allowed to make a letter with the pen there should be very thorough drill in these matters. Whitcombe and Tombs's new series of copy books are now in use throughout the district, and their adoption will, no doubt, facilitate improvement. Early in the year I suggested the use of double-ruled exercise books for the lower classes, and I find a general agreement of opinion as to the beneficial result of the experiment.

ARITHMETIC.—Though the percentage of passes in this subject is lower than last year, this may be attributed more to stricter requirements in the matters of numeration and notation than to any falling-off in the work generally. Indeed, the indications are in the direction of improvement, though not strongly so. A proportion of the questions in Standards I. to IV. were given in words, and strict accuracy in setting down the sums was demanded in all cases. By this means I hope to be able to record in time the absence of difficulty in these matters in Standards III. and IV. In the lower classes the slightest deviation from the most straightforward manner of stating a question is too often a cause of failure. Teachers would find that in blackboard work the introduction of as much variation as possible in the manner of putting sums will be productive of benefit, and have a decidedly sharpening effect. Practice and bills of parcels again present the greatest difficulty to Standard IV. In the former rule there is more accurate working, with an utter absence of anything approaching shortened processes. My questions in this rule were framed with the intention of specially testing the extent to which the scholars had been taught to curtail the work, with the result of showing that such teaching is conspicuous by its absence. For instance, in the following sum, "Find the value of 607 articles at £9 19s. 11¾d.," the working would generally run as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
	607	0	0
			9
	5,463	" 0	" 0
10/ = ½ of £1	303	" 10	" 0
5/ = ½ of 10/	151	" 15	" 0
1/ = ⅕ of 5/	30	" 7	" 0
1/ = ⅕ of 5/	30	" 7	" 0
1/ = ⅕ of 5/	30	" 7	" 0
1/ = ⅕ of 5/	30	" 7	" 0
6d. = ½ of 1/	15	" 3	" 6
3d. = ½ of 6d.	7	" 11	" 9
1d. = ⅓ of 3d.	2	" 10	" 7
1d. = ⅓ of 3d.	2	" 10	" 7
¼d. = ¼ of 1d.		12	" 7¾
¼d. = ¼ of 1d.		12	" 7¾
¼d. = ¼ of 1d.		12	" 7¾
	£6,069	" 7	" 4¼ Answer.

Now, the teacher should not only show how this lengthened process might be considerably reduced, but also the means of working the sum by the method of subtraction.

Farthings.	£	s.	d.		
4)607	607	0	0	×	10
12)151 ¾d.			10		
12 7¾d.	6,070	0	0		
		12	7¾		
	£6,069	7	4¼		

This example was taken from a large class in which the work, on the whole, was very well done; and though it may be considered a rather exaggerated example of the defect, in no one case was the shorter process attempted. The weariness induced by this sort of work, and the consequent distaste for it may probably account for the fact that sums in practice and bills of parcels given in the cards for the Fifth Standard were often badly done or passed over altogether. I have made this special test a feature in all parts of the examination, and I find that those who are presented at extra competitions, and even pupil-teachers, are not free from the tendency to do "round-about papers." I believe it is correct to say that the chief reason urged for the teaching of arithmetic is its indispensibility in connection with commercial pursuits; and therefore it is not too much to expect that our scholars should, on leaving school, be able to perform correctly and quickly the operations connected with the making out of a simple bill of parcels.

All standards were subjected to an oral examination in mental arithmetic with fair results. I adopted this style of examination for the purpose of encouraging teachers to give some portion of

the time devoted to arithmetic to strictly mental work, as I believe this to be an efficient help to the abolishment of the bad practice of counting on the fingers. Beginning with the best, the work of the standards in this subject stands in the following order of merit: Standard I., III., II., VI., IV., V.; Standard V. being decidedly the weakest. In this subject there were very few papers that could be called really slovenly, though there were varying degrees of neatness. To facilitate the training in this important feature of the work I suggested, during the year, the use of actuary-ruled exercise books for the lower classes. Most of the teachers have adopted this plan, and they report favourably of the result.

Spelling and Dictation are fairly well taught, very few schools showing really inferior work. As to quality of work the standards show as follows: Standards I., II., III., V., VI., IV.

Grammar.—Much that I said in my last year's report concerning this subject is still applicable. Considering that the questions given were, on the whole, decidedly less difficult, the fact of the passes being 8 per cent. lower in this subject than in 1886 would appear to point to anything but improvement. The difference, however, is more apparent than real, and is caused principally by the disturbing influence caused by one or two exceptionally bad cases amongst a small group of schools. As to quality of work, the classes rank as follows: Standard IV., III., V., and VI. The work of Standards V. and VI. is decidedly weak, the weakness exhibiting itself in the former principally in the inflexions of the verb and analysis, and in the latter in analysis and derivation. The work of Standard IV. is stronger than in any other subject; the results for this class being generally very creditable. Standard III takes a fair position, the work of various schools showing great contrasts; some exhibiting most excellent work, and others results which are most decidedly bad. I am quite sure that teachers and pupils would derive benefit in every way if analysis were commenced at an earlier stage. The most difficult problem seems to be, how to make the study of formal grammar bear fruit in connection with composition. The fact that the composition of Standard IV. was, after making all due allowances, decidedly the best, would seem to indicate that this subject is now better taught than formerly. Too often, however, letters and short essays, fairly well expressed, are disfigured by bad spelling, the absence of capital letters and punctuation, and slovenly writing and arrangement. The Fourth Standard in the Greymouth School deserves special mention for this portion of the grammar work. Generally speaking the subject requires more systematic treatment; and if teachers would commence the year with a well-defined system of teaching, and carefully record the effect, they would, I am sure, experience benefit therefrom.

Geography.—This subject presents various aspects, the classes ranking as follows: As a pass subject, Standard III. by far the best, Standard VI. and Standard V., the last-named standard showing only 39 per cent of passes. Class geography is, on the whole, fairly done. Weakness is a prominent feature in the work of Standard V., more particularly so in mathematical and physical geography. Further experience has confirmed the impression that the system of teaching recommended in my last report is the correct one. Standards II. and III. were judged partly by an oral examination before the map, and partly by slate or paper work. For Standard IV. the choice was given to the teacher of having the examination oral or written.

History, as taught at present, I do not consider of much value. The ludicrous results, from taking Standard III. out of the every day beaten path of questioning, proved how little reality there is in the subject to that class. Amongst some fairly good work in the higher classes, the tendency to give rote answers was also very conspicuous; and in oral questioning it was difficult to get proof that the continuity of history had been presented to the scholars. The confused ideas entertained upon the subject may be exemplified by the following answers: "Wat Tyler was a blacksmith. He went shooting in the New Forest, and found William Rufus up a tree and shot him." "After the Commonwealth Anicky (anarchy) succeeded." The last answer strikingly illustrates the danger of mere word teaching. Cards were prepared for this subject, but, if the teacher preferred it, the examination was conducted orally.

Singing.—Orwell Creek, Brunnerton, and Cobden are the only schools which teach singing in all classes. Greymouth and Westbrook confine it to the lower standards, and the rest omit it altogether. Brunnerton decidedly takes the lead in this subject. I hope to see the list extended.

Drawing shows a decided improvement.

Recitation also gives proof of greater care.

Elementary Drill is not neglected, though it is not general.

Sewing.—The committee of ladies who kindly undertook to examine the needlework report generally that good work is done, according to the regulations. Kynnersley and Nelson Creek take first rank in this subject in the order of their names.

Improvement is perceptible in object lessons and elementary science, Cobden, Greymouth, Brunnerton, and Westbrook Schools deserving special mention.

Classes P 1 and P 2.—Considering the difficulties that teachers of small schools have to contend with, these classes are, on the whole, fairly well taught. At Greymouth, Hatters, and Cobden Schools the work in these classes deserves special mention, and, in a lesser degree perhaps, the Brunnerton School.

Discipline and General Behaviour.—In the matters of discipline and the general behaviour of the scholars I have no complaint to make, though in one or two schools a little more strictness would have a salutary effect.

Home Lessons.—As to home lessons, I cannot agree altogether with those who would have them abolished. I would again, however, sound a note of warning as to giving home work in arithmetic before the scholars are throughly drilled in the principles of the rule and the methods of working. Medical men speak strongly concerning the worry and mental strain caused by the practice of giving home lessons. Neglect of the preparation I speak of is, I think, really the principal cause of trouble.

Pupil-teachers' Examination.—The pupil-teachers were examined in January, with the candidates for certificates, &c. Eight sat for the fourth class, three for the third class, three for the second class, and two for the first class—the schools represented being Greymouth, Brunnerton,

Dobson, Hatters, and Notown. All passed, eight passing with credit; seven of these belonged to the Greymouth School.

District High School.—The work of the higher class commenced in July, 1887, under the care of Mr. W. H. A. Craddock, and, considering the short period of work, the results of the examination may be considered very good. Eleven scholars were presented for examination. The best work was shown in Latin and Euclid; but all subjects showed fair progress.

Comparison of Results.—Comparing the results generally with those of 1886, we find that the percentage of passes on the number presented in standards is 1·5 lower, and the percentage of passes on the standard subjects is 7 lower. Considering, however, the influence exercised by one or two exceptionally unfortunate schools, I am of opinion that the results are, on the whole, quite on a par with those of last year. Notwithstanding such drawbacks as irregular attendance, insufficient floor and desk accommodation, and limited staff, with a too frequently recurring anxiety as to reduction of income, the teachers in this district have worked diligently and well, and deserve the thanks of the Board for their efforts. In my last report I referred to the possibility of evil resulting from the desire on the part of teachers and parents for large percentages. When satisfied that no effort will be spared to prevent his being misjudged by inexpert critics, I find the teacher readily amenable to reason: with the parent, however, it is different. Those who will exhibit the greatest apathy during the year as to their children's attendance will probably be aggressively anxious at examination time that the latter should pass. This results from the mistaken tendency to look upon the pass as the end and aim of all school work.

General.—At the time that I replied to the circular from the Education Committee I was unable to give the various points referred to in the circular much consideration. I will now take the opportunity of going a little more into detail in one or two subjects. I stated in my reply that I considered the present programme of instruction to be on the whole a satisfactory one, and am still of that opinion. The difficulty is not so much with the programme itself as to the general application of it to all classes of schools alike. I am quite sure that the solitary teacher of a country school would do very much more useful and generally better work if the list of pass subjects were for him reduced, and greater freedom given to him as to choice of class and optional subjects. As to the process by which the fitness for promotion is tested, I think there is room for considerable improvement. Before proceeding to suggest a remedy, I may briefly state the evils which my experience of the system leads me to think may result from it. Cram, rote teaching, and superficial work are the principal. Parents and scholars are both apathetic about attendance at the commencement of the year, and though I certainly cannot say that it is so with the teachers generally, yet the temptation exists for them also to take matters easily in the early stage. Indifference at the beginning brings hurried, superficial work at the end of the year. The nervousness and excitement observable among the scholars may be regarded as the reflected influence of this mental bugbear upon the teacher himself, for he may abstain from any direct reference to the approaching examination, and yet impart a share of his own worry to the pupils. I would suggest that some such plan as the following be adopted: That Standards I. and II. be promoted solely on the record of the year's work kept by the teacher, subject to the opinion of the Inspector as to the general condition of these classes; such opinion to be based partly on the impression made at the visit of inspection and partly on the result of oral questioning at the examination. No results to be recorded for these classes. For Standards III. to VI. a careful record to be kept of the work of the year, and at the examination the record percentage and the examination percentage to be added together, and the mean average percentage taken as the result, subject possibly to the attainment of percentages to be fixed upon for certain leading subjects. The fact of the yearly record becoming a factor in the matter would have a decidedly beneficial effect upon the attendance, and would tend to remove any temptation to cram. It is commonly remarked by teachers that the pupils upon whom they place the greatest reliance often fail them on examination day, and this is doubtless owing to worry and nervousness. The knowledge of having a good yearly record to fall back upon would help the scholar greatly to resist these feelings. Of course, the successful working of such a system requires thorough efficiency in the teacher, and his removal from the slightest suspicion of local influence. I do not pretend to any originality in connection with these suggestions. The test method recommended is largely in operation in the primary schools of America, and is gradually extending. Attached hereto are Tables I. to IV. [Tables II. to IV. not reprinted], and a report giving full particulars as to each school in the district.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Greymouth. E. T. Robinson, Secretary.

Summary of Results for the Whole District.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	13	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	54	13	2	12	27	14 5
S 5	113	11	4	39	59	12 11
S 4	222	22	12	67	121	12 6
S 3	219	13	14	52	140	10 9
S 2	223	13	13	45	152	9 7
S 1	227	14	12	24	177	8 5
P	442	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,513	86	57	239	676	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 5 months.

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Hokitika, 20th February, 1888.

I have the honour to submit my thirteenth annual report upon the schools in the Education District of Westland.

The number of schools in operation in the district at the date of this report is twenty-four as against twenty-three at the end of 1886. The new school added to the list is a small aided school situated at the Waikukupa River, half-way between Okarito and Gillespie's, and therefore twelve miles from the nearest school. The number of children at present benefited by the establishment of this school is five, and the total expense to the Board is £25 per annum. There are now five schools of this description in the district, and there is every probability of more being required, although it is doubtful whether, under the new system of payment to Boards, it will be possible to meet the demand or even to keep up the present number.

All the schools in the district have been examined according to the regulations, and the results of the examination are given in the tables which will accompany, and for this year constitute the chief part of, my report. All the schools north of the Mikonui River have also received the usual visits of inspection, and in each case the whole or the greater part of a school day has been devoted to this purpose.

The past year has been a very trying time for the schools in this district; almost every school has suffered severely either from a very meagre attendance during a considerable portion of the year, or from an entire closing of the school for many weeks, both of these drawbacks being occasioned by the prevalence of some epidemic (in most cases measles). It was therefore with somewhat gloomy forebodings that I commenced my examination tour, fully expecting to find a serious falling off in the year's results. I am glad, however, to be able to report that the deterioration has been very slight on the whole, and not more, indeed in most cases considerably less, than might reasonably have been expected. The number of scholars presented was 1,936 as against 1,829 last year, an increase of nearly 6 per cent., while the number of passes has increased from 827 to 886, or about 7 per cent. Taking, however, the number actually examined in standards (excluding the "exceptions," in both cases we find that the passes have increased from 76·6 per cent. to 81·6 per cent. While, therefore, the roll number has increased 6 per cent. the passes have only increased 5 per cent., and this may be taken to be about the extent to which the aggregate results have been affected by the unfavourable circumstances that have prevailed in the district. Comparing the results in the "pass" subjects for the two years it will be seen that there has been an increase in the passes in reading, writing, arithmetic and geography, and a decrease for those in spelling and grammar. This last subject has fallen off to the extent of 19 per cent., while arithmetic has advanced 10 per cent.

I am glad to be able to report that, notwithstanding the drawbacks referred to above, the "class" and "additional" subjects have evidently received much more attention this year than in former years, all of the schools showing some advance, and a few of them very considerable improvement upon last year's results. Indeed at one school there seems to have been almost too much prominence given to these at the expenses of the pass subjects, the latter having fallen 8 per cent. and the former risen 31 per cent., showing that at all events the teacher was not working for a large percentage of passes. The number of scholars above Standard VI. examined this year was forty-five, and the accompanying table [not reprinted] shows the percentage of marks gained by this class for the ordinary pass subjects and for the class subjects at the schools named, from which it will be seen that there is on the whole a marked improvement this year in the work of S 7. In fact the work of the standard classes in the class and additional subjects shows that an earnest endeavour has been made by the teachers in this district to accomplish the well nigh impossible task imposed upon them in the syllabus.

Owing to various circumstances well known to the Board, so much work devolved upon me during the first two months of the present year that I have no time to spare for anything more than a bare record of the performance of the schools at the examination, and the compilation of the various tables which are given in connection therewith. Perhaps on the whole this is not a subject for serious regret, seeing the growing tendency to convert Inspectors' "reports" into annual essays on school method published at the expense of the country. I shall not therefore give expression this year to any opinion as to the treatment of the several parts of the syllabus. Having nothing fresh to say on the subject, to express the same views in other words would answer no useful purpose, whilst their omission will help to reduce the Government Printer's account.

The condition of the preparatory classes at all the principal schools is quite satisfactory, and it is a matter for sincere congratulation in this district that the idea of raising the age for admission to the public schools was abandoned. If the original proposal had been adopted the effect here would have been well nigh fatal to the system unless some special relief could have been provided to meet the peculiar circumstances of the district. All the small schools must have been closed and the children of remote settlers must have been condemned to grow up in ignorance of the simplest rudiments of learning. Even in their modified form it is to be feared that the retrenchments will have this effect in some cases.

For the benefit of those who do not care to study tabulated statements, I may say broadly that the general condition of elementary education in Westland is probably as satisfactory as it is in any other part of New Zealand. That there is no school having a certificated head teacher that has to any serious extent fallen away from its former position, excepting the Blue Spur School, and here the falling off is accounted for in a manner which reflects no reproach upon the late or the present teacher. There are still twelve uncertificated teachers in charge of schools in this district, and, in justice to those who have qualified themselves for the service by passing the required examination, and still more in justice to the children attending these schools, the Board should endeavour to comply with section 45 of the Act, wherever the amount of the salary is sufficient to

justify the expectation that a certificated teacher might be obtained, and especially where the results show that there is a real necessity for considerable improvement.

TIME-TABLE.—The time-tables exhibited at the several schools are generally fairly well arranged, in some cases admirably so, and the distribution of the work over the time available is, as a rule, well proportioned to the relative importance of the subjects taught; but as nearly every teacher has a different method of showing the routine of his work, a great amount of quite unnecessary trouble and loss of time to the Inspector is caused in consequence of his having to make himself acquainted with fresh peculiarities at almost every school. In consequence of this, I have long had it in contemplation to draw up a form for general use in all schools. This I have now done, and if approved by the Board the forms will be distributed at once. It is not, of course, intended in any way to fetter the free action of any teacher in the exercise of his judgment in allotting the time at his disposal to the several subjects of instruction, but merely to cause all teachers to exhibit that allotment in a simple and uniform manner. The only novelty (if it can be called so) introduced is an analysis of the distribution of each day's work. This is already supplied by some of our teachers, and should be by all.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—Seventeen pupil-teachers came up for examination in January, and the examination was held simultaneously with the Civil Service and Teachers' Examination. Of the seventeen, four were examined for admission to the first (highest) class, and all passed, two gaining credit marks. In addition to this, two candidates in this class from the Hokitika School took up Latin as an optional subject and gained 62 and 54 per cent. of the maximum marks for that subject. For the second class three were examined, and all passed, one with credit; in this class also the Hokitika candidate took up Latin and gained 70 per cent. of the possible marks. For the third class there were eight candidates, who all passed, one with credit. One of these, Annie Banks, deserves special mention, as she was not appointed until July, and had therefore only six months' time for preparation. Margaret Wilson, Mary Potts, and William Houston had only nine months' time to prepare for the examination. The two Hokitika candidates in this class took up Latin in addition to the ordinary subjects, and gained 56 and 65 per cent. of the maximum marks for this subject. For the fourth class there were two candidates and both passed. In accordance with the regulations the pupil-teachers were required to preserve the exercise books used throughout the year, and to produce them for inspection. I found a marked improvement in both the quantity and quality of the work done in some cases. The books presented by the Kumara pupil-teachers were undoubtedly the best by far taking into consideration the quantity of work done, the regularity with which the different subjects were represented, and the cleanliness and neatness of the writing and arrangement. The Hokitika pupil-teachers' books were quite equal to those from Kumara in general execution, but exhibited a much smaller amount of work. This no doubt is owing to a different system of teaching, and does not by any means indicate any deficiency in the instruction imparted. The books exhibited by some of the pupil-teachers were not very creditable; they were untidy; the books were commenced at both ends; the work was without any date. One set of books abounded with slovenly scribbling, sometimes in coloured pencil and sometimes in ink, and with lines badly ruled. Seeing how important it is that our future teachers should themselves acquire the highest possible degree of excellence in this kind of work, I think that I should be justified in recommending the Board to amend the regulations with the view of making the condition of the exercise books the test for writing, and a serious failure in this subject to bar promotion.

I have, &c.,

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

SUMMARY of RESULTS for the WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	45	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	86	10	5	18	53	14 0
S 5	175	23	4	43	105	13 3
S 4	223	17	4	33	169	12 4
S 3	261	18	9	48	186	12 0
S 2	246	15	5	30	196	10 4
S 1	228	18	6	27	177	9 6
P	672	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,936	101	33	199	886	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 9 months.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Christchurch, 31st March, 1888.

We have the honour to present our report on the schools of the North Canterbury District for the year 1887.

The year opened with considerable arrears of work belonging to the previous series of examinations. These arrears have been substantially made up; but there still remain a few cases in which the annual examination has been postponed beyond the 31st of December, the postponement being due principally to the circumstances of the schools themselves.

The number of schools examined for standard classification is 153, with a roll number of 19,447—an increase of 797 children. Two new schools were not examined. A separate visit of inspection has also been paid to each school, with two or three exceptions.

In fixing the dates of examination, we have sought in every instance to give teachers the longest period of preparation possible: yet the attempt to bring the work within the limits of the departmental regulations has compelled us to take nearly all the schools earlier. Many of those examined in the months of November and December were taken as much as two months before we could expect them to be perfectly ready for reclassification. As regards standard passes, therefore, and no doubt to some extent in other respects also, our schools have been this year placed at a great disadvantage. Yet we have the gratification of recording in the accompanying tables—Tables A and B—a substantial advance on the corresponding results of our last report. In nearly every respect an improvement is shown. On the roll of the standard classes the proportion of absentees has fallen from 6·73 to 5·13; of exceptions, from 5·80 to 4·78; of failures, from 25·51 to 22·60; while the proportion presented in standards has risen from 62·64 to 64·05. The official percentage of passes for the district, estimated on the roll-number of schools examined, is 42·95; and the official percentage of failures, estimated on the standard class-roll, exclusive of absentees and exceptions, is 25·08, which are to be compared respectively with the proportions 38·61 and 29·16 of last year's return. The general result of the class subjects does not appear so favourable, the average percentage on class subjects granted to schools having fallen from 44·6 to 40·93; but it is to be noted that a more rigid system of assigning marks for drawing has been adopted, and the estimate formed for the greater part on the results of special tests rather than as before on general evidence of the attention given to the subject. The slight reduction in the average ages of the children is only an apparent improvement due to the earlier dates of examination.

TABLE A.—PASS SUBJECTS.

Classes.	Number presented.	Number absent.	Number excepted.	Number failed.	Number passed.	Proportion presented per Cent. of total School Roll.	Proportion passed per Cent. of total School Roll.	Number of Schools presenting	Average Age of those that passed.
									Yrs. mos.
S 7	82	...	...	...	...	·42	...	28	...
S 6	389	9	9	89	282	2·00	1·45	82	14 2
S 5	1,103	54	51	401	597	5·67	3·07	126	13 5
S 4	1,960	120	106	619	1,115	10·08	5·73	136	12 5
S 3	3,131	192	197	944	1,798	16·10	9·25	150	11 3
S 2	2,973	141	167	478	2,187	15·29	11·25	152	10 2
S 1	2,818	119	60	265	2,374	14·44	12·21	151	8 11
P	6,991	...	...	...	...	35·95	...	153	...
Totals for 1887	19,447	635	590	2,796	8,353	100·00	42·95	153	11 9†
Corresponding totals for 1886	18,650	782	674	2,964	6,201	100·00	38·61	146*	11 10†

* Normal Model and Normal practising schools reckoned together. † Mean of average ages.

TABLE B.—PASS SUBJECTS.

Proportions calculated in Percentages.	S6	S5	S4	S3	S2	S1	SS 6-1.
(a) Proportion absent of class roll	2·31	4·90	6·12	6·13	4·74	4·22	5·13
(b) Proportion accepted of class roll ...	2·31	4·62	5·41	6·29	5·62	2·13	4·78
(c) Proportion failed of class roll	22·88	36·36	31·58	30·15	16·08	9·40	22·60
(d) Proportion passed of class roll	72·49	54·13	56·89	57·43	73·56	84·24	67·50
(e) Proportion failed of the sum of passes and failures	23·99	40·18	35·70	34·43	17·94	10·04	25·08

Taking the proportion of failures in line *(e)* of the immediately preceding table as probably the fairest standard of comparison for the separate classes, we find that the improvement is general, and notably great in S6; but relatively to each other the classes occupy much the same order of merit. The reversal of the positions of S3 and S4 is the only change, S3 having now a slight advantage, due in part to the improved geography of the previous year, and in part to better ideas of the requirements in grammar and composition. The difference between S2 and S3 is again a striking

one, and is sufficiently explained by a reference to the syllabus of instruction. S5 again occupies the worst position, and is in marked contrast with S6; but on this contrast it would not be safe to base a conclusion as to the general character of the teaching or the gradation of the requirements. The bulk of the children in S6 belong to a small group of schools, where the highest classes have the advantage of excellent teachers, whereas S5 is more widely distributed. It is the better children, moreover, who remain the longer time at school. Yet we believe that the passing of Standard V. is a more formidable matter than the passing of Standard VI., and with the omission of geography as a pass subject in Standard IV., and its inclusion in Standard V., the tendency is in the direction of a more accentuated difference.

The children of S7 have been examined in about a third of the schools in the work of S6 simply; in the others a syllabus of additional work has been presented in algebra, Euclid, and Latin, or in one or more of these subjects. The answering is occasionally creditable. The reading is fluent enough; in other qualities of utterance the tendency towards an advance is not very strongly marked, and, though there is plain evidence of more general attention to subject-matter in the lower classes and to comprehension in the higher, the cases are still very few in which intelligent and well-expressed explanations of words and phrases are procurable. It is still no unusual thing to have the dull monotony of an examination enlivened by the ludicrously malappropriate answers that accompany fluent and even fairly expressive reading. Yet we are grateful to the teachers for the efforts they have made in the right direction, and are justified in expecting a continuous improvement. There is nothing that tends more to predispose an Inspector in favour of the school work than the evidence of intelligently taught reading lessons, and, if the books be well chosen, the influence exerted on other subjects is really important if not readily appreciable.

We have constantly urged upon teachers the necessity of taking in S1 a reading book of wider scope than the book hitherto in most common use, which is better fitted for the period of babyhood. We have also favoured in S2 either the sequel of the old series or one of the newer books, and have sometimes, in the interests of the annual alternation advocated in our last report, suggested that a change found necessary in S1 and S2 should be extended to S3; but we are opposed to the introduction into the district for S4, S5, and S6 of new books of which the order of difficulty is much below the standard of intelligence it is sought to cultivate in these classes; and we regret that in some of the largest schools, and by example in several smaller ones, changes in this direction have been made that were wholly unnecessary. The meagreness and simplicity of the matter in the newer books for the upper classes may suit an English school, in which three readers have now to be prepared, but they are decidedly objectionable in the schools of New Zealand, where one reader is accepted, and where, moreover, the children of corresponding classes are from one to one and a-half years older. We hold that the reading books of a school should be somewhat in advance in language and ideas of the child's ordinary surroundings, and this requirement is very fairly satisfied by Book V. and Book IV. of Nelson's original series, generally employed, and by the sequels, with which our schools are also familiar, down to S2, while in other respects these books cannot be considered inferior to later British publications. With the recent local issue of specially adapted books for Standard III. and Standard II. the two alternative sets necessary may be provided with even a less recourse to imported novelties than we have recommended during the past year.

We understand that the Board has in contemplation the prescription of certain defined reading books for use in our schools; and, as some action seems necessary, we have the honour to suggest the authorisation of the following, as involving the least change. The extension of the New Zealand series may, however, very shortly require a slight modification. S1: Royal Star Reader I.; New Royal Reader I. S2: Sequel to Royal Reader II.; Southern Cross Reader II. S3: Sequel to Royal Reader III.; Southern Cross Reader III. S4: Royal Reader IV., First Series; Sequel to Royal Reader IV. S5: Royal Reader V., First Series; Sequel to Royal Reader V. In schools where S5 and S6 are taught together we are willing, as heretofore, to accept the Reader of S5 for both classes, provided that the annual alternation already referred to be made; and, where S5 is the highest class, we see no objection to accepting S4 Reader for both S4 and S5 under the same conditions. For S6 and S7 in the largest schools we cannot advise the re-employment of the old Book VI., which is generally condemned. We should rather leave a book for this division to the good sense of the teachers; but we may mention the "Advanced Reader" of Chambers' "Graduated" Series as probably well fitting all purposes.

Spelling and Dictation.—Spelling and dictation may be briefly treated as satisfactory, and transcription receives sufficient practice. The slate-writing of the transcription in S2, however, is not in many schools as well looked after as it should be. More attention has been given to letter formation in the infant classes and S1, and teachers cannot afford to allow the slate-writing to degenerate in S2.

Arithmetic.—Arithmetic has on the whole improved in quality, more especially in the mechanical portions of the work of S1 to S3. Good methods, too, are extending in their use, and are by no means confined exclusively to schools of large size, in which good arithmetic may be taken as the rule. Yet it cannot be denied that the cases of defective methods and indifferent results form a very substantial minority, and are much more formidable in their number if attention be confined to the higher work and to what may be termed intellectual arithmetic, as the term "mental" is unduly limited in general acceptation. The improvement in the mechanical arithmetic of the lower classes is the more gratifying since one of the most obvious of common faults is inaccuracy in the mechanical work of S4. This must be remedied, and the remedy, though depending principally on a sound foundation in elementary processes and the cultivation of general habits of care, has a close connection with a second fault—that there is not enough oral teaching. It is extraordinary how many visits of inspection have been coincident with supposed lessons in arithmetic which consist of slate practice alone. But by the want of oral teaching we mean not simply the excessive use of desk or test work, or insufficient practice in

small mechanical calculations without the aid of pen or pencil. Oral teaching has a much wider scope in the introduction of new principles by a sufficient number of examples of the simplest cases, mentally worked, and the reasoning out of progressively more difficult examples till the pupils have gained facility and confidence enough to deal independently with new cases, and ultimately to correlate the several processes involved in more complex questions. As to the methods of working to be thus applied, we are convinced that the most satisfactory results may be got with the greatest intellectual benefit to the pupil and the least amount of labour to all concerned by the extended use of first principles in all kinds of questions, and more especially by the employment of the so-called "Unitary Rule" in preference to the old "Rule of Three." Owing to the advanced nature of the idea of proportion, the latter rule must be to almost all children an empirical one— a mere device for obtaining answers to sums. By the former, on the other hand, the pupil advances with the aid of his own common-sense, and understands the why and wherefore of what he is doing. He is less likely to be led astray, for he understands (or should understand) every stage of the process, and his reasoning faculty is constantly appealed to and enlarged. In a great many schools the tables of money, length, and weight, set down for the First and Second Standards, have been neglected altogether, and more often still they have been taught in a more or less parrot-like fashion. The requirements of the syllabus itself, or of ordinary intelligent instruction, can hardly be said to be fulfilled unless the children have concrete ideas of the values corresponding to the several terms, and a certain amount of practice in easy questions involving the aliquot parts of the quantities referred to.

Grammar and Composition.—Composition has assumed greater prominence on the time-tables of many of our schools during the past two years. The resulting improvement, formerly noted, has been steadily maintained; and the modest ideal, in which every child who quits school after passing the Fourth Standard is able to write a few well-expressed and suitably-connected sentences in proper letter form, is much nearer realisation. For the grammar itself, clear ideas of the duties performed by words, phrases, and clauses in a sentence are, both in themselves and in the mental training received from the study, of sufficient value to the business of life to warrant a high position in an educative scheme. Yet the prospects of the subject do not wear a much more hopeful aspect. The simple word-functions of S3, and the analysis of S5 are better; but otherwise a school in which the grammar has been successfully treated remains a pleasant surprise, and the criticisms of our last report hold good to a much greater extent than is desirable. To the suggestions we have there made a hint may be added that upon this subject above all others the comprehension of the reading matter has a direct bearing.

Table C.—Class Subjects.

Subject.	Percentages.	Number of Schools obtaining 60 per cent. and upwards.	Number of Schools obtaining from 40 to 59 per cent.	Number of Schools obtaining from 20 to 39 per cent.	Number of Schools obtaining less than 20 per cent.	Number of Schools included in Estimate.
Drawing	35·06	10	55	63	21	149
History	41·06	22	52	55	19	148
Geography	48·77	45	61	35	10	151
Science, object lessons, &c ...	39·96	24	65	43	20	152
All subjects	40·93	12	69	63	8	152

Class Subjects.—*Drawing.*—The above table gives a rough analysis of the position occupied by class subjects. Except in drawing, the marking has as far as possible been maintained on the same basis as before, and the outcome of the figures corresponds with our impressions of the work. The object lessons have made a substantial advance; history and geography have on the whole gone backward; but the seeming deterioration in drawing is owing partly to the exclusion of S2, in which drawing has been no longer a class subject, and more especially to the application of a somewhat different standard of judgment, resting on the results of the special tests already referred to. Our ideas on the last matter were made widely known early in the year, so that teachers might be prepared. The change has met with general approval, and exercises a salutary influence over methods adopted in teaching. While care has been taken in the pass classes that no child should suffer for mere inability to do the exercises prescribed, the employment of the more correct basis of class estimates has given the figures a less favourable appearance. The subject has really improved, and is in general fairly established as a part of the ordinary course of instruction. We are anxious, however, to see it included wholly and permanently in the class group. We are prepared to admit that, under the existing control of schools, and in view of the still persistent popular habit of estimating success by the measure of standard passes alone, to make a subject necessary for a pass is a very good way of securing general attention to it, and, further, that actual or anticipated pass requirements have probably done more to give drawing a firm footing than anything else would have done in so short a time; but we cannot avoid regarding the subject as a very unsuitable one to form a necessary determining element in the classification of a school for general purposes. Freehand remains, with a few exceptions of slightly-increased number, the only branch of drawing yet taught.

History.—The teaching done has generally been sufficient to produce in the Sixth Standard a fair knowledge of the ordinary elementary facts of British history, and this class makes the best appearance. But indications are rarely met with of any attempt to deal with simple sociological facts a knowledge of which is necessary to fit a man for his duties as a citizen; and we are, indeed, under the impression that a systematic treatment has been pursued in only one important school.

Very easy questions set on such matters as government, banking, &c., are almost universally avoided. Probably teachers are discouraged by the wide scope and vague limits of the subject, which may deprive their efforts of due recognition. To give the necessary definiteness a book has been wanted of some such nature as that in general use in the schools of South Australia; and in lieu of one specially prepared for our school purposes, and limited to them, Mr. J. H. Pope's "The State," recently issued from the Government Printing Office, is recommended to the notice of teachers. The following extract from Mr. Pope's very modest preface may not be out of place: "As all the chapters of the book have been constructed on skeletons, it is very likely that most of them are in a convenient form for use as notes of lessons on social science subjects. Probably a perusal of Chapters XIII.–XVI., for instance, would give a teacher who had never made such subjects a study the framework for a series of suitable lessons on exchange, money, banks, and business. Similarly, a brief study of Chapters XXIX.–XXXII. would yield a teacher a series of easily manageable lessons on the government of New Zealand." The history of S5 and S4 is not satisfactory, and seems to us to show a distinct drop from a past record of little merit. In S3, however, an improvement is to be noted in the character which the teaching occasionally assumes. Freed from the compulsion of driving a few unattractive facts into the head of every child, teachers have been more disposed to adopt a less uninteresting mode of treatment, and, if the many show evidence of no benefit, appreciative children are frequently found to take an interest in the subject, and to make intelligent answering. Two dangers, however, are to be pointed out—the danger of omitting to fix a story in its proper historical setting, without which its character as history is destroyed; and the ordinary one of not having due regard to a fair distribution of the knowledge, a danger incident to history in a greater degree than other class subjects.

Geography.—The geography of S2 well maintains the position reached in the previous year. In S4 we are afraid it is rather more clearly evident that the inclusion of the subject in the class group is often taken as an excuse for slovenly teaching. The maps of New Zealand are the best part of the work; yet even in this respect the interpretation of the "rough maps" of the syllabus with an emphasis on the adjective is much too common. The higher classes (in which geography is a pass subject) deserve credit for a little improvement in defining the position of places. In their mapping something better is demanded than rude outlines or sketches. We rarely get it.

Much more advantage has this year been taken of the permission to group S4 and S5 together for history and geography.

Science and Object Lessons.—The improvement in object lessons is of this nature principally: that they are more generally given as a regular part of the school course. Notes of lessons are also very generally kept, and the experimental treatment of science has been extended by the Board's grant of a goodly number of cheap sets of apparatus. We can say with confidence that in the larger schools the work done possesses considerable value; but in the vast majority of cases neither the object lessons nor the science lessons are of a character to give the children a deeper interest in the objects that surround them, or to improve their observing or reasoning powers, and the benefit is certainly not appreciable in the trifling information imparted. The teacher who, from want of time or skill, cannot treat the subject successfully, would be better employed in making up defects in other subjects; and, if the regulations permitted, we should willingly, in single-handed schools, forego the advantages which science and object lessons are supposed to give, and trust to the necessary conditions of living and to newspapers for an equivalent.

Additional Subjects.—The change of most moment in the additional subjects has been the entire disappearance of marks lower than five for repetition of poetry, sewing, and subject matter. In most of the schools drill has been examined, and the marks embodied in our reports have been assigned by Mr Walker, the Board's Gymnastic and Drill Inspector. The averages of the separate subjects are: Poetry, 12·3 for 152 schools; drill, 11·7 for 144 schools; singing, 10·4 for 121 schools; sewing, 13·7 for 146 schools; subject matter, 11·7 for 152 schools; and extra drawing, 8·3 for 3 schools. The average of the "additional marks" for the district is 57, as against 54·2 for last year.

Interpretation of Regulations.—In conducting the inspection and examination of schools we have, to the best of our belief, followed the gazetted regulations as closely as Inspectors have done elsewhere. Yet there is one very important particular in which it has seemed impossible for us, with any regard to the interests of our schools, to carry out what is clearly the intention of the framers, and we are supported in our opinion by the practice of at least one other large education district. We refer to the second half of Regulation 7 of Section IV., the whole of which reads as follows: "In order to obtain a pass, a pupil must be present in class during the examination in the class subjects for a standard which he has not already passed, and must satisfy the Inspector in all the pass subjects for the same standard: except that failure in one subject (unless very serious) may be overlooked if in the judgment of the Inspector it is due to some individual peculiarity, and is not the result of the pupil's negligence or of ineffective teaching." This regulation evidently contemplates in the first place that in no case shall a pass be granted if there has been a serious failure in any of the pass subjects, and next that the cases in which a pupil is allowed to pass with a simple failure in any subject shall be exceptional. We may as well confess at once that we have practically turned the exceptional cases into the rule, and taken shelter under the fiction that in every case "failure in one subject (unless very serious)" "is due to some individual peculiarity, and is not the result of the pupil's negligence or of ineffective teaching." We have, further, given an extraordinarily lenient interpretation to "serious failure" in all but the two most important subjects. The general result is, therefore, substantially that the pupils have been passed up with one failure unless that were a serious one in either reading or arithmetic, and we are curious to know what standard of attainment would permit a fair proportion to advance from class to class yearly under a much stricter arrangement. It is not a pleasant thing to feel compelled to evade the spirit of a regulation which we are under some obligation to obey, and we hope that this plain statement of the action we have taken will direct attention to the matter and lead to a revisal. In dealing with the case it

must be borne in mind that there are the strongest reasons against making any material difference in the classes as assembled for instruction and for examination, and that any reasonable principle of promotion from class to class must have as its basis the general capacity of the child and his fitness to undertake higher work. The rule in question, in its strict interpretation, operates with the most harshness in respect of writing and drawing, in which skill or want of skill has little to do with general intelligence, and we regard with alarm the embarrassments of applying to these subjects even the more lenient interpretation, as drawing year by year becomes a pass subject in successively higher standards. Further, the nature of the disparity in the number of pass subjects for the several standards introduces a new difficulty which stands in the way of the application of any common equitable rule of passing, and affects the organization of our schools by unduly swelling the classes preparing for the Third Standard. Our general views on the whole matter of pass and class arrangements are roughly sketched in our replies to the inquiries of the recent Parliamentary Committee on Education (Parliamentary Papers, I.–8, 1887); but we should gladly welcome a change of a much less radical character, whereby the freedom of treatment of which a class subject admits should be accorded to drawing, and whereby the directions to be followed in passing children should assume a more liberal character.

We have, &c.,
L. B. Wood, M.A.,
W. J. Anderson, LL.D.,
George Hogben, M.A.,
Inspectors.

The Chairman, North Canterbury Board of Education.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,— Education Office, Timaru, 23rd March, 1888.

I have the honour to present the following report for the year 1887:—

One new school has been opened during the year, making the number of schools in this district forty-nine. I have examined and reported on each school in detail, and paid visits of inspection to all the schools with the exception of the small one at Hakateramea. I have also attended meetings at Arundel, Fairfield, North Waitaki, Beaconsfield, and Hakateramea, to hear and report on the claims of the residents for new schools. The following table will show the general results of the examinations for the year:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes on No. examined.	Average Age of those that Passed.
							Yrs. mos.
S 7	45	...	...	...	..	..	...
S 6	149	11	5	34	99	71	14 1
S 5	294	20	12	125	137	50	13 1
S 4	513	33	33	140	307	64	12 8
S 3	764	51	42	210	461	64	11 2
S 2	618	39	34	81	464	80	9 9
S 1	556	34	9	35	478	91	8 7
P	1,566	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals for 1887 ...	4,505	188	135	625	1,946	72	...
Corres. do., 1886	4,365	234	83	621	1,814	72	...

At the date of examination there were 4,505 children on the rolls, which is an increase of 140 for the year. The number of pupils in attendance who had previously passed the Sixth Standard has risen from thirty-two to forty-five; in the six standard classes 2,894 pupils were presented, whereas last year there were 2,752; and the preparatory pupils are fewer by fifteen. Taking the children in the preparatory classes and in Standards I. and II., I find there is a falling-off of eighty-three; but the pupils of the third and higher classes are 233 more than last year. I think this falling-off in the lower classes, and the increased attendance in the higher ones, are results of the depression existing in the colony. The population does not appear to increase much, if at all, and so the lower classes suffer; and, besides, there is not a demand for the services of the older scholars, who are thus getting a longer period of schooling, and in these dull times are being all the better equipped for the good time coming.

Of the 2,894 children in standard classes, 2,706 or 93·6 per cent., were present at examination, leaving a percentage of 6·4 of absentees, against 8·5 for last year. This is a remarkable and gratifying improvement for one year; but the efforts which have brought it about must not be relaxed, for we have a long way to make up in this respect before we can be on equal terms with some other districts.

There are 135 "exceptions" this year, whereas last year the number was eighty-three. This is rather a startling increase, and one of a very unpleasant nature. It points to a very serious irregularity of attendance during the year; and this irregularity is brought out more clearly by the return I have made of those "entitled to exception" in case of failure at the examination: this number is 346, or nearly an eighth of all those presented in the standards. I have not the corresponding number for 1886, but it will be a matter of some interest to observe whether it will rise or fall for the next year.

Of the 2,706 belonging to the standard classes and present at examination, 1,946 passed, giving a percentage of 72, which is the same as last year. The percentages for the several standards range from 50 in the Fifth to 91 in the First Standard, The percentage of passes might be made to appear better if we exclude the "exceptions," as is done in calculating the percentage of failures for each school. The percentage of failures being 24, we should then have 76 per cent. of passes. These percentages are not to be confounded with the perplexing percentage of passes given in the examination reports, which is calculated on the total number of children on the rolls. For this district the percentage of passes thus calculated could not be higher than 64 with every child presented passing his standard examination: the percentage obtained is 43. As I pointed out in my report of last year, it is not a sign of greater or less efficiency for a school to be above or below this average; but if one wishes to know how any particular school has done, or to compare school with school, he should look to the percentage of failures, the percentage on class subjects, and the additional marks as given in Appendix I. [Not reprinted.]

For the past two years the teachers in this district have been paid a bonus for the efficient instruction of their pupils in class and additional subjects. To obtain this bonus it was necessary to have a percentage of 50 at least on class subjects and to obtain satisfactory marks for additional subjects, no minimum being fixed in the latter, as the possibility of earning marks for two of the subjects—viz., singing and sewing—depends on conditions for which the teacher is not wholly responsible. If he cannot sing he is cut off from earning marks in this subject, and a sewing mistress is not allowed to a school whose average attendance does not reach thirty. The highest percentage on class subjects obtained by any school where all the standards were represented was 74, and the highest additional marks 85. The average percentage on class subjects for all the schools is 55, and the average of additional marks is 56. The corresponding figures for last year were 52 and 51; so that an improvement has been made in both. Although the Board has been compelled for financial reasons to withdraw for the present this bonus payment—and I am heartily sorry for it—I am persuaded from what I know of the teachers that the great majority of them, animated by the prospect of success rather than stimulated by the hope of a bonus payment for that success, will continue to treat these subjects with as much zeal and with as satisfactory results in the coming year as in the past.

Class S 7.—In this class are included all those who have at any previous examination passed the Sixth Standard. As the sixth is the highest for which a syllabus of work is laid down in the regulations, it is the general practice to withdraw the scholars immediately after passing it; and teachers of small schools with all the standards represented in their classes, and some infant pupils besides, may well be pardoned for looking upon this withdrawal as a welcome relief. But in schools where two or more teachers are employed it should certainly be considered a laudable ambition on the headmaster's part to do his utmost to retain his best scholars. His opportunities of giving them direct instruction as a separate class will be few, but the pupils may be trusted to make good progress in many things with a little guidance in his spare moments. It is usual to keep the S7 working with the S6; but, although this is so, it is not to be supposed that a year spent in this way is lost time, for these pupils are almost always eager to learn, and the thorough grasp they get of their subjects by this year of revisal must prove a lasting benefit. Of the forty-five on the rolls, eleven were absent and thirty-four were examined in the work prescribed for the Sixth Standard, and almost without exception the work was exceedingly well done, many of the papers being models of neatness and general excellence. Some of these pupils had also received instruction in such secondary subjects as Latin, French, and algebra, and this higher work was not confined to the eight pupils of this class in the district high schools, who were taking these subjects as part of their regular course. From what I have said of this class I do not wish it to be inferred that I would add to the burdens of those teachers who look upon themselves as having already sufficient to bear; but I would gladly encourage those who undertake this additional work and who find their reward in the pleasure they derive from it and in the gratitude of their pupils.

Preparatory Classes.—The number of children too young or not sufficiently prepared for presentation in the First Standard is 1,566—about one-third of the pupils on the rolls. In twenty-four of the schools where the teacher is unassisted there are 226 children of this class, and, important as is the early training of the children—and many of the teachers are fully alive to this—they receive very little direct instruction, the immediate success of the standard classes being the teacher's chief aim. We have 157 preparatory pupils in eleven schools where the attendance entitles them to the privilege of having a pupil-teacher to aid the headteacher. In four of the eleven the headteacher takes the whole or part of the preparatory class, the pupil-teacher giving aid in the standard classes. This plan should be more general than it is—for the sake of the children in the first place, as it gives them the benefit of skilful teaching at a critical stage of their school course, and in the second place in the interests of the pupil-teacher, for whose training the teacher is responsible, and who has thus the advantage of acquiring skill in every department of school work. Fortunately, 1,183 children out of the total of 1,566 are to be found in schools with assistants, most of them certificated, and all with some years' experience, who have the infant department for their special charge; and their school hours are enlivened by their action songs, their class drill, and the pleasurable excitement of being in the company of many of their own age. Too frequently I am disappointed with the poor quality of the reading in these classes. There seems to be an idea prevailing among some of the teachers that one kind of reading—a monotonous sing-song, innocent alike of stops and expression—is to be accepted from children up to a certain indefinite period, when by some sudden change all this is to give place to a natural and intelligent style. But either this change does not come, or, if it does so, it has to be effected with much toil, which is felt to be the more irksome as it should be unnecessary, for there is no reason in the world why children should not be taught to read naturally from the first. Spelling is generally

good, and slate writing runs through all the stages from very bad to excellent. Better use should be made everywhere of the ball frame, and there should be regular and frequent drill in tables, and on no account should the practice of finger-counting be permitted (I am sorry to say it is sometimes encouraged), as it is one of those bad habits easily prevented, but very difficult to cure.

STANDARD CLASSES AND SUBJECTS.—I reported at considerable length last year on the various subjects of instruction, and I have observed on my visits to the schools that earnest endeavours are being made to remedy the defects that were pointed out and to reach a higher standard of attainment all round. But, however zealous our teachers are, great improvements cannot be looked for in one year, and therefore I do not think it necessary to refer in detail to all the subjects, what I said last year very fairly expressing my opinion of the work as I have found it during the year just closed. We have still a good many schools where it is a little trying to listen to the reading, and I have marked more failures in this subject than I did last year, not because the reading was worse, but because I have made the "intelligence" test somewhat more severe. In some schools the reading falls little short of being excellent. Arithmetic is again the subject in which the greatest weakness is shown. The frequent break-down in the upper standards is largely due to the want of thoroughness and skill in the teaching of the four simple rules. If, for instance, we take simple addition, how often do we find that the boy who can tell straight away that 8 times 7 are 56 hesitates a little over 8 and 7; if we give him 18 and 7 he has some long process to go through before he answers, the same slowness again over 28 and 7, his labour over the terminal 8 and 7 being always the same. Now, if he were drilled in the addition table he should be as ready with 8 and 7 as with 8 times 7, and once he knows 8 and 7 he should with equal readiness tell 18 and 7, 28 and 7, &c. There is nothing new about this way of adding by which a child runs up his columns of figures instead of slowly toiling with finger-counting and other laborious expedients; but I must say that I seldom see it carried into practice. So long as inaccuracy and slowness in the mechanical processes are as common as they are we cannot look for much skill in solving problems. Much time is spent on these during the year, but I think the teachers would be less surprised with the results were they to get their pupils into the habit of exercising their common-sense a little more and in having less trust in rules for everything. The most notable improvement in the grammar of the classes has taken place in the Third Standard; in the other standards it is still far from satisfactory in most of the schools. I have tried, as opportunities offered on my visits to the schools, to point out better methods of dealing with this subject, but it will take some time and much labour to get the children abreast of the requirements of the syllabus. In a fair proportion of the schools I have noticed that attention is given to simple exercises in composition in the Third Standard, the usual practice being to make the children write a few sentences after an object lesson has been given. A few of the teachers have adopted the method set forth in Mr. Park's "First Lessons in English Composition," an excellent little book which I should like to see in the hands of all our teachers, and which they might use with advantage in all the standards. From the way in which I get the essays and letters done in most of the schools it is plain that this subject does not receive the attention and treatment which its importance demands.

Except in six or seven schools the accommodation for the children is sufficient for the present attendance. Some of the older buildings cost a good deal to keep in repair, and in one or two instances it would be advisable to build anew instead of spending more money on patching. The schools are well supplied with furniture and other requisites, and these are generally well looked after.

I have given prominence to some of the weak points in our schools, but I should be doing an injustice to our teachers were I to give the impression that the state of education in this district is unsatisfactory. Very good work has been done in many of our schools, and I am satisfied that the teachers in the Board's service are attentive and faithful in the discharge of their duties.

I have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, South Canterbury Board of Education.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

We have the honour to submit our report for the year 1887. During the year all the schools in the Otago Education District were examined, except three small ones that were opened towards the close of the year; and all but one were visited for inspection. The following table shows at one view the chief statistics of examination for the year:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Standard Passes.	Average Age of those that Passed.
							Yrs. mos.
Infants ...	8,250	...	...	...	...	...	...
S 1	2,974	72	35	213	2,654	89	9 3
S 2	3,027	95	105	384	2,443	81	9 10
S 3	2,930	90	106	592	2,142	73	11 4
S 4	2,264	71	79	470	1,644	73	12 4
S 5	1,566	70	50	423	1,023	65	13 3
S 6	763	11	15	151	586	77	14 1
Above S 6 ...	212	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	21,986	409	390	2,233	10,492	...	*

Mean of average age, 11 years 8 months.

Of the 21,986 pupils presented on the examination schedules 13,524 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards, being 553 more than the corresponding number for last year. A total of 13,115 were present and were examined in Standards I. to VI. Of these 10,492 passed the standard for which they were presented—a result which gives 80 as the percentage of passes in standards. Last year the percentage was 77, so that there has been an advance of 3 per cent. for the year. The percentage of failures in standards (the exceptions being excluded in this computation) was 18. The average percentage in class subjects was 58, as against 60 in 1886; and the average of additional marks 63, as against 61. In Standards II., III., IV., and VI. there has been a slight advance in the percentage of passes in standards, and in Standard V. a decline of nearly 1 per cent.

The following statement is instructive, as showing a considerable advance in the efficiency of a number of schools. In 1886 the number of schools examined was 179; and in 1887 183. The statement shows what percentage of the whole number of schools had a percentage of failures of a certain range, The range of the percentage of failures was—

0— 5	in	7	per cent. in 1886, and in	7	per cent. in 1887.
6—10	"	9	"	"	13	"
11—20	"	23	"	"	32	"
21—30	"	29	"	"	22	"
31—40	"	16	"	"	16	"
41—50	"	9	"	"	7	"
50 and over		7	"	"	3	"

From this it appears that in 1886 39 per cent. of the schools had a percentage of failures below 21, while this year 52 per cent. of them had the like percentage. As the percentage of failures is practically the complement of the percentage of passes in standards, the above figures indicate a very satisfactory improvement in efficiency.

The results of Standard V. are considerably lower than they were a few years ago. The decline is chiefly due to weakness in arithmetic, and in grammar and composition.

It will be noticed that the average age at which Standard I. is passed is nine years and three months. This age is much higher than it should be. If it be assumed that, on the average, pupils enter school at six years of age, then it takes them three years and a quarter to get well abreast of Standard I. In our judgment, two years and a half should be sufficient for reaching this point. If that be a fair estimate, the teaching of the younger classes is evidently less efficient than that of those above Standard I. At present teachers are at liberty to present pupils for Standard I. when they think them fit, without any restriction as to age. The result is that only those who are thought to be sure of passing are presented, while the motives for pushing forward the work of the junior pupils are greatly weakened. In several districts parents have called upon us to complain that their children had been kept back; and in some of these cases inquiry showed that there was good reason for the complaints. We think that the progress made by the younger children is, as a matter of fact, unnecessarily slow, and it seems desirable that all pupils who are eight years and a half old should be required to come forward for Standard I. or a higher standard. Were such a rule as this in force, the comparative neglect of the infant classes would soon become a thing of the past. It is curious that the age at which Standard II. is passed should be only seven months in excess of that at which Standard I. is passed. As the ages at which the standards were passed last year were not computed, it is hard to say exactly how this fact should be explained, but it seems to point to a rise in the age at which Standard I. is passed. Above Standard I. good progress is made throughout the school course. In the higher classes the figures indicate that many of the older pupils either fail to pass or are withdrawn from school. The average ages given are those of the pupils who actually passed in each standard.

The syllabus continues to be a burning question with teachers. The persistent discussion of its provisions is not, however, an unalloyed good, for it tends to make teachers less careful and zealous in carrying out their instructions, as laid down in the syllabus, than they would be were their faith in its suitability less frequently and less rudely assailed. About two years ago considerable changes were made to render it more workable in schools of small and medium size, and further changes in the same direction are desired and, we think, desirable. But, strange to say, a great many of the teachers, whose labours should be made more easy and more fruitful by these changes, do not take advantage of them. It would, in fact, appear that there is no small amount of sham about the outcry for easing the syllabus and allowing greater freedom in the course of instruction and in the grouping of classes. It seems clear, too, from the fact that so large a proportion of the smaller schools do well not only in the pass subjects, but also in the class and additional subjects, that the syllabus, as it stands, is not so unworkable as many would have us believe.

The results of the year's examinations testify to the continued efficiency of the instruction given in the standard classes. In the teaching of the infant classes there has been fair improvement in thoroughness and in intelligent treatment. But in most of the smaller schools there is still much room for improvement in both these directions, as well as in the rate of progress. We have been very anxious to get a better style of reading in the junior classes, and the teachers have made praiseworthy and, in many cases, very successful exertions to attain this object. Mere word-reading, as opposed to reading by phrases or sentences, is, however, still rather prevalent. Failure to secure good reading at this stage is due to several causes, but chiefly to the following: (1) Insufficient preparatory working-up of new and hard words; (2) a want of thoroughness in mastering the lessons before they are left; and (3) neglect of frequent revisal of former lessons. The last point is one of great importance at this stage, for revisal and repetition of old lessons, in which the difficulty of recognising the words has been already overcome, affords an excellent means of culti-

vating a good style of reading, and of giving that practice in vocal manipulation, as we may term it, which many teachers are prone to overlook and neglect. In the first perusal of a lesson the training of the eye is the chief thing to be secured; in the revisal the training of the ear and of the vocal organs should be the teacher's main aim.

The counting and tables of the infants generally receive sufficient attention, but the handling of these subjects is apt to be mechanical and even repellent. More regular and intelligent use of the ball frame would greatly aid both comprehension and acquisition. In the smaller schools much of the drilling in counting and in tables could be done by monitors under the teacher's direction. These can be much better utilised in such work than in taking reading lessons, which they are, as a rule, quite unfit to treat properly. The slate work (writing, ciphering, &c.) is seldom well looked after, and in many cases it is greatly neglected. It is, no doubt, difficult in the smaller schools to provide varied and suitable desk employments for the younger children, but this acknowledged difficulty cannot be held to justify the indifference to the matter that is shown in many small schools. A little study and resource would, even in these, make the work of the beginners vastly more pleasant and entertaining.

In the standard classes, reading, spelling, and writing are the subjects in which the pupils make the best appearance. The weight attached to intelligent reading, under the new regulations, has led to considerable improvement in fluency (though that has long been satisfactory), and also in distinctness and natural expression. In a large number of schools the reading is, indeed, as good as can be expected. This is especially true of the larger schools, but it applies to a considerable number of the small rural schools as well. In the latter it is difficult to give sufficient practice in reading, and the want of this is a very common cause of bad reading.

The explanation of the language and of the matter of the lessons is, on the whole, inferior, and in some cases it is almost worthless. In no part of the teaching is there so much room for improvement as in the handling of these parts of the English lessons. The want of comprehension is largely due to unskilful teaching and to a bad style of questioning. Instead of dealing with complete thoughts, as expressed by phrases and parts of sentences, attention is too frequently directed to single words detached from the context in which they occur. Pupils are often seen working up lists of meanings of words without any reference to the sentences in which the words are used, and no fault seems to be found with this kind of preparatory study. Preparatory study is, in our view, of the greatest value, but it needs constant intelligent direction from the teacher. Much greater care should be taken not only to explain and interpret what is not understood, but also to impress the explanations. For this purpose the blackboard should be in constant use; yet in one English lesson out of every two which an Inspector sees the blackboard is not used at all. At the end of the lesson there should be a recapitulation of the chief difficulties encountered in it; but this also is usually neglected. The backwardness in English is partly due to the small amount of matter read during the year, but still more to the preference given by teachers to the simplest reading books they can find. This is what causes the constant changing of books, of which the public so justly complain. Many of these books fail to supply a sufficient quantity of well graduated and fairly difficult matter, to render the language and expression a fit subject of educative study all the year through. The lessons should offer a certain gentle continuous stimulus to the intelligence of the scholars, sufficient to keep their minds in a state of healthy tension while engaged in their study. This condition is not, however, adequately fulfilled by many of the readers now in use, and their ease is such that a boy or girl who has passed the highest compulsory standard (the Fourth) may be quite unable to read a newspaper or a book of moderate difficulty with understanding. It is even a question if the cause of education would not be promoted by requiring each standard to read a higher book than that written for the corresponding standard in Great Britain.

In connection with writing there is extraordinary toleration of faults in the way in which pupils sit and hold the pen. Business men attach considerable importance to these matters, and experts in teaching writing would with one voice condemn such laxity as prevails in the great majority of our schools. We can only suppose that the teachers regard the way of sitting and holding the pen with indifference, for we cannot believe that serious efforts to secure a better style would be unsuccessful. In German schools attention to these points is most strongly insisted on, and we think it would be well if teachers here would look after them more carefully during writing lessons and all writing exercises.

Standard I. is the only class that does well in arithmetic. In Standards II. and III., and in many cases in Standard IV. also, the results are fair. We are satisfied that the comparatively large number of failures in this subject is not due to the difficulty of the questions set. In drawing up the arithmetic papers used during the year great care was taken to avoid everything that could be considered unfair or too difficult. That the tests were fair is, indeed, admitted by most of the teachers, who very often express great surprise and disappointment at the numerous failures, and assure us that the pupils usually work such questions with accuracy and ease. Indeed, few discover any difficulty in the questions until their pupils are found unable to answer them. The scanty success that attends the teaching of this subject is largely due to the backwardness of the pupils in English. The wording of the questions, even when it is as plain and direct as possible, often baffles their comprehension, with the result that they multiply where they should divide, or *vice versâ*, or make other obvious blunders. Whatever reasoning is required in dealing with the great majority of the questions set is of the simplest character. Very often all that is needed is to consider whether the answer will be greater or less than one of the data of the question. Every paper contains enough direct or quasi-direct questions for a child to pass by them alone. One or two more difficult questions are included, to test the smarter children and the range of the teaching; but it is not necessary and not expected that every one should answer these, or even attempt them. The cure for failure to interpret simple questions correctly is to push forward the teaching of

English, and make it more thorough and intelligent. No less helpful will it be found to give the pupils a good deal of practice in simply describing or explaining how the questions are to be done. In the ordinary teaching of arithmetic at the blackboard this exercise forms but a small part of the work, most of the time being taken up with the merely mechanical operations of adding, multiplying, and so on. From Standard IV. upwards it would be well to restrict this mechanical work as far as possible, and to concentrate attention during actual teaching on analysis of the data, and brief but clear statements of the mode of solution. Even mechanical questions however—exercises in practice and the addition question—in Standards II. and III., for example, are by no means so accurately done as one would expect. Failure in such sums shows that the operations of the simple rules have not been properly mastered. In Standards II. and III. the first aim of the teaching should be to impart quickness and accuracy in adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, and changing one denomination of money to another. Compared with a thorough mastery of these operations ability to do simple problems is of very slight consequence. In the arithmetic papers of Standards II. and III. four-fifths of the work is direct, and on that alone every well-trained pupil should be able to pass. In these classes we would much rather find entire neglect of simple problems than have accuracy and thoroughness in the common operations wholly sacrificed for them. The low percentage of passes in Standard V. is largely owing to failures in arithmetic, most of which are to be attributed to unskilful teaching.

Grammar is, on the whole, well taught in most of the schools. The Standard V. class, however, showed considerable weakness in the subject, the failures in it being almost as numerous as in arithmetic. In a good many cases the work of Standard VI. was also unsatisfactory. In our opinion there is far too little *viva voce* work in the grammar lessons of these standards.

We cannot report any general improvement in composition, which, though abundantly practised, is but little taught. It frequently happens that no provision is made in the time-tables for giving regular instruction in the art, and where such provision exists the handling of the lesson is usually disappointing. In some schools, however, it is taught with very considerable success, and the superior exercises handed in by nine-tenths of the pupils of these schools show that nothing but want of perseverance and want of skill prevents the attainment of equally satisfactory results in all cases. One of the chief causes of want of success in teaching this subject is neglect of rough analysis of a very elementary character. In Standard IV. the linking of simple statements into longer sentences, and the converse process of roughly analysing longer sentences into their component statements, should receive a great deal of attention and illustration. This discipline is always well imparted in the schools in which composition is successfully taught, and it is the chief cause of the success which they attain. To pupils in Standard IV. the exercise should present no difficulty, for the parsing at this stage presupposes a knowledge of the functions of conjunctions, of relative pronouns, and of relative adverbs, and this knowledge supplies the key to the connection of the statements of which long sentences are built up. The exercises and essays that are so commonly written in schools afford excellent material for criticism and illustration of principles. To serve this purpose the faults should be criticised and corrected at the blackboard before the class, the pupils themselves taking as large a share as possible in the work. To correct the exercises singly or privately and then return them to the pupils is to throw away one of the best means of teaching the subject which the teacher has at his disposal. It is not enough to mark errors in such cases; the pupils must be taught how and why they are wrong. This, we fear, is often neglected, as it is no unusual thing to find that the pupils don't know why the parts marked by the teacher are wrong. Where this is the case all the labour of correction is a useless form. A notable feature in the composition exercises received at the standard examinations is their brevity. Even when the subjects are most familiar, and the children must know a great deal about them, the letters and essays are extremely short. In some of the reading books brief summaries are appended to the lessons. These the pupils frequently reproduce almost *verbatim*, instead of trying to tell in their own words what they remember of the matter. We have even found pupils committing these summaries to memory in school, while under the teacher's supervision. Those who tolerate this sort of cram may be anxious that their pupils should pass, but they must be wholly indifferent to their education and equipment for life. Of course little or no credit is allowed for such feats of memory. Readiness in putting one's thoughts into words should be greatly promoted by the practice and training, which all school-children receive, in orally answering the questions which form so large an element in all teaching. They are asked and answer many hundreds of questions every year. If they are carefully trained to give their answers in the form of sentences, and also to make them fairly full and complete, this discipline alone should give them considerable facility in expressing what they have to say. For this purpose a large proportion of the questions asked should be so framed as to elicit a connected statement of some length, and afford practice in gathering up a number of particulars into one whole. Such questions will naturally abound where English lessons, object lessons, and history lessons are skilfully taught. We are pleased to see that considerable pains is now taken to secure the kind of training here contemplated, and we feel sure that it will give substantial help in teaching composition.

History is now a class subject in all the standards in which it is taught, and geography in Standards II. and IV. We do not find that the teaching has deteriorated in any way in consequence of their transference from the list of pass to that of class subjects. In only a small number of schools are Standards IV. and V. grouped together for geography and history. Teachers of all small schools would act wisely in availing themselves of this privilege.

A satisfactory number of object lessons is now given in all except a very few schools. From these the pupils derive a good deal of useful information, but it is very doubtful if the lessons are generally handled in such a way as to cultivate and strengthen the faculty of observation and the power of describing what lies before the eyes of the scholars. We are confident that object lessons

could be better taught if less blind reliance were placed on object-lesson books. In these the details are often too minute and technical, while points of greater importance are sometimes overlooked or but slightly noticed. The selection of matter needs to be adapted to the advancement and the circumstances of the pupils, and this adaptation can be best made by the teachers treating the subject, after adequate study and preparation, from their own point of view.

In science little is attempted, and that little is seldom well known. It appears to us that the method of teaching by lecture or oral address alone, which is almost exclusively trusted to in our schools, is radically unsuitable. The pupils should also have text-books in their hands, and these might be taken as the basis of the oral and illustrative teaching. The text-book will facilitate revisal and reference to principles or facts previously taught, and it will enable pupils who have been absent to study and work up what has been done during their absence. In the absence of text-books abstracts of the lessons have to be written out in notebooks; but this involves a considerable sacrifice of time. Children, moreover, are seldom sufficiently advanced to set the matter out clearly unless it is copied *verbatim* from the blackboard, a plan which involves a great restriction of the time available for teaching. Even college or university students do not trust to the notes of the lectures of their teachers, but habitually consult one or more standard works on the subjects of study. If the same thing were done in our schools we do not doubt that the teaching would be more thorough and fruitful. Wherever such text-books are used by the children their knowledge of the subjects is, as a matter of fact, almost always much more exact and complete. We would earnestly advise all teachers to select a suitable simple text-book on the science subject they mean to teach, and to get their pupils to procure copies for their own use. This does not mean that the chapters of the book are to be merely read, and the matter learned in this way. The teaching will still be oral, illustrative, and as far as possible experimental, and the exposition in the book will be used to secure perfect mastery and possession of what has been thus taught. In the science lessons which we see from time to time questioning on previous lessons is all but wholly neglected. A lesson, we think, might very properly begin with a careful examination on the matter of the previous lesson, and of any other formerly-taught principles that have a direct bearing on the lesson for the day. The common practice of setting a question or two to be answered in writing is no real substitute for the oral examination, for it fails to secure correction of errors for the benefit of the whole class, and cannot serve as a brief lucid recapitulation of the teaching. To make science lessons of real and permanent value better methods of treatment and greater thoroughness of teaching are indispensable. We have been anxious to see the results in this subject at their best, and for this purpose we have very often asked the teachers to conduct the examination in science. But we have seldom found them very ready to undertake this task, and in many cases they must have felt that their teaching did not appear to advantage.

As regards method we are glad to find that there is steady though slow improvement. Many have still to learn that it is the pupils who should do the brunt of the work, and not the teachers. Random talking, and telling what could with a slight exercise of skill be elicited from the pupils, are still much too prevalent. So, too, is failure to impress and emphasize what is taught. But there is little use in commenting on these matters here. We endeavour to point out all faults of this kind to the teachers themselves, and we do not doubt that honest efforts are generally made to amend them.

The order, behaviour, and manners of the pupils, are, as a rule, very satisfactory; but the attention is not always so good as we should like to find it. In some of the classes of the larger schools indifferent attention is very noticeable. This is chiefly due to weakness of government on the part of assistants, but in some of the cases the headmasters cannot be held free from blame, in quietly tolerating what they well know to be hurtful to the interests of their schools. It is their duty to support to the utmost the authority of their assistants at all times, but more especially when they take charge of new classes. If, after due trial, they find the assistants too weak, it is equally their duty to report the state of affairs to the School Committee, that steps may be taken to apply a remedy. More than one of our larger schools have had their efficiency impaired for years, because headmasters have been too good-natured and easy-going to do their duty by making representations in the proper quarter. There has been in recent years a very general improvement in the attention of the infant classes. This is largely owing, we think, to the practice of teaching the classes in smaller drafts, and making the lessons short. The interest of very young children soon flags, and it is a mistake to attempt to sustain it for more than fifteen or, at the outside, twenty minutes.

An impression appears to be gaining ground that the syllabus of study in the public schools induces cram. We are of opinion that there is very little foundation for such a view. In the larger schools, where there is ample time to overtake all that is prescribed, there is clearly no reason why the teaching should not be intelligent and educative in every class. In the smaller schools, and especially in those taught by a single teacher, with an average attendance ranging between thirty-five and fifty, it is difficult to find sufficient time to handle all the subjects in a thoroughly educative manner. In these the work in some of the subjects is apt to be superficial and ill digested. So serious is this danger that we think it highly desirable to lessen the work prescribed for schools of the class specified. This could be easily done—(1) by omitting the history of Standard III.; (2) by giving up all examination in history in the higher standards and simply requiring that the text-book (or part of it) be professed for reading, spelling, and explanation, along with the ordinary reading-books; and (3) by allowing greater freedom in grouping any two consecutive standard classes together in such subjects as grammar, geography, and history. These changes, which would affect but very slightly the range of the teaching and the existing arrangements of the syllabus, would, we think, suffice to eliminate everything that can be justly held as fostering superficial work and cram. While holding these views we are satisfied that a very large part of the undigested work that is met with in our schools is due not to any faults of the syllabus but to very obvious faults in management and teaching. So manifest is this connection that the inspection visit rarely fails to disclose the causes of failure at the examination. In the larger schools, given

satisfactory attendance, there should be no taint of cram at all, for steady honest study all the year round will overtake all that is required, and even more. That this is so is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that the elder pupils of the district high schools do all the syllabus work as well as those of other schools of the same size, and a large amount of extra work besides. There are even schools in which the geography and history of the higher standards are worked up almost exclusively during the second half of the year, and that with no noticeable deficiency in the knowledge of these subjects. As a rule, a good teacher will not try to cram his pupils: it does not pay him to do so. It is only the indolent and the incapable who are willing to trust to such a process. Those who trifle away the earlier part of the year may find the time left insufficient for thorough and intelligent study of the work prescribed; but, except in a very small proportion of schools, a capable teacher, who works honestly and steadily week by week, will have no great difficulty in taking his classes over all that is required without strain or pressure, and in a way that will promote in a high degree the mental training of his pupils. It seems to be a common mistake to postpone revising till the examinations are approaching. In a well-conducted school the work of revisal will be pretty evenly distributed throughout the whole year, and not concentrated into a spurt of high and unhealthy pressure at its close. To the latter practice, and to the excitement which it generates, a great many failures are unquestionably due, and it is probably the chief cause of the suspicion that the work is rushed through without that mental assimilation which is a condition of all educative study.

We have, &c.,
D. PETRIE,
W. TAYLOR,
P. GOYEN,
Inspectors.

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Invercargill, 23rd March, 1888.

I have the honour to submit my general report for the year 1887. I entered on the performance of my duties as Assistant Inspector on the 12th March. Between that date and the middle of December I examined and reported upon ninety schools, and paid fifteen visits of inspection. The rest of my time was fully occupied with office work, and with the usual examination of pupil-teachers and of scholarship candidates. Five schools—namely, those at Wendonside, Mandeville, Mossburn, Mokoreta, and Redan—were opened during the year, and were therefore not visited by me for the purpose of examination. One school, that at Athol, was closed temporarily when I was prepared to examine it. The following table gives a summary of the examination results for the year for the whole district:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that Passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	29	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	98	1	1	25	71	14 9
S 5	336	10	15	132	179	13 6
S 4	637	41	58	176	362	12 7
S 3	1,076	55	89	290	642	11 8
S 2	1,075	65	52	86	872	10 5
S 1	1,167	53	28	50	1,036	9 6
P.	2,943	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	7,361	225	243	759	3,162	*

* Mean of average age, 12 years 1 month.

From the above table it will be seen that of the 7,361 on the examination schedules, 4,389 were entered for examination in standards. A total of 4,164, or about 95 per cent., attended; and of these 3,162, or nearly 76 per cent., passed in the standards for which they were presented. But from the number actually examined there must be deducted 243 scholars "excepted" on account of irregularity of attendance. When this deduction is made the percentage of passes rises to 80.

In the examination-report schedules, which contain an arithmetical expression of the Inspector's estimate of the efficiency of individual schools, there are two items which, to many members of Committees, and even to a few teachers in this district, are still somewhat misleading. I refer to the terms "percentage of passes" and "percentage of failures." I observe that some Committees use the former as a means of comparing their schools with others. For the purposes of such comparison the percentage of passes, as computed for the examination-report schedule, is quite useless, seeing that it has reference not to the number of children actually examined, but to the whole number enrolled. Take the cases of the following schools:—

School.	Number on School Register.	Presented and Passed in Standards.	Percentage of Failures.	Percentage of Passes.
	I.	II.	III.	IV.
Mabel	56	14	0	25
Slopedown	17	14	0	82

In each school fourteen pupils are presented for examination in standards, and all pass. The percentage of failures in each case is therefore 0; and, so far at least as the figures in Column III. can inform us, both schools are equally efficient. But this conclusion appears inconsistent with the figures given in Column IV. The seeming inconsistency is explained by a reference to Columns I. and II., where it is seen that in the case of the second school the proportion of standard children to the roll number is greater than in the case of the first. The percentage of failures, on the other hand, is calculated on the sum of the failures and passes, and is therefore independent of the number of children not presented in standards. This percentage, taken in conjunction with the number of marks awarded for class and additional subjects, indicates, so far as figures can, the Inspector's judgment of the state of a school, and may be used for the purposes of comparison.

I regret that pressure of examination and other work left at my disposal only a very small fraction of the year to be given to inspection. On this account the information that I have gained touching the inner life and working of the schools under the charge of the Board must necessarily be very incomplete. On examination day the ordinary routine of school work is so interrupted that, in respect of many important particulars, an Inspector must be chary in forming a judgment. On the whole, however, I think the Board may be congratulated on the state of the schools under its charge. In its service are to be found skilful, enthusiastic teachers, with whom it is a pleasure to be associated. I am satisfied that much real work in education is being done, and that the large majority of our teachers make an honest endeavour to discharge their duties well, and to prepare the children entrusted to their care, not alone for the standards, but for the duties of life. The Board is aware that three-fourths of the schools in this district are country schools conducted by unassisted teachers, and that in each of a large number of those there are, at least, five standards and two infant classes. The unaided teacher who successfully grapples with the work of the syllabus has done well; and it affords me pleasure to record the fact that not a few of these small schools have acquitted themselves in a manner altogether satisfactory. It is true that in several of our schools only a moderate degree of efficiency has been attained. In some cases this is due more to the inexperience of the young teachers in charge than to a want of conscientious effort on their part. But in other instances, where better things might reasonably be looked for, bad organization, unskilful teaching, or weak discipline has resulted in signal failure on examination day. The teachers have possibly worked hard, but have succeeded only in beating the air. In all classes of schools, but more especially in those small ones I allude to, careful economising of time and labour, good organization, perfect discipline, and continuous, earnest effort are necessary that even intelligent teaching may attain the end aimed at. I would strongly advise country teachers to avail themselves to the full of the permission granted by the regulations to group classes for instruction in certain subjects.

With permission of the Board, I shall comment briefly on the more important of the pass subjects.

Reading.—This subject shows, as usual, the highest percentage of passes. This, however, is not tantamount to saying that reading is the most successfully-taught subject of the syllabus. On the contrary, it is only in a comparatively small number of schools that the subject seems to have received that share of attention that its importance warrants. In these, however, reading has been so taught as to impart to the children a large amount of educative discipline. Generally, reading may be characterized as ranging from very fair to very moderate. Mistakes in pronunciation, the slurring of small words, the indistinct articulation of unaccented syllables, imperfect grouping of words, and disregard of sense pauses are the prevailing faults. To these attention has been directed so often, and with so little apparent effect, that one cannot avoid the conviction that many teachers presume on the indulgence of the Inspector, and devote to the subject only so much time as will secure that limited degree of proficiency which they think will obtain a pass. But mere verbal accuracy is not all that is required, though it is certainly true that the attainment of even this measure of success implies the cultivation of such valuable habits as accurate observation and attention to small things. I have too often had occasion, when commenting on the results of my examinations, to note the fact that teachers had evidently exercised little care that their pupils understood the meaning of what they read. Where comprehension is weak, it may be possible to secure reading free from most of the defects I have already indicated; but unless the words are to the children something more than dead things, something more than mere sounds, intelligent and expressive reading is an impossibility. Even in the earliest reading lessons the teacher should not rest satisfied with merely mechanical accuracy. In the very lowest classes he will take pains to connect the meaning with the words read, and to get the children to read as if they knew the meaning and wished to convey it. By explanation and illustration he will clear up all difficulties of the text, and by inductive questioning will train the children in habits of intelligent thought. In the upper standards the paraphrasing of sentences and paragraphs should receive a large share of attention; the educative value of this exercise can hardly be over-estimated. Finally, I would remind teachers that it is an instruction to Inspectors that "no reading that is not intelligent shall be allowed to count towards a pass."

Writing.—The handwriting, as judged from the copy books, is on the whole very fair. In a considerable number of schools, indeed, a high degree of excellence has been reached in this art; and it is only in a relatively small number that the writing is very bad. I have been pleased to notice that, in the large majority of schools in this district, errors are, on the whole, carefully marked, and that teachers have adopted the system of having the day's copy uniform for each class. In schools where the writing is indifferent the most unsatisfactory results are those obtained from Standard II. I trust it is needless for me to impress on the teachers of those schools the truism that the foundation of good penmanship, as of good reading, must be laid in the lower classes. Nevertheless, thick upstrokes and turnings, jagged, uneven downstrokes, and letters wrongly sloped, compel the conclusion that the children are allowed to sit in a constrained attitude, and to hold the pen in a faulty manner; while unmarked and often repeated errors in the shapes of letters, in their

relative heights, in their points of junction, supply evidence of lax supervision. The few inspection visits that I have been enabled to make have shown me that, in some schools at least, too little use is made of the blackboard in dealing with this subject. The slate writing of Standard I. seems to have been taught in most schools with a good deal of care. In very few cases has it been my duty to report adversely on it, or to record that teachers have neglected to see to the proper ruling of the children's slates. But if the copy-book writing is fairly good, I regret to find that the number of schools in which carefully-written exercise books are to be found is exceedingly limited. In many instances not only was the most wretched scribbling approved by the teachers—their signatures were to be found on some of the pages—but exercises supposed to be corrected showed numerous errors that had been passed over unmarked. Very little reflection would convince teachers of the serious mischief that this laxity on their part is sure to bring about. Much might be done towards improving the home exercises of Standard II. and Standard III., by putting into the hands of the children exercise books so ruled that the children may write between parallel lines. Books of this description are, I believe, procurable in Invercargill, and I notice with pleasure that they have already been introduced into one or two schools in this district with eminently good results. I take this opportunity of reminding teachers that copy-book writing, the errors of which are unmarked, will be more strictly dealt with on examination day than that which shows evidence of supervision.

Spelling.—In the First, Fifth, and Sixth Standards the results obtained in this subject are, on the whole, very satisfactory. This is also true in a modified degree of the work done by Standard II. The spelling of Standards III. and IV. however, as tested by selected words and a passage of dictation, is very moderate. The more difficult words are, as a rule, correctly spelt, while numerous errors are made in simple words occurring in the passage dictated. This of course must be attributed to carelessness, not to ignorance. Transcription in Standard II. seems to have received less attention than its paramount importance merits. Usually the writing was fairly good, but it was rare to meet with transcription exercises absolutely free from errors of some sort. In this matter there can be no half measures. A transcription exercise carelessly written, or imperfectly corrected, not only does no good, it does positive harm, as a mistake to which attention has not been drawn is tolerably sure to be repeated.

Arithmetic.—This subject supplies a very large number of failures in all classes except Standards I. and II. With respect to the upper classes, the reason of this weakness is not hard to find. The work is too mechanical. Many teachers defer the introduction of problems until the Third Standard is reached. This is most unwise. From the very first a child should be supplied with problems, graduated in difficulty; and in dealing with these he should be trained to set down in full the different steps of the process, so as to show clearly the principle on which he has worked. Only thus will arithmetic fulfil its functions as an exercise in exact thinking, and as a means of familiarising children with such methods of computation as will be useful to them in after life. Standards II. and III. require more thorough drilling in the notation of numbers. A large proportion of the failures in these standards may be referred to weakness in this respect. I have seldom found a school in which mental arithmetic is altogether neglected. I should like, however, to see much greater prominence given to this subject in all classes, but more especially in the junior standards.

Grammar.—The results obtained in this subject are, broadly speaking, by no means commensurate with the time devoted to it. In not a few schools parsing is well taught. In others, again, it is almost worthless; and the reason of the non-success is apparent from an examination of the work done by Standard IV. In this class a demand is made for an expression of the process of reasoning by which a child has been led to assign a word to a particular class or part of speech. The statement of the use of the word is usually vague and inaccurate; and not rarely the inference drawn from the statement is utterly wrong. Occasionally the part of speech is given while no attempt is made to explain the function. These are the evidences of unsystematic training. The exercise has become one of guesswork, not of reasoning; and the time spent upon it has been time wasted. Much practice in oral parsing should be given. The children should be taught to fix their attention on the use of the word to be parsed, to state this use clearly and definitely, and then to refer the word to its class. Parsing for inflexion should be dealt with separately, and in a similar manner. If the sentence to be parsed has been judiciously selected, little direct help will be required from the teacher except in the way of leading the children to exercise their reasoning powers, and to think for themselves. Analysis of sentences is taught only in Standards V. and VI. Teachers, however, will find it to their advantage to introduce this subject at a much earlier stage. The grammar lessons of Standard III. should be based on the analysis of the simple sentence; and every parsing exercise in Standard IV. should be preceded by the analysis of the selected passage. The only technical terms that need be introduced in classes below Standard V. are subject, predicate, and object. The pupils of Standard IV. should be trained to state the functions of the phrases that form the enlargements and the extensions, and to indicate in the case of each the part of speech it has the force of. A skilful teacher will be able to go a step further, and to lead his pupils to perceive the relations that the clauses of an easy sentence bear to one another. The practical object of grammatical teaching—viz., composition—seems to be lost sight of by many teachers. This subject I have very carefully examined, and the results have been, on the whole, disappointing, more especially in Standards III. and IV. In all the time tables that have come under my notice a certain proportion of the school time is set apart for the teaching of composition. The indifferent results must be the outcome either of a non-adherence to the time table, and a total neglect of the subject, or of a failure on the part of teachers to arrange and graduate the course of instruction. The children must be taught in the first place what is and what is not a sentence. At first, therefore, a large number of lessons must be devoted to exercising the children in building up simple sentences, and in the proper use of capital letters. For a time nothing else should be required of them. They will then be shown how to combine two or more of those simple sentences by means of connective words. Children are apt to form into one long sentence a series of totally unrelated

statements by the aid of the most inappropriate connectives. This tendency must be checked, and short sentences insisted on. Composition exercises must be thoroughly corrected and criticized, and all errors explained, as far as possible, to the class. On no account should this portion of the lesson be omitted or performed in a perfunctory manner.

DISCIPLINE.—Good discipline seems to be maintained in most of the schools in this district; and I am pleased to be able to testify to the satisfactory behaviour of the children while under examination.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Southland Board of Education. JAMES HENDRY, B.A., Inspector.

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