

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In Continuation of E.-1B, 1890.]

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Auckland, 30th January, 1891.

We have the honour to present our report for the year 1890.

Two hundred and sixty schools have been examined in standards, and two hundred and fifty-four have been inspected.

The percentage of passes in standards is 45·2; the percentage of failures is 19·7. These numbers are almost identical with those of last year. Forty-two schools have been reported as “unsatisfactory,” “poor,” or “bad,” as against thirteen so reported in 1889. Hence it appears that about 80 per cent. of the scholars who ought to have passed from a lower to a higher standard did so pass, and that about 84 per cent. of the schools examined are in a state varying from satisfactory to excellent.

We attribute the poor results in some of the schools reported as unsatisfactory to the frequent change of teachers. While this is, perhaps, unavoidable, we cannot refrain from expressing our opinion that it militates greatly against the success of a school as shown at the annual examination.

In estimating the work of any school we have not relied altogether on percentage of failures, passes, or marks. Our judgment in this matter has been modified to a considerable extent by the character of the work done in the several classes, the degree of proficiency in the higher as well as in the lower classes, and the general tone and discipline of the school.

The recent addition to the staff of Inspectors has enabled us this year to pay far more visits of inspection than it has been possible to do heretofore. We find the method of teaching in most cases satisfactory, though sometimes marred in the application. We have no desire to impose a stereotyped style of teaching upon our teachers. We expect no one to work in chains. At the same time we shall certainly continue to exercise our undoubted right of criticizing those methods which we believe to be faulty. Teachers may rest assured that any originality on their part which tends to cultivate the minds of their pupils, and to foster in them a taste for knowledge, will meet with our most cordial approval.

In our last report we remarked on the success with which the small country schools were taught when under the charge of female teachers. We are glad to see that others are of the same opinion. The Otago Inspectors, in their report for 1889, say: “The practice of appointing females as head teachers in many of the smaller rural schools is working well. Female teachers do not move from school to school so frequently as males, and, on the whole, they conduct schools of this class decidedly better than most of the male teachers who fill such positions.”

We have had on several occasions to report on the want of care with which the school records required by the Education Department are kept. It is necessary to remind teachers that neglect in this matter is deserving of the most severe censure.

READING.—In some parts of the district reading has improved; in others the same faults to which attention has so often been called recur. Too little time seems to be devoted to this subject. Teachers, in many instances, do not teach reading; they hear it. The scholars are not trained to break up sentences into phrases; the relative importance of the stops receives but little attention; and the meaning of the words in the text is often explained not in an easy familiar manner, but by a reference to the list of definitions, often mere synonyms, at the end of the lesson. It would be an advantage if two sets of reading-books were used in the lower classes. Teachers complain, with some justice, of the great difference as regards difficulty that exists between the reading-book of Standard IV. and that of Standard V.

WRITING.—Generally speaking the writing in the copybooks is good. There are still, however, a few teachers who think that it is of no consequence how their pupils write in the exercise-books. It does not seem to occur to them that to permit careless writing in the latter tends to destroy whatever good they have done at the writing-lesson in the former.

SPELLING.—A large number of scholars continue to fail in spelling. The test imposed is not a difficult one; we do not go out of our way to find perplexing words, those in the reading-book in use are given from dictation, and a liberal margin is allowed for errors, unless of the most flagrant character. We believe, if more time and attention were given to reading, and to the strict correction of transcription and work in exercise-books, we should soon cease to complain of the poor work shown in this subject.

ARITHMETIC.—Here we see the most improvement. The problem work has been much better done this year. It is remarkable, however, that the absolute accuracy so essential to the simple commercial rules should be wanting in “bills of parcels” in Standard IV. We recommend teachers not to resort to arithmetic-books for examples, but to make them: there can be no difficulty in finding a proper model; a storekeeper’s bill is not a unique document. Mental arithmetic does not receive sufficient attention; it is not the committing to memory rules and formulæ for quick calculation that is required, but rather that the scholars should be practised in the art of solving, without a pencil, arithmetical questions not involving long processes.

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION.—Formal grammar is on the whole fairly well taught in most of the schools. More attention should be given to the inflection of words, especially in Standard IV. If teachers would adopt a more scientific method of teaching this subject, and rely less on giving their pupils exact definitions from text-books, we believe we should have little cause of complaint. Composition, though very generally practised, is seldom systematically taught. At least one lesson per week should be given on the essentials of composition, the proper methods of beginning and ending different kinds of letters, and on the arrangement of the subject-matter into sentences and paragraphs. Elegance of diction can of course hardly be expected, but there is no reason why even young scholars should not be trained to express themselves with clearness and propriety.

GEOGRAPHY.—But little progress has been made in the mathematical and physical branches of this subject. In Standard V. especially, we notice that the scholars have little real knowledge of the phenomena of day and night and the seasons. Each school should be provided with a globe. Map-drawing has been fairly well done, though, as a rule, too many names of places are inserted; leading features only are required. In Standard VI. more prominence should be given to a knowledge of the British possessions. The natural products of our own colonies should be particularly noticed when teaching the distribution of plants.

DRAWING.—We have noticed some improvement in mechanical and mathematical drawing. Freehand and model drawing have not been taught with so much success. We suggest to teachers that, in teaching solid geometrical drawing, models as well as copies should be used.

CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.—In most of the larger schools this portion of the syllabus of instruction receives a fair share of attention. In small and half-time schools, as might be expected, it is somewhat neglected in favour of the “pass-subjects.” Generally speaking, elementary science has been more successfully taught than in former years. The classes are usually examined orally, Standard IV. to Standard VI. being frequently grouped for the purpose. We have observed, in too many instances, that the answers are given by a very small portion of the scholars. This shows that sufficient care is not taken, when giving a lesson, to arouse and stimulate the interest of every one in the class under instruction. The alternative programmes of instruction in elementary science prepared with the valuable assistance of Professors Thomas and Brown ought to remove any doubts in the minds of teachers as to the extent to which instruction in science should be given in our schools. We cannot speak favourably of the work done in object-lessons. Most teachers seem to utterly misunderstand, or purposely to neglect, the true scope of these lessons. Properly given, they afford a most valuable means of training the reasoning and perceptive faculties of children: as they are usually given they are simply worthless. We recommend head teachers to pay some attention to this when instructing their pupil-teachers. The “notes of lessons” sent in by the latter at their recent examination showed how little heed had been given to this part of their educational course. It is a pity that the pieces of poetry usually learned by the scholars for recitation are not of a higher order of merit. Teachers are not compelled to take them from the reading-book. The children generally repeat their lines accurately enough. If better pieces were selected perhaps something more might be done: they might learn to recite with taste, feeling, and expression. Military drill and calisthenics are taught efficiently in the larger schools; in the smaller schools, in most cases, calisthenics only are taught. Singing is taught in the larger schools wherever the teachers are competent. Needlework is taught wherever there is a female teacher.

The schools in the Auckland District continue to merit favourable mention for discipline, general tone, and behaviour of the scholars.

We append a summary of results for each school and for the whole district.

We have, &c.,

JOHN S. GOODWIN,	} Inspectors.
WALTER HENRY AIREY, B.A.,	
JAMES C. DICKINSON,	
RICHARD CROWE,	

The Chairman, Board of Education, Auckland.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	86	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	633	35	32	184	382	14 3
" V. ...	1,547	104	99	527	817	13 3
" IV. ...	2,624	178	154	624	1,668	12 5
" III. ...	3,124	168	198	611	2,147	11 6
" II. ...	3,201	160	179	352	2,510	10 4
" I. ...	3,012	117	85	202	2,608	9 2
Preparatory... ..	8,176	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	22,403	762	747	2,500	10,132	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 10 months.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 9th February, 1891.

I have the honour to submit my report on the schools of the district for the year ending the 31st December, 1890.

I have again to report that the schools have been inspected and examined as required by the regulations. It has been the practice to begin the examinations as late as the beginning of October in order to give the fullest time for preparation. Now, however, owing to the increasing number of schools and the time required in travelling to overtake them, it is imperative that this work must be begun at a much earlier date. In doing so, I purpose making a change in the order of each school's examination, experience having conclusively shown me that it will be a very beneficial one, though it will to some slight extent lessen the time for preparation of a few schools during the present year. In bush schools, under present arrangements, the eldest scholars, being required at home for farm or dairy work, attend very irregularly for a time before the examination, and are, as a rule, withdrawn from school after it takes place for the remaining portion of the quarter. A reference to the quarterly returns for December in past years will show this to be the case. I trust the change will lessen the irregularity. Bad weather and sickness in several parts of the district delayed the examinations, and I was compelled to carry on the work at Tarata, Tariki Road, and Kaimata Road after the date on which the schools closed for the holidays, that the whole might be completed. On a previous attempt to visit these schools I had to return to town, as the weather was bad and the roads blocked by landslips.

I again refer to the disadvantages under which the staff at the Central School labours, arising from the school being conducted in two separate buildings at a distance from each other. If economy in working and the best results from the organization of the school are considered, then provision should be made for accommodating all the classes at the larger building. The allocation of this year's building grant will provide for increased space at Okato, where the enlargement made about three years ago has been found insufficient for the present attendance. This has been the most pressing want. Several residences, also, are urgently wanted in districts where a difficulty exists in providing lodgings for the teacher. In one case the teacher travels daily about fourteen miles between his home and the school. Four of the largest school buildings are badly in need of painting.

Several of the residences, gardens, and grounds about the school buildings are exceedingly well looked after. Lepperton, Inglewood, Tikorangi, Oakura, and Tataraimaka are worthy of mention. The schools also at these and several other places are not overlooked. A little personal effort from some teachers is, however, needed in arranging and keeping the apparatus of the school in order, cleaning out their school cupboards, fireplaces, and mantelshelves, which at inspection visit were in a number of cases neither presentable nor creditable.

At the pupil-teachers' examination, twenty were examined in their classified grades. Three completed their period of apprenticeship, two of whom have been promoted; the other, a promising and trustworthy teacher, received an appointment in the Wanganui District, where the better monetary inducement is likely to draw the best of our young teachers, if the Board does not give them greater encouragement to remain. Very few males offer as candidates; at present there are only three engaged in the district. The scale of payments is not liberal enough to induce them to enter the profession. The total allowance for a course of four years is but a trifle better than that of a telegraph messenger for the like period.

Considerable trouble and interruption of the school work arises yearly from the frequent changes of teachers, chiefly among those in charge of schools. No less than twenty-one changes of this class have taken place during the past year. The smaller schools are mostly affected. The worst case is that of the Upper Mangorei School, which has had no less than seven teachers within the past seven years. What results can be expected from such a school? The settlers, generally, are opposed to the schools being kept closed when a change takes place; consequently a temporary appointment, which in some cases has become permanent in character, has to be made. From several of such, the scholars have suffered by the bad methods of instruction, and the indifferent

scholarship of those who, untrained, make shipwreck of the school in gaining for themselves a notion of the art of teaching. Again, these appointments require special monetary consideration, therefore the mischief is done at an increased expenditure. The experience of the past year or two points to the fact that the salaries paid to the teachers of these schools will not command the services of qualified persons. How many schools have been advertised during that time for which no eligible applications were received!

The average attendance for the year is again lower than last year's. I have noticed with regret that in several districts but little, if any, effort is made to improve or maintain it. From the returns to hand from thirty-four schools, 399 scholars had failed to make the minimum attendance for the last quarter of the year. The excepted number, also, shows a higher return.

Including the attendance at the Carrington Road and the Kaimata Road Schools, not shown in Table No. 2, the number presented, 2,658, exceeds last year's presentations by 105. The roll-number, however, for the September quarter was still higher; the returns were 2,701. The average yearly increase for the past seven years is 84. Both the absent and the excepted numbers are again higher, the first by 5 and the latter by 13. The percentage of attendance of those presented in standards on the examination-day has been increasing yearly. It has now reached 97 per cent., or 6 per cent. higher than that of 1889. It is very gratifying to know that the severe weather did not lessen the interest of my young friends in their examination. The other percentages for the year follow in table form to allow of comparison:—

Year.	Of Failures.	Of Passes.	On Class Subjects.	Of Additional Marks.	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Grammar.	Geography.	Inspector's Marks.
1889	25.4	39.1	51.6	46.8	89.7	82.0	92.1	73.8	70.1	52.9	61.8	64.7
1890	23.8	41.1	54.9	49.7	90.9	84.2	92.9	86.4	73.5	57.8	69.4	63.9

In five schools the percentage of failures did not reach 10 per cent.; in twelve, 20 per cent.; in eight, 30 per cent.; in six, 40 per cent.; in five, 50 per cent.; and the remaining two were respectively 64 per cent. and 65 per cent. From the foregoing it will be seen that in twenty-five schools the percentage ranged from no failures (in three schools) to 30 per cent. In four others, ranging from 30 to 40 per cent., the year's preparation was interrupted by the change of the head teacher in each case; also in the remaining thirteen seven changes of a like character occurred. Deducting the results obtained in the seven schools where the teaching has been either exceedingly bad or hindered by changes, the percentage of failures for the district would fall to 20 per cent. Now that the district is well provided with school buildings, I trust that the Board will remove the chief hindrance which prevents the appointment of efficient and trustworthy teachers, especially to the smaller schools. I allude to the low salaries, which compare unfavourably with those of other Boards.

Reading is slowly but surely improving; in several schools its changed character was very decided. I have good reason to believe that a fair number of your teachers are now working zealously in raising this subject above the merely mechanical effort which had been the standard of past years. The introduction of new primers for use in the preparatory classes is a success, and I am now in a position to form a good estimate of what I can reasonably expect in future. Both in town and country schools where the classification was good the reading was easy and well emphasized. Where it was bad, notes were taken, so that a repetition at the coming inspection will compel me to fill up a new classification schedule, which will be adhered to at the examination visit. The new Reader for Standard I. will need careful treatment; the teacher will do well in giving extra assistance and supervision in schools where this class is under a pupil-teacher or an assistant. Fluency alone will not make the pass. I would again, also, remind teachers of the great value of good recitation, because of its effect in rousing the feelings and inciting the scholar to acquire a good style. The subject, itself, however, ought to be removed from the "additional" class, and grouped with reading for a pass in the senior standards. With some teachers the subject is treated as mere memory work, their efforts going as far as the preparation by each class of a few stanzas of verse a week or so before the school examination.

Of spelling, I can only repeat what has already been said in last year's report. The subject is, with few exceptions, well taught. The experience of the year will, however, dictate the need of the preparation of the whole text-book in Standard V., instead of a portion merely. The methods of its instruction are now well established, and, excepting in the case of teachers well acquainted with them, advice is rarely required.

Class failures in the arithmetic of Standard II. occurred in a few instances, but in this, as well as the other standards, the work was decidedly better than formerly. The making-out of ordinary receipts seemed to be a foreign idea in Standard IV. in a pretty large number of the schools. Where the usual invoice form was the only stock article, some rather questionable attempts in controlling the use of "Bought of" and "Dr. to" were handed in. The making-out of receipt forms should be intelligently taught by various illustrations, and the scholars afterwards required to give them frequently, covering some imagined sale. Every receipt ought to bear the amount in words, and the stamp, when required, with the proper signature in full, and the date written across it. In Standard V. teachers overlook the fact that short methods in working complex fractions are

the chief causes of the mistakes so often commented upon when valuing the papers. When the step-by-step method of reduction is followed the working is, as a rule, correct, and the answer obtained. Much practice in this class of questions is necessary before the scholars work accurately. Teachers are apt to forget that the learner's memory is well exercised by the processes which the use of the arithmetical signs includes. If it is necessary to have several hundred questions worked by every pupil in the simpler rules of arithmetic, it is indispensable that a like preparation be required with such tests that best show the scholar's acquaintance with the working of vulgar fractions. In future, the old treatment of numeration in Standard III. will receive no consideration. The few teachers who evidently are satisfied with it are advised to bear this in mind. Mental arithmetic was not quite so satisfactorily answered; the questions were a trifle beyond the former year's, but this part of the work must be pushed, so that more effort and time ought to be given to its preparation.

The preparatory work amongst the teachers at the Central School a few years ago, is now showing its results in the treatment of drawing throughout the district. Very creditable specimens of geometrical and scale drawing were done in the majority of the schools. As formerly, no class-book work was accepted; every child did its work either from memory or the blackboard. At one school much valuable time had been wasted in working up the geometrical class-books for examination. They were exceedingly well done, but I found the scholars knew very little about the subject. I should like to see the freehand work in Standard VI. confined to the drawing of natural plants and flowers, which can easily be flattened against the blackboard. Model drawing will be fairly well taught this year, but common objects should be given as copies, and both grouped when fair proficiency in drawing each is acquired.

The penmanship in the copybooks is well supervised: still I cannot speak favourably of the ordinary slate and paper writing of every school. I have had to call attention, occasionally, to the careless work which a few teachers accept and encourage by their indifference. In their schools, I feel disposed to make the pass on the writing of the examination papers, instead of accepting the usual specimens. Perhaps this hint will be sufficient.

Grammar and composition are still the weakest subjects. Frequently the questions on the application of a simple rule of grammar were unanswered. To write out the plural form of a noun presented little difficulty, but to state when a noun takes *es*, or some other ending, was often too much for the instruction. I fear the present system of pass cramming is influencing teachers to forget that their chief duty is the storing of the memory by exercising pupils in the use of what they learn. A new departure was made in testing the composition of Standard III. A scheme of exercises was drawn up by myself, and a copy sent to each school. The results have been, where the scheme has been intelligently tried, beyond my expectations; at the same time it has shown me the schools where there is really no instruction given in this subject. In such, the knowledge of what a sentence is, the use of capital letters, and the period, were unknown to the class. Next to reading, composition and grammar are the subjects which test a teacher's skill and interest in his school, because they demand from him more personal energy and patience than any other subject. Standards V. and VI. did the best work of the year. Analysis was well answered by Standard V.

About 50 per cent. of failures in geography occurred in Standard VI. and Standard V. If these classes were handled in the same manner as Standards II. and III. are, I am certain good results would follow. Too much slate work and too little oral questioning are the points to which attention is directed. With such treatment, it is no wonder that physical geography is so often poorly answered. In the efficiently-conducted schools the results in Standards II., III., and IV. were highly satisfactory.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM MURRAY, Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Taranaki.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.			Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
								Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	43	4	1	15	23	14 10
" V.	...	...	140	8	9	55	68	14 0
" IV.	...	...	267	29	21	92	125	13 1
" III.	...	...	428	36	37	115	240	11 9
" II.	...	...	399	28	21	43	307	10 5
" I.	...	...	370	30	14	16	310	9 5
Preparatory	...	...	962	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	2,609	135	103	336	1,073	*

* Mean of average age, 12 years 3 months.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Board Office, Wanganui, 10th February, 1891.

I have the honour to submit my report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending the 31st December, 1890.

WORK OF THE YEAR.—The work of the year consisted of the inspection and examination of schools, together with the compilation of results and the writing of a report for the Education Department; the examination of pupil-teachers, candidates for scholarships, and scholarship-holders; the drawing-up of eighty-six different standard examination cards and thirty-six advanced examination papers for pupil-teachers, candidates for scholarships, &c.; and the ordinary office work, which during the year was unusually heavy.

Owing to my absence on leave (rendered absolutely necessary through my being thoroughly worn out after the great pressure of work in 1889), I did not resume the duties of my office until the 18th of February, from which until the 23rd December I was continuously engaged. The actual number of days between these dates is 307, or, omitting Sundays, 263 working-days. Upon reference to my diary I find that during those days I devoted 3,166 hours to the Board's service, or over twelve hours per day. If from this calculation some enforced holidays (such as Good Friday, Easter Monday, Queen's Birthday, &c.) were omitted—I say nothing of the ordinary workman's half-holiday on Saturday, for during at least two-thirds of the year such a luxury was unknown to me—the average would be higher; while, if it were calculated on five school days in each week, it would reach nearly fourteen hours and a half per day. During examination time, owing to a school being taken daily, all the paper work had to be examined and valued, percentages had to be calculated, reports had to be written, &c., *after* a late dinner following a hard day's work from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., not to mention long rides in all kinds of weather before and after these hours. To give some idea of the amount of paper work to be examined and valued at night, I may say that at one large school over five reams of foolscap were used. Now, it must be perfectly plain that an Inspector working for so many hours and so late in the night can have little refreshing sleep—that he has no time for absolutely necessary relaxation, for ordinary social duties, and for self-improvement and keeping himself conversant with the educational topics of the day, and that a break-down in health must inevitably follow sooner or later. Also, when such hours are necessary to get the work done even without full inspection, it is clear that the district is too large for one Inspector to manage to the best advantage of those under him, and with ordinary justice to himself. The district, I may say, extends from Foxton and Linton in the south to the Taungatara River (near Opunake), Mount Egmont, and the Patea River at Stratford in the north. The number of miles I travelled, chiefly on horseback, was nearly 2,500. On Saturdays I never returned to Wanganui during examination time, and very seldom during inspection time, or the number would be much larger.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—During the first week of the midwinter school holidays I examined the pupil-teachers of the district, with the following results: First Class, or end-of-third-year candidates, 9 examined, 9 passed with percentages of possible marks varying from 75·8 to 63·3; Second Class, or end-of-second-year candidates, 11 examined, 10 passed with percentages of possible marks varying from 93·4 to 62·4; Third Class, or end-of-first-year candidates, 14 examined, 9 passed, with percentages of possible marks varying from 83·4 to 61·9. The work on the whole was good, and it generally was characterized by neatness and nice arrangement. Arithmetic was not strong in the Third Class: in the Second Class and in the First Class it was very good indeed, the total percentages in the subject being 77 and 79·5 respectively, and six candidates—three in each class—obtaining full marks. Reading in not a few cases was very moderate: reading aloud should be practised. For further information with regard to the work done at the examination I beg to refer you to my special report thereon.

SCHOLARSHIPS.— . . . It is worthy of note that many scholarship-holders resign their scholarships before the allotted two years have expired, when some opportunity occurs for their making a start in life—generally, I notice, either as pupil-teachers or as clerks. Perhaps the fact that several of the Board's scholarships are held at purely primary schools has something to do with this, for some of my examinations of scholarship-holders showed that very little progress indeed had been made in anything worthy of the name of secondary work, while in absolutely necessary primary work the pupils had degenerated into a thoroughly unsound state.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS; STAFF.—At the close of the last quarter of 1890 eighty-seven schools (including ten aided schools) were in active operation, having an average weekly roll-number of 7,889, and an average attendance of 5,761, or 73 per cent. These eighty-seven schools were officered by 174 teachers, made up as follows: 33 principal teachers, 53 sole teachers in charge of schools, 29 assistant teachers, and 59 pupil-teachers. With regard to the classification of assistant teachers (mentioned in my last report) nothing has as yet been done.

AVERAGE WEEKLY ROLL-NUMBER; ATTENDANCE.—For the four quarters of the year the mean average weekly roll-number was 7,778, and the mean average attendance 5,745, the former showing an increase of 463 and the latter an increase of 315 for the twelve months. This average attendance expressed as a percentage of the roll-number shows only 73·8, and on comparing this percentage with the percentages of the districts in 1889 I find that, as regards this district, it has decreased by 0·5 during the year; that it is the lowest in the colony except in Taranaki; and that it is 5·9 lower than in Hawke's Bay District, 6·6 lower than in Auckland District, 11·5 lower than in Otago District (85·7, the highest in the colony), and 6·5 lower than the mean average of the thirteen districts (80·3). Now, as the success of the schools depends in a large measure upon the regular attendance of the pupils, I find myself frequently confronted with the following question: Why is the percentage of attendance so low in this district? "Bad roads," is the usual excuse. But this does not satisfy me, for bad roads are comparatively few—not nearly so many nor so bad as in the Auckland District—and the average attendance is higher at several bush schools than at several town schools. "Many small schools" is another excuse. But this district is particularly

rich in fairly large town schools, while Nelson District, with very many small schools and few large ones, has a higher percentage than Wanganui by 4.5. "Bad weather" I have sometimes thought was partly responsible, but I find that Grey and Westland, with presumably the worst weather in the colony, beat us by 3.4 and 5.1 respectively. Owing to the great importance of this subject—which must be my excuse for dwelling so long upon it—I have taken a great deal of trouble to find where the fault lies; and that the attendance at the large schools is far from being as regular as it ought to be is very evident from the following figures, which show the average attendances of the nine largest schools (the schools in Wanganui Borough are taken as one), expressed as percentages of the mean of their weekly roll-numbers for the four quarters of the year: Wanganui (4 schools), 79.6; Hawera, 79.4; Aramoho, 75.6; Marton, 75; Palmerston—Central School, 72.9; Patea, 71.5; Palmerston—Terrace End, 69.7; Foxton, 69.6; Feilding, 65.8. Now, is it not very discreditable that at not one of these individual schools does the percentage of attendance reach that for the colony, or those for the Districts of Otago, Auckland, North Canterbury, and Hawke's Bay; that at Patea, Terrace End, Foxton, and Feilding the percentages are far below that of any district; and that Feilding shows 6.6 below Taranaki, the lowest district, and 19.9 (!) below Otago, the highest? But all these comparisons should show results in our favour, for the percentages of single town schools with every advantage are compared with that of the colony, and with those of whole districts in which necessarily every kind of school is represented, including little aided and bush schools. Some such questions, too, as the following present themselves: When the percentages for the large schools individually do not reach the average percentage for the colony or the percentages for several districts, how much lower must be the percentages at these schools than those at similarly-situated large schools in other districts, and how can our small country schools be expected to make up the difference? When the percentage for the whole District of Otago is 85.7, what must be the percentages of the Dunedin City schools compared with those of the schools of the large towns of Wanganui and Palmerston? How can the pupils in this district, with such comparatively low attendances, be as well educated as those in some other districts? Finally, then, I appeal to all interested—Board, Committees, teachers, parents, and even children—to endeavour to wipe out this disgrace of several years' standing. That this district—one of the most advanced in the colony, with its railway and metalled roads from end to end; with its magnificent plains and well-grassed hills; with its old-established farms in as perfect a state as could be desired, and its new well-cleared bush farms; with its comfortable country homes, and its fine towns ten to fifteen miles apart; with its schools so close that comparatively few children have to walk more than two or three miles each way, while many ride fine horses—should year after year show that it values education less than other districts, some of which cannot for a moment be compared with it in point of advantages, surely is not creditable. To encourage all in their endeavours, I may point out that the two schools highest on the list of percentages showed me in their upper standards far and away the best work in the district.

GROWTH OF THE DISTRICT.—The following table showing how the district has progressed during the past ten years will be of interest:—

	1880.		1890.		Increase.
Number of schools in operation (last quarter)	55	...	87	...	32
Number of pupils on rolls...	4,394	...	7,889	...	3,495
Average attendance	3,319	...	5,761	...	2,442
Average attendance for year as percentage of mean of roll-numbers for four quarters	75.1	...	73.8	...	Decrease. 1.3
Teachers	55	...	86	...	Increase. 72
Assistants	18	102	29	174	
Pupil-teachers	29	...	59	...	
Presented in standards	2,217	...	4,726	...	2,509
Passed in standards	1,704	...	3,401	...	1,697
Passed in Standard I.	562	...	846	...	284
Passed in Standard IV.	134	...	488	...	354
Passed in Standard VI.	28	...	125	...	97

In all the numbers in the foregoing table there is thus great improvement, except in that one which represents the average attendance expressed as a percentage of the mean of the roll-numbers for the four quarters of the year, where there is a decrease of 1.3. Such decrease is a very displeasing feature, for it makes one incline to the opinion that the colonists are not now so keenly alive to the advantages of a sound primary education for their children as they were ten years ago; yet the education now given is infinitely superior to that of 1880, and the teaching has improved yearly. My own personal experience as a teacher, and as an Inspector since the Education Act was passed in 1877, confirms the foregoing opinion. It is, I suppose, the old story: what is new and fashionable is often valued more than what is old and well known, though the former may be wholly untried, while the latter not only has been tried but also has been found worthy. At the same time, however, it must be remembered in connection with these percentages that ten years ago all the schools were on the main roads, whereas now there are many in the so-called back-country. During the past five or six years a great deal of land on this coast, which formerly was covered with dense bush, has been taken up in comparatively small sections, and the Board has done a great deal to encourage settlement by establishing schools as soon as a fair attendance of pupils could be counted upon. No doubt the struggling pioneers on these sections have more work which their children can do—hence they keep them frequently from school—than the majority of settlers of ten years ago had, who occupied well-grassed farms from which scrub and fern had been cleared, and upon which "logging-up" and such-like were not daily required as on a bush farm.

* * * * *

INSPECTION.—The time at my disposal allowed of my paying only fifty-two visits of inspection. It is very evident that year by year the number of these important visits must decrease, as long as

one Inspector is required to work the district. The inspection reports were written in duplicate, one copy being sent to the Committee and teacher interested, and one to the Board.

EXAMINATION IN STANDARDS.—Of the eighty-seven schools in operation at the end of the year, all open for twelve months, or eighty-four, were duly examined in standards. Of the remaining three,—Rata, Waituna, and Midland Road,—the first was opened in the third quarter, and the remaining two in the fourth quarter, of the year. The four new schools were Whakamara, Mangawhero, Linton, and Fitzherbert. Between the 20th March and 11th June twenty-four schools were examined, but this period was largely taken up with inspection visits, and with the preparation of examination papers for pupil-teachers, scholarship candidates, and standards. From 20th July, immediately after the returns of the pupil-teachers' examination had been made up, to 15th December I was engaged with the standard examinations on almost every school day, sixty schools being taken. Also, I was obliged to examine some schools on Saturdays. Only one school—one in which there were no upper standards—occupied me less than a day, while the examination of the largest school stretched over five days. The usual examination hours were from 9 a.m. to 5.30 or 6 p.m. The reports were written in duplicate, and were posted to the Committees and the Board within from a day to a week of the examinations.

On the days appointed for the examinations there were 7,633 pupils (3,955 boys and 3,678 girls) on the school-rolls, of whom 4,726, or 61·9 per cent., were presented for promotion in the six standards, 2,866 were in the preparatory class, and 41 had already passed Standard VI. Of the 4,726 presented, 4,443 or 94 per cent. (1·6 lower than in 1889) attended and were examined, 283 were absent, 270 were excepted (that is, failed, but, not having made more than half the possible attendances during the three quarters preceding that quarter in which the examination was held, they were not counted against the school), 772 failed, and 3,401 passed the requirements and were promoted. The percentage of failures was 18·5: that is, the percentage of passes on the number examined in standards, omitting exceptions, was 81·5.

The following are the customary tables. In Table A will be found a condensed summary of the examination results for the past two years; and in Table B the results in each standard, together with the average age of the children. Table C, by means of which the simple-looking totals in Tables A and B are obtained, is necessarily a very bulky one, the keeping of which involves a large amount of time and trouble. It gives all the information under the headings in the following tables, but with regard to each school, and it can be seen in manuscript only in the Board's office, for the printing of it would entail too much expense.

TABLE A.

							1889.	1890.
1. Presented in Standards I. to VI. inclusive	...	...	...	...	...	...	4,413	4,726
2. Preparatory class	...	...	...	...	...	...	2,644	2,866
3. Class above Standard VI.	...	...	...	...	...	...	32	41
4. Number on rolls on days of examination	...	...	...	...	...	...	7,089	7,633
5. Percentage of roll-number presented in Standards I. to VI. inclusive	...	...	...	...	...	...	62·2	61·9
6. Examined in Standards I. to VI. inclusive	...	...	...	...	...	...	4,211	4,443
7. Absent	"	"	...	...	...	...	202	283
8. Excepted	"	"	...	...	...	...	296	270
9. Failed	"	"	...	...	...	...	997	772
10. Passed	"	"	...	...	...	...	2,918	3,401
11. Percentage of passes, calculated on roll-number (4)	...	...	...	...	...	...	41·1	44·5
12. Percentage of failures	"	"	...	...	...	...	25·4	18·5
13. Percentage of passes on number examined in standards (6)	...	...	...	...	...	...	69·2	76·5
14. Percentage of passes on number examined in standards, omitting exceptions	...	...	...	...	...	...	74·5	81·5

TABLE B.

Number of Schools examined in each Standard.	Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Ex-cepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Failures.	Percentage of Passes on Number examined in Standards, omitting Ex-ceptions.	Average Age of those that passed.
18	Above Stand. VI.	41	...	...	...	...	...	...	Yrs. mos.
45	Standard VI. ...	174	7	7	35	125	21·9	78·1	14 3
70	" V. ...	404	15	23	91	275	24·9	75·1	13 6
77	" IV. ...	821	67	51	215	488	30·6	69·4	12 8
78	" III. ...	1,154	73	80	200	801	20·0	80·0	11 8
80	" II. ...	1,117	67	61	123	866	12·4	87·6	10 5
82	" I. ...	1,056	54	48	108	846	11·3	88·7	9 4
*	...	4,767	283	270	772	3,401	18·5	81·5	†

* Number of schools examined in one standard or more, 84. † Mean, 11 years 11 months.

A few remarks on the results set forth in the foregoing tables will not be out of place. Taking Table A first, and comparing the numbers in the column for the year just ended with those in the column for the preceding year, I find (1) an increase of 544 pupils on the rolls on the days of examination, and of 313 presented in standards; (2) that the number of pupils absent is comparatively higher; (3) that, though the number of pupils examined is so much higher, the number excepted is 26 lower, and the number failed has decreased by no fewer than 225; (4) that the number passed has increased by 483; and (5) that there is an advance of 7 per cent. in the standard passes. Turning then to Table B, and comparing it with the similar table of 1889, I find a marked improvement in the percentage of passes in each standard, more especially in Standard V. and Standard VI. Thus, the passes are higher in Standard I. by 1·5 per cent., in Standard II. by 4·8 per cent., in Standard III. by 10·7 per cent., in Standard IV. by 9·5 per cent., in Standard V. by 14·6 per cent., and in Standard VI. by 12·1 per cent. In my last report I pointed out that the percentages of passes in Standard IV., Standard V., and Standard VI. were particularly low; so it is only natural, but none the less pleasing, that they should be found higher this year. Also, I ventured the opinion that, under the present regulations, in the majority of small schools these upper standards would show really good work in only every second year; and 1888 was their good year. I trust that when the returns of 1891 are made up such opinion will be found incorrect. Standard IV., as is generally the case in this district, has the lowest percentage of passes, and for this weak arithmetic is largely responsible. This standard shows also the highest percentage of absentees. I am glad to see the number of exceptions has decreased. The first year in which exceptions were recognised was 1885, and for the purpose of comparison I give the percentages of passes on the number examined in the six standards, omitting exceptions, for the past six years: 1885, 67·9; 1886, 70·2; 1887, 72·9; 1888, 77·4; 1889, 74·5; 1890, 81·5. With regard to the average ages of pupils in standards, I may state that I cannot place much reliance on them, for whenever I had time to compare the ages of the same pupils on the schedules of 1889 and those of 1890 I frequently found differences of either considerably more or considerably less than twelve months. The average age in Standard I. is far too high, and more children might well have been ready for presentation in this class. Standard III. shows the highest number of presentations—98 more than Standard I., and 37 more than Standard II.; so the number presented in all standards expressed as a percentage of the number on the rolls is rather low—61·9. Again, with regard to these average ages it is worthy of remark that they are frequently lower in the very small schools under one teacher than in the large schools in town, as witness those for Standard I. in the following: Sanson (166), 10 years 2 months; Foxton (242), 10 years 1 month; Feilding (338), 9 years 10 months; Terrace End (269), 9 years 7 months; Palmerston (542), 9 years 5 months; Halcombe (148), 9 years 5 months; Bull's (176), 9 years 5 months; Fitzherbert (22), 7 years 10 months; Hunterville (61), 8 years 5 months; Paraekaretu (39), 8 years 6 months; South Makirikiri (31), 8 years 6 months; Goat Valley (27), 8 years 7 months; Birmingham (43), 8 years 8 months. The numbers in brackets represent the numbers on the school rolls on the days of examination. The last six schools had each only one teacher. Such statistics as these give rise to the following questions: Are as many children in the large schools selected from the preparatory classes for presentation in Standard I. as might reasonably be expected, after taking into consideration the minute classification of such children, the number of years already spent by them in school, and the number of teachers employed in instructing them? Are the results of the teaching of the children in these preparatory classes and Standard I. found in the subsequent standards as sound and lasting as they should be? Are the large classes in a town school, taught by subordinate teachers, any better off than the small classes in a country school where each pupil gets a share, however small, of the time and attention of one very capable master or mistress?

Before leaving Table B, I should like to point out one very glaring feature—the large decrease in the numbers in standards above Standard III. Thus, the number in Standard IV. is 71 per cent. of the number in Standard III., the number in Standard V. is only 49 per cent. of the number in Standard IV., and the number in Standard VI. is only 43 per cent. of the number in Standard V. The 404 pupils in Standard V. were distributed over no fewer than 70 schools, and the 174 pupils in Standard VI. over 45 schools.

The following table (Table D) shows for each standard the percentage of pupils that passed in each of the pass-subjects. Also, the total percentages in each subject for all classes taken together are shown for 1889 and for 1890, so that progress may be gauged. The making of the final calculations in this table gave me much pleasure, for in every percentage except that for spelling in Standard V. I found an advance. The full table (of which Table D is a summary) showing the results in each school can be seen in the office. It covers a very bulky sheet, and the keeping of it involved a great deal of time and many additions and calculations. As, however, such a table clearly shows with what success each pass-subject is taught at each school, I consider it should be kept.

TABLE D.

Classes.		Reading.		Dictation and Spelling.		Writing.		Arithmetic.		Grammar and Composition.		Geography.		Drawing.	
		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.	...	167	95.8	167	95.8	167	98.2	167	77.2	167	59.2	167	79.0	...	...
" V.	...	389	90.4	389	70.4	389	96.9	389	76.0	389	67.0	389	72.7	389	93.0
" IV.	...	754	87.9	754	71.6	754	95.7	754	66.9	754	63.2	...	...	754	88.3
" III.	...	1,081	85.7	1,081	78.2	1,081	96.7	1,081	78.4	1,081	72.0	1,081	83.0	1,081	96.2
" II.	...	1,050	89.5	1,050	82.6	1,050	98.2	1,050	83.2	...	...	...	...	1,050	96.0
" I.	...	1,002	83.0	1,002	87.6	1,002	95.7	1,002	87.4	...	...	...	...	1,002	95.8
Totals	1890	4,443	87.2	4,443	80.2	4,443	96.7	4,443	79.4	2,391	67.6	1,637	80.2	2,276	94.4
	1889	4,211	84.7	4,211	77.3	4,211	94.4	4,211	74.0	2,180	64.0	1,526	74.1	3,723	89.3

INSTRUCTION.—In each of my annual reports during the past six years I wrote so fully under this heading that I do not purpose to say much this year. The foregoing table plainly shows that the majority of teachers have worked well, and that steady progress is being made. I shall, accordingly, merely make a few remarks upon the quality of the work in each standard, noting especially any generally common weaknesses.

Reading slowly improves, but I consider it should have been much better in Standard I., where the percentage of passes was lowest—83. The attainments in reading in this standard were varied to a most extraordinary degree at different schools, and perhaps nothing gave me more pleasure and nothing more annoyance than listening to this subject in this class. Thus, at some schools I found pupils quite unable to read words continuously in Nelson's small little book—a book not nearly sufficiently advanced for the class; while at others, some of which were small schools with one teacher in charge, very young Standard I. pupils read an advanced Standard II. book with the greatest ease and with perfect inflection. In Standard III. and Standard IV. too many pupils found great difficulty with the ordinary words of the text, and seldom did I find what was read comprehended. In Standard V. and Standard VI. improvement was shown, but at some schools so helplessly did the pupils flounder through reading-lessons which they had not lately seen, that—I am sorry to have to say it—I must come to the following conclusion: Few pupils would pass in reading if they were examined in matter quite new to them. Style and expression varied very much at different schools. In the teaching of reading in the preparatory classes the blackboard might be used more freely.

Spelling, considering the little difficulty the teaching of it as compared with other subjects should entail, is the weakest subject in this district. The percentages in Standard IV. and Standard V. are particularly low—71.6 and 70.4 respectively. There was, however, improvement shown for the year in every class except Standard V. (3.1 lower), but especially in Standard VI. (9.3 higher) and in Standard III. (8.3 higher). Some teachers might remember that "concert exercises" in spelling are liable to degenerate into a mere unconscious utterance of words. Spelling is a matter for the visual memory and for transcription, not for oral recitation. Pictures, so to speak, of words need to be seen and recognised, and time is terribly wasted by the mere utterance of letters that compose them. In the face of this, I was sometimes told that pupils would have spelled better if they had been examined orally, instead of having been required to write the words; but I ask, do not teachers, in oral spelling, prompt, perhaps unconsciously, their pupils, besides frequently allowing them two or more attempts? Again, surely the pupils of any properly-trained class should find it easier to give written answers than oral answers; for in the former they have plenty of time and can supervise and correct, and also there is no ground for nervousness as I allow the teachers themselves to dictate the words. Yet again, ability to spell is necessary in written work only. With regard to the dictation in Standard III. to Standard VI. inclusive, every year it is forcibly impressed upon me that, though the passages are read over several times, at comparatively few schools do the pupils, when supervising their work, see and correct silly misspellings and omissions. At the worst schools the passages were sometimes unreadable—a feature that tells of an utter absence of training. But training is the object of true education, knowledge is secondary; and observation, or, in other words, intelligent work, is the be-all and the end-all of teaching and training.

Writing: Recognising the importance of good writing, I have always been very particular with this subject, and I am pleased to be able to state again this year that writing throughout the district is on the whole very good indeed. The percentage of passes for all standards taken together is 96.7, in each standard it is over 95, and both in Standard VI. and in Standard II. it reaches 98.2. In Standard II. at the majority of schools transcription on slates in particular was exceedingly good, while at several schools some very fine transcription on foolscap (not in the requirements of this standard) also was shown. Such a percentage in Standard II. must be considered wonderfully high. The examination papers of Standard III. and the higher standards inclusive generally were characterized by extreme neatness and nice arrangement.

Arithmetic shows improvement in every class, and the total percentage for the six standards, 79·4, is a very creditable one for this subject. The general complaint in this colony, in the Australian Colonies, and in the United Kingdom, that arithmetic is the least satisfactory subject, and shows a much lower percentage of passes than any other subject, cannot be made with regard to this district; for I find that the percentage here is within a fraction of the percentages in spelling and geography, each of which subjects shows 80·2, and that it is 11·8 higher than the percentage in grammar, which reads 67·6. The most marked improvement was in Standard VI. and in Standard V., namely, 9·9 and 13·3 respectively. In Standard VI. pupils met with little success in what are commonly known as compound proportion sums, through their working them by "first principles"—a mistake, in my opinion. In sums on fencing land, area was frequently found instead of distance round. In Standard V. pupils undoubtedly were weakest in fractions; but practice was not as strong as one might reasonably expect, "interest" was frequently worked by cumbersome methods, and cancelling was seldom employed in "proportion" and "first principles." At Hawera and Wanganui Boys' the arithmetic in these two upper standards was very fine. Standard IV. shows an improvement of 7·4. Failure was found most frequently in reduction and other sums in weights and measures, through pupils being either ignorant of their tables or thoughtless. Confusion of linear measure with square measure was very common, and sometimes I found a sum worked partly by one table and partly by the other. Some pupils were unable to divide or multiply by a mixed number, and in "practice" the old mistake of dividing into the wrong line I still frequently found. In the working of bills of parcels great improvement was shown, and in this branch the Aramoho School recorded quite a unique performance, twenty-nine pupils out of thirty examined working quite correctly the bills on six different sets of examination cards. I must not forget to mention that very many pupils in these three upper standards were inaccurate in little subtractions of money entailed in working problems. In the lower three standards the arithmetic was on the whole good, and there was an improvement of 6 per cent. in the passes in Standard III., and also in those in Standard II. In problem-working the old fault of using division for multiplication, and *vice versa*, was still common. In Standard I. the style of putting down the work was very varied. Small cramped figuring never should be allowed. Some teachers might remember that the syllabus of this standard requires that "the numeration must be applied to the addition and multiplication, and the multiplication known to be a compendious method of addition."

Grammar, with Composition, showed a lower percentage of passes than any other subject, namely, 67·6, but this is 2·7 higher than the percentage for 1889. In Standard VI. grammar was often good in the large schools, but in the small country schools many pupils failed to satisfy the requirements. Analysis was generally treated by this class in a better manner than any other branch of grammar, but derivations of very common words were seldom known, and most pupils failed to give any reasons for their corrections of improprieties and false syntax. Corrections without reasons point either to laziness or to lack of intellectual training, and they may be the outcome of pure guessing. In Standard V. analysis showed great improvement, but parsing often was very bad at small schools, the pupils showing little acquaintance with the kind, the voice, the mood, and in a lesser degree the tense, of the verb. In Standard IV. what Mr. Thring calls "lunatic mistakes" were far too common. For example, I examine many Fourth Standards in which few or more pupils make such senseless errors as calling "children" singular, "men" feminine, "women" masculine. But, as Mr. Thring points out, there is as much sense in this kind of work as there is in calling a dog a calf. In Standard III. sentence-writing showing the usage of words on the cards was the weakest feature. In Standard IV. and in Standard III. I am convinced that the work in grammar would much improve if very simple analysis were included in the syllabus for these classes. Without some knowledge of analysis the pupils in Standard IV. can in many instances only guess whether nouns are in the nominative case or in the objective case, inasmuch as the case-endings have been lost, and the case itself depends on the structural position or logical relation of the words in the sentence. It is, therefore, most important that a knowledge of the structure of the sentence and of the logical relation of its parts should be obtained as quickly as possible.

Composition varied very much as to quality. The majority of pupils now begin and end letters properly; but the matter generally was very brief, and in the upper standards rather childish. In Standard VI. pupils are still weak in writing letters of application. Also, it was very noticeable that at comparatively few schools could the pupils in Standard VI. and Standard V. readily write sentences illustrating the usage of certain words on the cards, such as, for instance, *advice*, *advise*, *receipt*, *recipe*, *practise*, *practice*, *conduct*, *con'duct*. Several times, too, I found that pupils—even those in the upper Standards—did not know for what purpose an accent was put over a particular syllable of a word, in what words the initial *h* is silent, what letters are consonants and what vowels, and how to divide a word into its syllables. In Standard III. and Standard IV. the dividing of a monosyllable when the word would not fit at the end of the line—e.g., *leng-th*—was a common error. Pupils never should be allowed to crowd words in any written work.

Geography improved considerably in Standard V. and Standard VI., and in Standard III. also by nearly five per cent. of passes. I confess, however, that I am yearly disappointed with the work done in this subject in the highest two classes, especially as I consider the questions set particularly easy and straightforward. In Standard V. pupils were often ignorant of the back work of Standard IV. The mapping from memory was very fine at some schools, notably Wanganui Boys' and Hawera. With regard to physical and mathematical geography, the remarks made last year apply again this year. It appears to me that teachers do not work according to the syllabus in these branches, so often do pupils ignore questions couched in the very language of such syllabus. Thus, the question "Write a few lines about the distribution of land and water in the Western Hemisphere," was as so much Greek to the pupils at several schools, even after some oral explanation had been given. Laziness on the part of the pupils is, I think, responsible for a great

deal of poor work in geography, and it is brought about by teachers doing too much of the work, as pointing out each feature separately, instead of getting pupils to be able to form a mental picture of a map, and name in order the features from one point to another.

Drawing shows a high percentage of passes in each standard in which it is a pass-subject. More scale drawing might in future be done in Standard IV. and Standard V., and care should be taken that the figures are of large size, that all measurements are neatly marked in, and that all lines stand the test of the scale.

CLASS-SUBJECTS.—In the last Annual Report the Minister of Education wrote as follows: "The 'class'-subjects are not in any sense optional. A class must be examined in these subjects before any pupil in it is admitted to examination in the 'pass'-subjects. If the 'class'-subjects received as much attention as the 'pass'-subjects, the results of examination expressed in marks ought to be in favour of the 'class'-subjects. . . . The conclusion suggested by the comparison is, that a subject is likely to receive less attention if it ranks as a 'class'-subject than it would receive if it were included among the 'pass'-subjects." The class-subjects are, I may say, drawing (in Standard VI. only), geography (Standard II. and Standard IV.), history (Standard III., Standard IV., Standard V., and Standard IV.), and elementary science and object-lessons; and the percentage of marks obtained in all taken together was only 49·5, while the percentage on the "pass"-subjects (not omitting exceptions) was 76·5. Some of the "class"-subjects undoubtedly were not regularly taught at a few schools, notably Maxwell; for I met with whole classes of pupils in regular attendance who made no attempt to answer any question on their examination cards, and who showed similar ignorance when examined orally. On the other hand, at some schools the answering was quite as good in the "class"-subjects as in the "pass"-subjects. On the examination schedules may be seen the marks obtained by each school in each subject, but I have not kept these marks apart for the district as a whole, so I cannot give the different percentages. I am, however, quite satisfied that *Geography* was the most efficiently taught subject. In Standard II. I should like to have found the pupils more familiar with the printing and colours on a map, for it was nothing unusual to find those who could readily recognise peninsulas, islands, &c., unable to say for what colours, wavy lines, dots, and such-like stood.—In *History* the answering seldom was good, while at not a few schools it was marvellously absurd. I still think that history should not be required in Standard III.—In *Drawing* in Standard VI., freehand and plain geometry generally were good, but, as in many schools solid geometry and model drawing (especially the former) had not been taught, the marks for the subject as a whole were materially lowered.—In *Science* intelligent answering was very rare, and *Object-lesson* teaching slowly improves. At my inspection visits I sometimes noticed teachers when giving lessons in these subjects floundering helplessly along because they had not written notes beforehand as so often recommended. Science would be much benefited if a well-arranged and not too extensive syllabus, and a text-book covering such syllabus, were prepared. The syllabus as at present laid down might well be divided into two or more class-subjects. Upon the sole teachers of small schools science and history press very hardly, and I am more than ever convinced in the opinion expressed in my annual report for 1887, that in such schools some extra subjects should be compulsory and some optional, and that a sole teacher with preparatory classes and six standards to teach should not be required to take up as many (if any) optional subjects as a principal teacher of a large town school where each class has at least one teacher. How science can be taught with any success to two or three pupils by means of one lesson a week, and when all pupils are seldom present at two lessons in succession, is a mystery which I do not attempt to solve.

ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.—The "additional subjects" are nominally six—viz., recitation, drill and exercises, singing, needlework, subject-matter of reading-lessons, and extra drawing; and in each subject the possible marks obtainable are 20, or in all a total of 120. The average number of marks obtained by each school was 42·3, but from this no idea can be formed of the quality of the work done, for all the subjects are not compulsory at all schools. Thus, singing is taught to all standards at comparatively few schools, extra drawing at hardly any, and needlework only at those where either female sole teachers or female assistants are employed. Hence, at a large proportion of schools only three subjects were valued by me; and, in order that outsiders may be able to form some opinion of the quality of the work actually done, it would be better if the total marks obtained were expressed as a percentage of the obtainable marks in only those subjects taken up at each school. In the class-subjects such a calculation is required.—*Recitation* varied from excellent to mere sing-song. I am afraid several teachers think that recitation consists in the repetition of words more or less accurately.—*Needlework* generally was very good.—Of the *subject-matter of the reading-lessons* I can say nothing favourable, for at very few schools could pupils give the meanings of passages in their own words in sentences, while at several they could make no attempt at all at answering. I should like to know what kind of training teachers consider a First Standard has received when not a pupil in the class will make an attempt to describe what is meant by "the country" or by "pretty lanes," when such words appear in the reading-lesson. It seems to me that what is known as "oral composition" might be made a valuable means for bringing about improvement in this important matter. For example, words occurring in a reading-lesson are written on the blackboard, and pupils are called on individually to stand up and make sentences containing one or more of these words. Time should be reserved at the end of each lesson for recapitulating parts of it by the pupils themselves, and they could be required to ask questions about it. Inquiry on the part of the pupils is not sufficiently encouraged at any lesson. Above all, answers should be made in sentences, not in single words, and pupils should be required to improve upon the wording of each other's answers.—*Military drill* is taught in very few schools. The *order, discipline, and behaviour* are on the whole satisfactory. Their class motions pupils can perform, when they like, with quickness and precision; but at several schools unnecessary noise and excitement are too common at change of lessons and at the end of the day's work just before dismissal.

Habits of self-restraint need fostering. The attention of the pupils is frequently more satisfactory in the small schools than in the large ones. Several principal teachers might do more to improve the attention and tone generally in some of the classes in their schools. Attention is a lesson to be learned, and quite as much a matter of training as any other lesson. Attitude in class is not always what it should be. There cannot be any really good work going on when pupils are in lazy, slouching attitudes. "Attitude makes false work, as well as betrays false work." At many small schools I was much pleased with the manner in which pupils gave their whole attention to their paper work from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., and then answered brightly in oral work.—The *Manners* of pupils I find very nice at most schools.

REGISTERS, ETC.—The *Registers* generally are correctly kept as far as mere accuracy in calculations is concerned, but sometimes at my inspection visits I had to point out such omissions as the following: Total of morning attendance not entered before afternoon sitting, daily attendance not added up to date, number of weeks and average weekly roll for quarter not calculated, previous week's attendances not entered in summary. Many of the books I found spotlessly clean, a few very dirty and untidy. The latter were generally without blotting-paper, or had meagre pieces about an inch square, saturated with the ink of six months or so, while the pens and the ink on the tables were unfit for use.—The *Quarterly Returns* not infrequently showed glaring errors, which could have been the result of only gross carelessness.—In the *Log-books* I should like to see more remarks with regard to the actual working of the schools, the progress of classes, and the work of subordinate teachers. In these books at the beginning of each year and each quarter certain matters with regard to organization should be entered, as, for instance, the number on school roll and the number in each standard, the name of each teacher and the class taught by him or her, the average attendance for the past quarter, &c.

Before closing this report I beg to ask teachers to read again what I wrote last year with regard to questioning a class and training pupils in expressing their answers well. Year by year the number of schools where this important matter receives attention increases, but only very slowly. Simultaneous answering and indiscriminate answering are still far too common in what are supposed to be educative oral lessons; and as a consequence I often found, both at inspection visits and at examination visits, that answers given—if disconnected words making no sense by themselves can be called answers—had no association with the questions. Simultaneous answering may at times be useful—indiscriminate answering, never—in purely *memoriter* work in the lowest classes; but to require a whole class to repeat simultaneously answers which have been given by individual pupils when the exercise involves no mental effort is worse than useless. How absurd, for instance, is the following example of these two kinds of answering, which is a *fac-simile* of what I heard at a certain school: "What part of speech is 'that' in this sentence?" Answer (shouted by several pupils here and there in the class): "Relative pronoun." Teacher: "Nonsense! how could it be?" Answer (shouted immediately by several pupils): "Conjunction." Teacher: "Right. Now, whole class together, what part of speech is 'that'?" Answer (in one great shout, some pupils looking amused and supremely self-satisfied, others gazing about in an absent-minded manner): "Conjunction." Now, after such treatment as this, how could pupils be expected to know under what circumstances 'that' is a relative pronoun, under what it is a conjunction? Surely here was a good opportunity for inductive teaching! Surely here simultaneous answering was of no use whatever! In mental arithmetic, too, simultaneous answering is useless, but it is commonly practised. *E.g.*: Upon the correct answer to "What is the cost of ten slates at 8½d.?" being received, the teacher follows with "Now, all of you, what is the cost?" "Complete answers" are of great importance in mental training. "Round," shouts a boy in answer to the question, "In what are a pencil and a penholder alike?" "Yes," says the teacher, "they are both round." But children should be trained to express their ideas accurately and fully in their own simple language, without any padding on the part of the teacher.

Once more, then, I ask teachers not to hurry their questions in educative oral work; not, as a rule, to accept answers in single words; and not to be satisfied if the pupils are apparently interested and attentive, and acquiesce in what is merely told them. As Mr. Fitch points out in his "Notes on American Schools," "There is no true teaching unless the learner is made to speak his own words, as well as to listen to those of an instructor. Acquiescence is not knowledge, for it is easy to assent to many propositions without understanding them." I do not want Charles Kingsley's remark, "The master learned all the lessons and the scholars heard them," to be applicable to any of our schools.

Finally, let me draw the Board's attention to the fact that in this report I have pointed out defects—in order that they may be remedied—more freely than excellences. It must not therefore be forgotten that great credit is due to many teachers who are working with energy, enthusiasm, and success—teachers with whom it is a pleasure to be associated in their noble but arduous occupation. Much of the work done by the pupils was very fine, and progress of a most substantial kind has been made during the year.

I have, &c.,

W. H. VEREKER-BINDON, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 24th February, 1891.

I have the honour to present my seventeenth annual report on the work and condition of the primary State schools of the Wellington District.

In June last the Education Board considerably acceded to the representation made in my last report, and appointed Mr. T. R. Fleming Assistant Inspector; and I have had the benefit of

his valuable services in the examination of the large schools during the latter part of the year. As, however, nearly all the work of the past year came under my own supervision, it is well that I should on this occasion report alone; and next year we can report conjointly.

The number of schools examined in 1890 was seventy-three—one more than in the preceding year. The new school at Maungatainoka is a prodigy of its kind, for, in the first year of its existence, it has an attendance of 156 children, and it is the largest school I have ever known to attain such growth and condition in so short a time. It was built in the virgin forest, in proximity to lands laid out for a small-farm settlement, and two or three years ago there was nothing but forest for miles round.

The total of the attendance in all schools in 1889 was 10,460, and in 1890 it was 10,694—an increase of 234.

The total of the standard passes in 1889 was 5,985, and in 1890 it was 6,438—an increase of 453. The examination attendance was very good and very hearty. Of 7,687 children, who were expected to be present for standard examination, only 217 were absent, or 1 in 35; and in some large and good schools hardly any pupils were absent. In standard work the following table shows the passes made, compared with those of the previous year:—

Year.		Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
1889	...	1,347	1,548	1,039	943	684	351
1890	...	1,330	1,377	1,456	997	727	447

The percentage of passes made on the number presented for 1890 is 93·3, which is 3·8 per cent. higher than the result for 1889, and the highest result yet made; and I am again in a position to state that there is a highly satisfactory increase in the numbers passed in the higher standards, and an equally satisfactory decrease in the numbers returned in and below Standard II. Thus again it is clear that the standard classification in this district as a whole continues to rise year by year in a very appreciable degree.

On again going carefully through the examination reports of the several schools, I am pleased to find that many of those which were considered last year to be in a stationary or declining condition are now more or less improving, and that there are not more than nine schools out of the seventy-three which can be looked upon as being more or less in an unsatisfactory condition; and, further, that in five of the weakest schools a change in the head-teacher has been made since the examination, and that better results may now be expected in these schools under their new management.

Much of the character of the standard work is satisfactory and improving. The practice of so marking the schedules that, on the one hand, credit is given for excellence in any subject, and, on the other, weakness without failure is recorded, gives a useful stimulus to class-teachers, especially in large schools, where *Æmulatio alit ingenia*. In many schools, English is a comparatively weak subject. Candidates in Standards V. and VI. are often unable to correct common errors of speech. There is very little failure in spelling, and good composition is generally taught. A few schools are still weak in arithmetic, but more attention is generally given to mental work, which is now a daily exercise in nearly every school. Much of the paper work is neatly written and carefully arranged. The use of the new form of examination papers for the several standards and subjects has conduced to this result. These papers have again been revised, and, as they are now sold at half their former cost, it is hoped they will be generally used for all examinations. In some of the best classes of larger schools, much of the standard work is of excellent quality—especially in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The teachers of such classes act on the motto, *Age quod agis*, and it is quite a pleasure to examine their work. Frequently, during the past year, have I warmly commended such teachers. Drawing is now a standard subject in all schools, in accordance with the syllabus drawn up by the Drawing Instructor. The time of this officer has been taken up during the past year with other matters, and he has not spent as much time as usual in the schools; but of course the classes have been carried on, and the first-grade examination made. The passes this year, made by 1,932 candidates from fifty-six schools, were—689 freehand, 821 geometry, 381 scale, and 75 model. Of these papers, 262 are marked excellent, and 353 good. Mr. Riley is about to introduce a new syllabus, and to give much more time to the schools.

In taking a broad view of the standard work, it may be said that the schools as a whole have arrived at a state of efficiency so far as the number of passes is taken into account. The aim of the teacher is now to maintain and improve the quality of this work.

I have now to deal with that important part of school work which lies outside standard requirements, and the importance of which, I think, is hardly realised by the public. This work is divided into two sections: first, the “class”-subjects, now three in number—history, geography, and science; secondly, the “additional subjects,” now five in number—recitation, drill, singing, needlework, and subject-matter of reading-book. In the table of results attached to this report [not reprinted] will be found the percentage of maximum marks obtained by each school in each of these sections. The examination of “class” and “additional” subjects precedes the examination in standard work, and the value of a school, in my judgment, depends in a great measure on the quality of this class instruction. In the successful teaching of science, physical geography, history, recitation, observation-lessons, and subject-matter, the best abilities of a teacher are needed. The eight subjects already enumerated are all more or less taken up in schools, and they are all well taught in some schools; but much remains to be done. It is in the direction of improving the instruction generally in this portion of our curriculum that attention is required. This year has seen the introduction of more practical science teaching, nearly every school taking up one at least of four prescribed syllabuses—chemistry, physics, physiology, and botany. Also, “object-lessons” to lower classes are now illustrated in several large schools by actual experiment, and the lessons form an introduction to the first principles of science; but such work is not yet general.

I am much pleased with the year's work in physical geography, the prescribed programme being generally well and intelligently taught. Historical Readers are in more general use. Where any difficulty exists in getting the children supplied with these Readers, I hope the School Committees will purchase sets for the use of the school. One set will last for years, and it is by far the best means of providing classes with complete sets of uniform books in good condition. Improved recitation is also a feature of the year's work. The late Matthew Arnold said, "The art of reciting a piece of poetry well is an education in itself," and I am pleased to find it is more or less being made an art. In the city schools, Tonic Sol Fa singing is more generally taught by each class-teacher, and a decided improvement is the result. Many of these teachers have attended classes taught by Mr. R. Parker, and it is already recommended in the Pupil-teacher Examination Report that such instruction classes in singing be open to all teachers at a nominal fee. The report on the needlework of the city schools, sent to me by a competent lady examiner, states that the work is more varied, better presented, and generally of improved quality. The head-teachers are advised that new plans are suggested. The making of small garments, with specimens of more varied work, with improved darning, is recommended. In many country schools the sewing is very well done. A new pole-drill for girls has been introduced with great success by M. de Mey, who continues to prove himself a valuable officer. Generally speaking, the classes showed considerable intelligence in answering questions on the subject-matter of their reading-books.

The infant departments of schools have been carefully examined, and the work in reading is much improved, especially in the city infant schools. With the exception of the Mount Cook Infant School, these departments are deficient in kindergarten occupations. Material for modelling in clay and at least three other occupations is now supplied to all these departments, and more satisfactory work will be looked for.

In my last report I expressed the opinion that school life was not bright enough, and that there was danger of children being overbored by the wearisome dullness of much of their daily occupation: *Durum et durum non faciunt murum*. A few months ago I asked the head-teachers to meet the Inspectors, and talk over with them how means could be devised whereby school work could be made more interesting, attractive, and palatable to the taught, and, if possible, at the same time, more intellectual and less wearisome to both teachers and taught. We discussed recommendations which I had drafted, and we decided on the adoption of a programme, which was submitted to the Board, who warmly approved of the plan, and voted a liberal sum of money to furnish the schools with the necessary apparatus and material. The following is the plan of work proposed for next year: That more time be given to the teaching of elementary science experimentally; that, in the lower classes, "observation lessons" should be taught by actual experiment and illustration; that "readings" of Longman's Fairy Tale Books and other books of interest and amusement to young folks, and of stirring passages from history to upper classes, be made twice a week by the class teacher; that modelling in clay and at least three other kindergarten occupations be introduced into all infant departments; that home lessons be made light and easy; and that drawing lessons should include the application of drawing to the making of cardboard models and designs. On the other hand, it was allowed that requirements in history and political geography should be definite and moderate, and that the arithmetic of one or two standards should be a little easier. We are now about to furnish schools with the means of carrying out these resolutions, which I am sure will meet with a general approval, and which, I doubt not, will in time lead to a more wholesome, a more intellectual, and a lighter-hearted school-life.

I have, &c.,
ROBERT LEE.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wellington.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	
						Yrs.	m.
Above Standard VI. ...	127	...	...	...	...	13	...
Standard VI. ...	561	13	26	75	447	13	9
" V. ...	840	24	46	43	727	12	9
" IV. ...	1,141	37	47	60	997	11	11
" III. ...	1,771	56	107	152	1,456	10	11
" II. ...	1,644	53	100	114	1,377	9	7
" I. ...	1,403	33	24	16	1,330	8	6
Preparatory ...	3,207	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	10,694	216	350	460	6,334	*	

* Mean of average age, 11 years 2 months.

HAWKE'S BAY.

Sir,— Education Office, Napier, 1st January, 1891.
I have the honour to submit for the information of the Board my annual summary report on the progress of education in this district for the year ending the 31st December, 1890.
Forty-seven schools were in operation at the close of the year. These contained forty-nine departments with accommodation sufficient for 5,478 pupils, supposing that the school places were

exactly arranged to supply the wants of each district. The number of pupils returned as belonging to the schools at the end of the year was 6,012, whilst the average attendance for the December quarter was 4,843, or 81·2 per cent. of the roll-number. The schools were staffed by forty-seven head teachers, thirty-eight assistants, sixteen ex-pupil-teachers, and fifty-one pupil-teachers. On the estimate that two pupil-teachers are equivalent to one assistant or principal teacher, the staff employed is equal to one pupil-teacher for every twenty-one children in average attendance.

No new schools were opened during the year, nor were any efforts made to provide the deficiencies in the way of buildings which I pointed out in my last report as being necessary. The teaching at the Napier Main School, at Gisborne, Patutahi, Ashley-Clinton, and Matamau is carried on under conditions by no means favourable to good progress, and nothing has been done to alter what it is only possible to characterize as an unsatisfactory state of affairs. I regret also that nothing has been done in the way of repairs to the school buildings and to the residences. A heavy expenditure must be incurred at no distant date unless steps are taken to paint the buildings and carry out minor repairs which School Committees, though very desirous of carrying out, are unable to undertake with the funds placed at their disposal.

Compared with last year the increase in the school attendance is small, but this is in consequence of the great amount of sickness that has prevailed in most of the school districts for more than six months of the year. A number of the schools had to close for several weeks owing to the absence of so many pupils from sickness, and the general effects have been such that the average attendance for each of the three quarters ending June, September, and December was much lower than that for the March quarter. Signs of improvement were apparent in the December returns of attendance, but still the results are unsatisfactory, as they point to the fact that nearly two hundred fewer children were attending the Board schools during the December quarter than were attending in March.

I have noticed that several Committees instituted proceedings against parents under section 92 of the Act for non-attendance at school, but the enforcement of attendance is not popular with the Committees generally, as it tends to arouse strong local jealousies in small communities, where every man deems himself as good as his neighbour.

All the schools have been duly examined and reported on as required by departmental regulations. They have also been visited at other times as far as circumstances have allowed for the purpose of judging as to the character of the teaching and the power of controlling classes or departments in the case of those teachers who hold certificates of competency from the Government.

The number of pupils whose names appeared on the examination schedules as belonging to the schools at the time of the examination was 5,732, whilst there were 3,732 children, or 65·1 per cent. of the whole, presented for examination in standards. Eighty-six pupils were absent from school on examination day, 126 were "excepts" under the regulations, 685 failed to meet the requirements, leaving 2,788 pupils, or a little over 48·6 per cent. of those presented in standards, for promotion to a higher class.

The following table contains a summary of the results in each of the standards. For the purpose of comparison the totals for the years 1888 and 1889 are also given in the table:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Examined.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age.
							Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI. ...	47	...	47	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	142	4	138	4	44	99	14 3
" V. ...	339	7	331	6	114	211	13 5
" IV. ...	552	11	341	21	117	403	12 3
" III. ...	785	24	761	28	150	583	11 4
" II. ...	823	21	802	32	130	640	10 5
" I. ...	1,044	18	1,026	35	130	861	9 0
Preparatory ...	2,000	...	...	...	...	...	...
	5,732	86	3,646	126	695	2,788	*
Totals for 1888 ...	5,578	118	3,468	147	889	2,566	11 10
Totals for 1889 ...	5,691	66	3,539	134	641	2,897	11 9

* Mean age, 11 years 9 months.

In what is known as the Inspector's "Summary of results for each school," there will be found a table containing the percentage of passes, the percentage of marks gained in class-subjects, and the marks gained for additional subjects by each school in the district. Of standard passes nine schools passed 55 per cent. or more of their pupils in the examination; sixteen schools passed 45 per cent. and under 55 per cent. of their pupils; whilst the remaining twenty-two schools varied in their passes between 44 per cent. and 9·3 per cent. In the class-subjects five schools obtained over 80 per cent. of the possible marks; twenty-seven others obtained marks varying from 60 to 80 per cent., and the remaining fifteen schools obtained fewer than 60 per cent. of marks; one of them falling as low as 12½ per cent. In every school additional subjects were taken up; repetition being taken in forty-two schools; drill, &c., in twenty-eight; singing in thirty-five; needlework in forty-one; extra drawing in two; whilst in the case of forty-two schools marks were given for a knowledge of the subject-matter of the reading lesson.

The results for the various schools show wide differences in the standard of attainments, but

the differences often depend upon causes over which teachers have little or no control. The regularity of pupils at school, the social position of parents, and the emulation of a Committee are important factors in making a successful school, though they are not always indispensable to success. A good teacher, with a smack of enthusiasm for his work, with a little tact, ability to control, and a methodical mind, can work wonders anywhere, and though adverse circumstances may often hinder they cannot keep away the success which such a teacher merits. During the year under review the school work has been greatly hindered by the la grippe epidemic, by irregular attendance, and in the case of Standard VI. pupils by a short school year, so that the results do not show in as favourable a light as those of the previous year. Both the presentations in standards and the passes were fewer than they were in 1889, but in class and additional subjects the progress made was very satisfactory. The forty-seven pupils who are returned as above Standard VI. consist chiefly of the senior division of the Gisborne District High School, who do work of an advanced character as defined in section 56 of the Education Act, and altogether beyond the standard requirements. The general report on the work of the upper division of this school has already been submitted for approval. With the exception of the pupils referred to, few of the older children continue to attend school after passing Standard VI., and these pupils have to be examined in the requirements of Standard VI. It seems to me that an important advantage to education would be gained if some arrangements could be made for bringing together the few solitary pupils to be found in the country schools in Standards V. and VI., and the class above Standard VI., so that they might be brought under the same kind of instruction. As things are at present a good deal of a teacher's time in the smaller country schools is necessarily given to the instruction of a few pupils in the higher standards, whilst the lower classes are too often left to the tender mercies of a junior teacher. The difficulties in the way of bringing together for instruction the senior pupils residing in the neighbouring districts are many, but, whenever it is possible, effective organization implies its adoption. The short school year which a number of the Sixth Standard pupils had for the preparation of their work has necessarily increased the failures in that standard, and a reference to the table of passes will show that many pupils have not succeeded in reaching the requirements entitling them to a pass. In any case the effect of the failures will be beneficial both to teachers and pupils, and I look forward to much better results in Standard VI. next year, as a number of those to be examined will have had nearly two years for preparation of their work.

Before offering a few remarks on the subject of instruction, I would point out how difficult it is to form anything like a fair estimate between my demands for a standard pass, and the demands of Inspectors in other districts. It seems to me that, whatever compulsory subjects are authorised to be prepared by pupils to entitle them to a standard pass, something like a fair degree of attainments should be insisted on. No doubt the departmental regulations assume that a standard pass in one district should be a fair type of a standard pass in every other district. But Inspectors are isolated. They have no common basis by which to judge or compare their several standards, and each interprets the departmental regulations in his own way. The Board has already suggested to the Minister of Education that a meeting of Inspectors should be held. I venture to express a hope that the Minister will approve of the suggestion. I have no more wish for uniformity in education than I have for uniformity in nature, but it would be a great satisfaction to know how far the demands for a standard pass in this district will bear comparison with those of other educational districts.

The character of the instruction in most of the schools is in its way commendable, but real educative processes are too often neglected for the more immediate results which are to be obtained for the purpose of meeting regulation requirements. In the higher standards I have observed signs of deterioration in the school work, even in some of the best organized schools. As to the cause, I can only refer it to the number of "pass" and "class" subjects that pupils have to attempt in order to qualify for what is known as a "standard" pass. It is not that children are overworked, they are simply overtaught. They are made weary by a continual supply of the bare husks of the many subjects they have to learn, and yet the cry is, by men who should know better, that our education is "too literary!" I think it is Ruskin who says that "nothing is well done that is done in competition," and this is very true when applied to the work of the schools. One of the highest purposes of school training should be to show the children how to use books, and yet in some schools children scarcely become acquainted with any book, except the ordinary standard readers, through which they are taken at competitive speed, during their entire school life. How to use for purposes of study a grammar-book, a geography-book, a dictionary, or even a history-book, is a mystery to most of our standard children, as parents may readily find out for themselves. The blame does not always rest with the teachers. I am convinced that the majority of them would pursue a different course to-morrow if they had the power to do so; but the character of the work to be prepared can only be accomplished by the teachers collecting the scrappy facts of knowledge themselves and getting their pupils to learn the same, regardless as to whether the children are being educated so long as the course pursued meets with departmental requirements. The Inspectors are powerless to alter what they know to be wrong, and so the Education mill grinds on regardless of utility and the constant demands made for the adoption of rational processes in education.

The junior departments continue to be carried on with much care and success by a very earnest staff of teachers. But I should like to see an attempt made to train children to answer questions put orally just as fully and as completely as if the children had to write down their answers on paper or on slates. What is made fundamental in the early training of children becomes a mental discipline in after years, and, if young children can be trained to give a complete answer orally when a question is put to them, it will be an important advance in intellectual training compared with the system that now prevails. To illustrate what I mean by an example, let it be supposed that the recapitulation of an object-lesson on "A Slate" is being taken. The teacher, holding up a

slate, asks, "What is this?"—Children: "A slate." Teacher: "How many sides has it?"—Children: "Four." Teacher: "What is its shape?"—Children: "Oblong." Teacher: "How many surfaces has it?"—Children: "Two." Teacher: "For what is it used?"—Children: "To write on." And so on to the end. Now, there is no intellectual faculty brought into play by allowing answering of this sort. Memory and a previous lesson on form will provide the word given as an answer to each question; but neither observation nor memory will suffice for the following answers: Teacher (holding up a slate): "What is this?"—Children: "It is a slate." Teacher: "How many sides has it?"—Children: "A slate has four sides and two surfaces." Teacher: "What is its shape?"—Children: "In shape the slate you have is an oblong." Teacher: "For what is the slate used?"—Children: "The slate is used for writing and drawing; it has other uses also." The first method, as here described, requires the exercise of the perceptive faculty only; whilst the latter method of answering requires the exercise of the conceptive faculty, which combines the intellectual with the perceptive faculty.

The system of "cutting-out," for training young children in correct form, and referred to by me last year as having been successfully introduced into several schools, is making headway, though very slowly; but good results are promised in several junior departments. If scissors could be provided for the use of pupils, the system of "cutting-out" in connection with drawing would be generally adopted throughout the district.

READING.—I have already expressed the opinion that the children do not get sufficient practice in reading at school, and I am inclined to urge the establishment of a school library for the use of pupils in every district. Six reading-books, containing altogether about eight hundred pages of ordinary reading matter in six years, constitute a very small literary outfit for boys and girls in this country on their leaving school; and, when this fact becomes fully realised, I think it will be readily conceded that a library is necessary, if not indispensable, to the efficiency of every well-ordered school. The circular on the subject of school libraries that was issued some months ago by the Government has had a beneficial effect upon teachers, and at least three new libraries have been established on the lines suggested by the department. The following schools in my district have each a library for the use of pupils: Ormond, Matawhero, Te Arai, Gisborne, Wairoa, Petane, Meanee, Patangata, Norsewood, Porangahau, and Woodville. As a subject of instruction reading should be fostered in the lower standards much more than it now is. The power to read with intelligence is perhaps the most valuable of all acquirements, and offers more sources of lasting pleasure and profit to children and adults than anything else. In Standards I., II., III., and IV. at least two reading-books should be prepared during the year, and I should hail with satisfaction a departmental regulation that made this compulsory for all schools. The subjects embraced by them might readily include the whole of the present requirements in geography, history, and lessons on general information.

ARITHMETIC.—This subject receives more attention than reading in the majority of schools, but, as pointed out by me two years ago, success would be much more easily gained by the pupils if teachers gave more time to instruction in mental arithmetic and the thorough preparation of arithmetical tables. Naturally all the higher processes can be illustrated by means of elementary and concrete examples, and these should be frequently given to children as mental tests, for I am fully convinced that mental arithmetic is a most valuable aid to pupils in their after lives, and no efforts should be deemed too great so as to make a school thorough in this branch of work. A special paper in mental arithmetic was set as part of the arithmetic for Standards IV., V., and VI., the tests being limited to the rules in Blackie's Mental Arithmetic, and the average results were encouraging. The style of arithmetic papers sent in by pupils above Standard III. was not equal to those of previous years. To me it is greatly to be regretted that the decimal system of weights and measures has not been adopted for the colony instead of the cumbrous and antiquated system we now have.

Writing varies much in quality in the different schools, but on the whole the average standard results are fairly good. My tests for writing in Standards I. and II. were given on slates, the copybooks being marked without reference to a qualification for a pass. In Standards III., IV., and V. the copybooks only were marked for a pass in writing, but in future I propose to set special writing tests on paper for all standards above the second. Vere Foster's books, Palmerston series, are still used in most of the schools; but lately a number of teachers in the Poverty Bay district have adopted the Jackson's Vertical Writing Copybooks, as used in the English Civil Service examinations, and the results have been unusually good. Judging by the progress made during the twelve months the Jackson's copybooks have been in use, it seems to me that a good deal of time will be saved in acquiring a knowledge of writing by their adoption, but I defer a final judgment upon them until after another visit to the schools where they are in use.

DRAWING.—As far as the schools have been able to comply with the regulation in this subject, the progress is satisfactory. Freehand and plane geometrical drawing have been taken up in all the schools, but elementary solid geometry has not been attempted anywhere, and model drawing is only taught at present in three places.

GEOGRAPHY is well taught in the lower classes, but in the two highest the results are not so good. The employment of blank maps for testing the pupils in Standards II., III., and IV. has done much to foster the growth of intelligent methods in teaching the subject, and I am sorry that the same plan cannot be adopted in my examination of the remaining standards. In many schools mapping continues to be well and carefully taught. I find that the most difficult thing to get done in this subject is the topography of one's own district, with a general knowledge of the geography of New Zealand. Children too often know the rivers of Asia or the lakes of Africa or America much better than they know the rivers and lakes of New Zealand or even of their own district. I am sometimes inclined to think that teachers themselves know very little of the geography of New Zealand, whilst relatively it is the most important country with which they have to deal.

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION.—As a standard subject grammar and composition occupy an important place. In Standards III. and IV. the grammar was examined orally, and a special test in composition was afterwards given; it being possible for pupils to obtain half marks in each division of the subject. In the highest standard the pupils in their paper tests gave evidence of having been carefully instructed, but too much time appears to be given to the analysis of sentences and too little to paraphrasing.

The class and additional subjects continue to receive much attention, and in many schools they are taught with commendable success. A vast amount of poetry for repetition and recitation was prepared for the examination, and I am inclined to think that this will form a most valuable store for pupils in their after lives. The memorising of the noblest thoughts of noble minds must tend to encourage those who will have little time for reading after leaving school, and, although the elocutionary effects are sometimes poor, the seed that is being sown is of good quality. Singing is well taught in a number of the schools, but perhaps the most marked improvement in the additional work is in drill and calisthenics. Teachers are beginning to appreciate the benefits to be gained by the systematic instruction of the boys in drill, and of the girls in calisthenics, and in several of the principal schools this phase of school training has lately received special attention. The Napier School Committee some months ago engaged Sergeant-Major Huddleston, of the Napier Volunteers, to instruct the town children in drill and physical exercises, and the progress up to the date of my visit to the school was very marked.

SEWING.—Judging by the reports of the lady examiners the sewing in most of the schools is of a high order of merit. It is needless on my part to say that the lady teachers deserve much credit for the efficient manner in which the subject continues to be taught. Personally I should prefer to see more attention paid to patching, darning, and mending in Standards III. and IV., and in the highest standards it would be well if arrangements could be made for special instruction in cutting-out and in the use of sewing machines. Sewing is a subject in which specialisation for instruction and training can be fully carried out, and already this form of specialisation has been introduced into one school with excellent results.

Instruction in elementary science is popular in most schools, but there are few teachers who are really capable of teaching the subject well. Nor is much encouragement held out by the Board to those who are fond of science and who are experts in some special branch or subject. There are no scientific appliances provided for the schools, with two or three exceptions, and teachers who take up physics or elementary chemistry are required to purchase their own appliances. This is a subject which calls for consideration by the Board. Makatoku, Napier, Ormond, Danevirke, Hastings, Kaikora, Gisborne, Woodville, Ormondville, and Norsewood are the only schools where elementary science is really well and intelligently taught.

MORAL TRAINING.—I regret that I cannot express full satisfaction at what may be termed the moral phase of training in certain schools. It is a phase of training too often overlooked, because, like reading and arithmetic, it cannot be measured by percentages; but no part of school work should be more jealously guarded by School Committees. Moral training is permanent in its effects, and if this aspect of school discipline is weak the whole educational fabric will be of little value. There are things which, in themselves, are not wrong, but which on the part of teachers are not at all times becoming. Appearances are very important as a factor in training, and it is for this reason that I do not think it by any means a proper thing for teachers to be seen smoking in and about a school; nor should hotels be the places for teachers to frequent. Such matters as these may appear to some as of trivial importance, but it must be asked what will be the possible effects upon the rising generation when such things are common? Men must learn to discipline themselves before they can discipline others without the employment of force, and it is in this phase of school keeping, I regret to say, there is room for improvement and watchfulness.

In conclusion, I am pleased to again record the fact that the Committees, with few exceptions, continue to take an active and intelligent interest in the welfare of their schools. As a rule, representatives from each Committee meet me on the day of examination, and they show in many ways their desire to carry out efficiently the duties imposed on them by the Education Act. I am convinced that much good to the cause of education in this district is done by their instrumentality.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

H. HILL.

NELSON.

SIR,—

Nelson, 31st December, 1890.

I have the honour to submit to you my report on the Nelson public schools for this year.

Ninety-four schools are now at work, several of which have been opened quite recently. The rolls contained 5,714 names when the schools were examined, 5,303 being present. The absentees from examination, 411, were far too numerous. The number of scholars on the roll at the close of the December quarter was 5,831.

On the whole, there is substantial reason for being satisfied with the work that has been done in our schools during the past twelve months. It is true that in some schools a large proportion of the pupils have proved unequal to the demands made upon them on examination day; but, from a careful observation of what was going on during my visits of inspection, and on other sufficient grounds, I have no reason to conclude that more than a small fraction of such schools as have done badly on this occasion owe their ill-success either to the indolence or to the incapacity of their teaching staff. Under a system where weakness in any one of seven subjects is, of necessity, branded as “a failure” in all, much allowance must be made for the element of chance, especially

in the very small schools now so numerous in this district. The accidental presence of even so few as three or four dull-witted or backward children in a school numbering in all hardly a score of pupils would materially alter for the worse what are conventionally termed the "Results," however ably such a school may have been conducted.

Wherever I have satisfied myself that there were good grounds for attributing a part or even the whole of the non-success of a school to faulty teaching or training, I have endeavoured to indicate my meaning with sufficient clearness in the detailed account of the state of each establishment.

I am again able to report in favourable terms as to the discipline of our schools and the good behaviour of the great majority of the scholars, both when within and without the school walls. The orderliness and good humour of the school children whom one passes by, either in the streets of our towns or on our country roads, together with the infrequency of foul language, cannot well escape the notice of even a careless observer.

Something too much has been made of the multiplicity of subjects now embodied in our complete school course. It is undeniable that by adding to the number of channels the total volume of a stream is not increased; but no reasonable being ever expected that it would be, and an examiner who knows his business will always make allowances in proportion to the quantity of additional matter exacted. A school course that should include only three or four subjects, succeeding one another in an unchanging and unchangeable round, would be found intolerably tedious by young children, few of whom can fix their minds intently on anything for many minutes. It would seem that variety of food for the mind is as essential as a varied diet for the body. Four of the most popular subjects among our children are those which have assumed only lately a prominent place in the public schools of Nelson—drawing, elementary science, vocal music, and drill. The evident relief with which children who have been poring over sums welcome a singing-lesson, or exchange a lesson in grammar, where words only are dealt with, for a lesson in common things, speaks volumes in favour of retaining these cheering variations in the programme. Nor should it be forgotten that all these matters, in one way or another, largely help forward the general conduct of the school. Drill, for example, in addition to its admitted physical uses, gives habits of prompt attention and orderliness; while drawing, independently of its intrinsic value in after life, does much to help the handwriting by training eye and hand.

Reading, which until the last two years was the least satisfactory portion of the school work, now stands, as it ought to do, at the head of the list. It is not too much to say that the reading in many of our schools is at present excellent, in the majority good, and in no instance distinctly bad. There are still, however, one or two points in which the methods of teaching employed might be bettered. Simultaneous reading, useful in its way as an adjunct, has been allowed to usurp too prominent a place in the reading lesson. It also too frequently precedes, instead of following, the individual reading of each member of a class. The art of reading at sight will not be readily acquired if children with retentive memories have the opportunity of hearing a whole passage read by the class, with the corrections of the teacher, before attacking it for themselves one by one. It is a hopeful sign that an alternative reading-book, so long recommended in vain, is at last being brought into use pretty generally.

Good or even fair handwriting is still far from being as common as it ought to be. On inspection visits one misses the active minute supervision of the teachers and the constant use of black-board writing as an exemplar, without which really good work can hardly be looked for. Much slovenly, misshapen writing is to be found, where it is quite unpardonable, among the copybooks of even the older scholars. Remonstrance having so far proved ineffectual, several specimens of moderately good writing, taken from our own schools, will be brought round at next examination for the purpose of comparison. Those whose copybooks fall distinctly below the standard thus set up, especially in the two highest classes, may lay their account in being summarily rejected.

In face of the fact that at least twice as many scholars break down in arithmetic as in any other subject, it may seem paradoxical to affirm that this important art is very well taught in most of our schools; but arithmetic, especially in its higher branches, is intrinsically difficult, and habits of unerring accuracy, as well as the faculty of looking all round a knotty question, do not, as a rule, come to children until the ordinary school life is nearly over. I find that in this subject, beyond all others, young pupils, however carefully and skilfully they may have been trained, habitually disappoint—though they occasionally exceed—the expectations of their teachers. Again and again it has been found that a whole class will break down miserably, while the classes immediately above and below it, who have received precisely the same kind of training, will answer correctly and with ease every question on their paper. Even our picked scholars, who have solved readily the hardest papers set at the ordinary annual examinations, too often give but a sorry account of themselves when tested by not dissimilar work at a scholarship examination.

The substitution of a set of papers in which some knowledge of common idioms, and of the meaning of words in daily use, is required, for the mere formal parsing that has hitherto made up the staple of the grammar papers, proved a sore trial to the older scholars, for whom it was intended. Comparatively few could explain "what was wrong, and why it was wrong," in such phrases as "They saw both you and I," and "Neither James nor John were wrong." The meaning of such words as "renowned," "restitution," and "absolve" also presented quite unexpected difficulties to some otherwise well-taught scholars. On the other hand, the English composition was, for the most part, creditably done.

Elementary science continues to be carefully and successfully taught in most of our schools, though in a few the teachers evidently thought that it could be treated as an optional subject, and therefore ignored it altogether. This is a mistake that cannot be too speedily rectified.

Time would be saved if the teaching of geography were more intimately blended with that of history. These two matters are so closely related that there are many occasions on which they

might be taught concurrently, when it would be found that each helped the other. Little fault can reasonably be found, however, with the way in which both of these branches are being taught at present.

Great pains have evidently been taken by our teachers to improve the faulty spelling of which I had such good reason to complain last year. Although matters have certainly mended, much remains to be done before the general result can be termed quite satisfactory. It is only fair, however, to explain that the large increase in the number of those who broke down this year, especially in the upper classes, was mainly due to the nature of the test applied to the latter. For the older scholars the dictation was taken from a book with which they had no previous acquaintance; and this ordeal, though not, I think, an unfair one, proved too hard for scholars of fourteen or fifteen years old.

The systematic teaching of vocal music, now general in our town schools, is generally spreading throughout the country districts. The progress made by the children in part-singing, and in the art of reading simple music at sight, is most encouraging. Several of our country teachers, with praiseworthy zeal, have been studying music to such good purpose that, though they knew little or nothing about the subject a year or two ago, they are now able to train and conduct efficiently their own music classes.

Many teachers have also attended drawing classes, with the laudable object of better qualifying themselves for teaching that art. The good results of this may already be seen in the improved work of their pupils. Blank drawing-books are now fast superseding the very unsatisfactory books formerly in general use, when the teachers were less able than they now are to draw copies or to teach from models.

My usual account of the condition of each school when it was last examined is appended. [Not reprinted.]

I have, &c.,

W. C. HODGSON, Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Nelson.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI. ...	124	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	351	13	18	88	232	13 11
" V. ...	513	22	25	134	332	12 10
" IV. ...	704	29	52	218	405	12 0
" III. ...	741	25	32	109	575	10 10
" II. ...	740	26	40	135	539	9 10
" I. ...	734	21	25	53	635	8 8
Preparatory ...	1,807	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	5,714	136	192	737	2,718	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 4 months.

GREY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Greymouth, 8th April, 1891.

I have the honour to present my report upon the schools in the Grey District for 1890.

Nineteen schools were examined, and the examination of two schools was deferred owing to bad weather and other causes. The following tables give full particulars of passes, and furnish a means of estimating the condition of the district from year to year, since 1885 [not all reprinted]:—

	1885.	1887.	1889.	1890.
Roll-number on day of examination ...	1,383	1,513	1,746	1,729
Number of above who have already passed the standard course ...	14	27	18	26
Within standard classification ...	872	1,058	1,177	1,161
Number enrolled in standard classes present at examination ...	828	972	1,100	1,080
Number promoted to a higher standard ...	579	676	731	912
Percentage of promotions—				
On roll-number of school ...	41·87	44·6	41·9	52·7
On roll-number of standard classes ...	66·4	64	62·1	78·5
On number present in standard classes ...	69·93	70	66·5	84·4
Mean of average age in standards. .	...	11y. 4m.	11y. 3m.	11y. 4m.
Mean of average age of those who passed ...	...	11y. 5m.	11y. 6m.	11y. 7m.
Percentage of passes in standard pass-subjects ...	...	78	77	85

Percentage on Class-subjects.						1887.	1889.	1890.
Drawing	...	...	...	...	...	64	78.2	79.3
History	...	...	...	...	...	35	53.6	49.1
Geography	...	...	...	...	...	42	49	44.7
Elementary science and object-lessons	...	...	...	...	...	53	72	64.3
Mean percentage on class-subjects						48.5	63.2	59.3
Average of marks for additional subjects (possible total, 25 for 1887, 20 for 1889 and 1890)—								
Repetition and recitation	...	...	...	...	...	15	14.6	14.5
Drill and exercises	...	...	...	...	...	16	15	15
Singing	...	...	...	...	...	18	17.5	16.8
Needlework	...	...	...	...	...	17.8	12.6	17.4
Subject-matter	...	...	...	...	...	12	...	...
Mean average						15.8	15	15.9

Average percentage of additional marks :—

	1886.	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.
Percentage	74	63.2	45.6	75	79.5

The result is on the whole extremely satisfactory. Under the head of "Promotions" there is a general and considerable increase.

In dictation and spelling, arithmetic and grammar, a great improvement is perceptible. Reading has improved slightly, and writing shows no appreciable improvement, but is not consequently to be reported as bad. The writing has improved very considerably during the past few years. Geography shows a decided falling-off, which is largely attributable to an attempt to do the Geographical Readers thoroughly in addition to the ordinary programme.

In class-subjects there is some falling off. History, geography, and science are weaker than in the previous year, and drawing slightly better.

In additional subjects the mean average is slightly better. Needlework shows great improvement. Recitation and drill show no improvement generally on the previous year, and there is a slight degree less perfection in singing. The additional subjects should receive greater attention.

Drill and singing are too often omitted, and there appears to be an idea existing that the teaching of these subjects is optional, but it is not so. Want of space often prevents due attention being given to drill, but where a playground is provided it should not be omitted. Where the ability to teach singing exists, that subject should be included. "Subject-matter" I am often compelled to omit owing to want of time, but in the few cases in which I was able to give attention to it evidence was forthcoming of the omission of that very important part of the reading lesson.

In connection with these subjects due allowance must be made for those teachers who have charge of small schools, and who find some difficulty in meeting the requirements of the syllabus.

READING.—Though the percentage of passes in this subject is high, it must not be supposed that anything approaching perfection has yet been attained. Really good reading is still more the exception than the rule. Class criticism as to accuracy, pronunciation, and observance of stops is allowed and rightly encouraged, and the effect is perceptible. Why not encourage the scholars to extend their criticism to style, expression, and emphasis? I am sure that the teacher who would try the experiment would find himself repaid. The subject-matter, I am afraid, is often regarded as of no importance, but a comprehension of the matter of the lesson must precede intelligent reading. Two books should be used in the lower classes during the year. I fear that the book-lessons are too often learned by heart. Longman's New Readers, which are now used in this district, are well graded, and their introduction has been beneficial. I found that in some schools the scholars have been advanced from the Second Primer to the First Standard Book, the Infant Reader being passed over. This is decidedly a mistake, and should not occur. Care is necessary in the use of simultaneous reading. The monotonous tone which prevails in a few schools may possibly be caused by a too free use of this exercise. In asking for the meaning of a word I frequently find that another part of speech is given. Scholars should be carefully trained to give a synonymous word being the same part of speech as the word occurring in the lesson. If the funds of the Board would permit I strongly recommend that the schools be provided with a full set of reading-books for school use only. Those for the upper classes should have a continuous story for the purpose of creating interest in the lesson.

SPELLING.—The passes in this subject show an increase of 16 per cent. as compared with those of 1889. This is very satisfactory, and is no doubt attributable to improved methods of teaching, and greater care in connection with dictation exercises. In the few schools which exhibited any weakness I generally found the transcription carelessly done; and deficiency in spelling may often be traced to want of care in supervising the transcription exercises of the lower classes. Punctuation is required in the fourth, fifth, and sixth classes; and, though I have treated mistakes and omissions very leniently hitherto, I cannot promise to continue the indulgence. I allow the teacher always to give out the dictation and spelling; but this is an advantage only when the teacher's delivery is clear and distinct. Mistakes are often made which show the hearing of the scholar or the pronunciation of the teacher to be defective,

ARITHMETIC.—Last year there was some falling-off in this subject. This year it shows great improvement. I seldom find notation any difficulty in the lower classes; and in several schools Class Primer II. has done the work of Standard I. very well. The slates used in Standards I. and II. are often much too small, causing sums to be crowded, and creating trouble and perplexity for the examiner. I am often told that parents object to purchase larger slates. Economy is commendable, but also sometimes mischievous. The number of schools which give due attention to mental arithmetic is increasing, and the effect is apparent in the written work. Standards V. and VI. should do a great part of their work on paper. A mistake on the slate being easily erased, the habit of carefulness is not promoted as in paper work. Standard V. is the only class which shows any particular weakness. The papers set were not of more than ordinary difficulty; and the cause may possibly be found in the advancement of scholars from Standard IV., who have just managed to secure a pass, but would benefit by remaining in that class another year. A little more severity as to passes in Standard IV., I believe, would have a salutary effect. I have been careful not to exceed the requirements of the syllabus as to problems, but they still present insuperable difficulty to a large proportion of the scholars. This shows the necessity for more extended use of mental work. No school can do really good work in arithmetic where this important branch of the subject is neglected. The papers in this subject are generally very carefully and neatly done, and show that habits of carefulness and tidiness are inculcated. As a relief in posture likely to be physically beneficial, I would recommend that scholars be allowed sometimes to stand whilst working in this subject, and be enjoined to hold the slates well up.

GRAMMAR.—This subject also shows considerable improvement generally, but there are greater contrasts than in any other subject. In some schools the whole work is done admirably, composition being exceedingly well taught; in others the composition is well expressed, but spoiled by want of punctuation, bad spelling, and indiscriminate use of capital letters, or their absence altogether where necessary. The parsing generally is very well done, and is, in some cases, beyond programme requirements. I should like to see the reason for classification more often given. Standard IV. was weak in the inflections of the noun and pronoun. Analysis was very unequal, some schools doing very good work and others showing little knowledge of the subject. In the Greymouth School simple analysis is begun in Standard III., a practice I should like to see general.

WRITING.—There is no falling-off in this subject, but no improvement can be recorded. There has been very considerable improvement during the past four years, and the slate writing of the lower classes on the whole is very good. Copybooks are used in Standard I., excepting in those schools which are too crowded to allow desk-room for the purpose. In the majority of schools great care is taken with the copybooks, and their condition was very creditable. In a few cases careless supervision had resulted in poor work and untidy and dirty books. In one or two schools I found that the rule that the scholars in Standards I.—III. should not write on a single line had been disregarded, with the inevitably unfavourable result upon the work. I hope to see strict compliance with this rule, whether in copybook or exercise-book. The difficulties in connection with the position of the scholar and the manner of holding the pen have materially increased since the introduction of drawing into the syllabus, and I am inclined to think that the best way to meet the difficulty will be to introduce the "upright" system of writing, which allows of the posture of body and the manner of holding the pen being the same as for drawing. Notwithstanding my often repeated injunctions concerning the use of short pencils in the lower classes, it still too often occurs that a class is found at work with pencils altogether too short for satisfactory work. There is no excuse whatever for this, as pencils and pencil-holders are supplied by the Board without charge. In some cases the condition of the exercise-books indicates the possibility of deterioration in the writing. No matter how carefully the work in school may be supervised the acceptance of careless work in the exercise-books must affect results injuriously. Scribbling in these books should be strictly prohibited.

DRAWING.—Freehand drawing shows improvement. The syllabus has not been very strictly observed, owing to various causes. The cost of the necessary material is practically prohibitive to geometrical drawing, and model drawing languishes for want of models. The work done has, generally speaking, been very well done. The drawing-books in the majority of schools present a very creditable appearance.

GEOGRAPHY, ETC.—The cause of a comparative failure in this subject has been already partly accounted for. The results in Standard IV. are not encouraging as to the further creation of class-subjects. Standard II. does much better, and has greatly improved since the introduction of the Geographical Readers. In this class, especially, the use of the Geographical Reader has created greater interest in the subject, with beneficial results. A good set of readers based upon our own syllabus would be of great service. Map knowledge is on the whole fairly good, but mathematical and physical geography are poorly taught. It is quite an ordinary event to find the scholars' ideas of latitude and longitude very mixed. The location of places is pretty well known, but very little attempt seems to be made to connect them with events of interest and importance. No subject requires wider reading on the part of the teacher, and no subject can be more interesting, than geography if properly handled. History should be associated with it as much as possible, for the two combined are mutually helpful. A zinc tray filled with sand would be of great service in the lower classes, for the scholars can acquire correct notions of the various divisions of land and water much better by the practical exercise of forming them in sand than by mere description or the exhibition of diagrams and pictures. Standard III. in some schools failed altogether in the spelling of geographical names. This is strong evidence of carelessness, and the fault should be remedied.

Hughes's Science Readers are still used, and are well adapted for school work. Sufficient effort is not made to give a practical direction to the work, and the same may be said of object-lessons.

Mere verbal descriptions will never fully awake the interest of the scholars. Marcus Ward's Historical Readers are used with fair result. I believe the majority of elementary history-books to be uninteresting because they are too full. Under a feeling of compulsion to include the whole subject, the matter is so attenuated that everything of interest is eliminated, and nothing but bare unadorned fact remains. Is it so essential that scholars should know the whole subject? Would it not be better that a book for any standard should contain only carefully-chosen extracts from the history of the period treated fully and graphically; and of course preferring those in which the details are most interesting? I am of opinion that it would, and that more benefit would result from a taste and liking for historical reading being created, than from the possession by the scholar of a large stock of facts, very few of which would be retained by the memory for any length of time. Standard III. should certainly read nothing but short historical stories. The classes below Standard I. are generally well taught, even by some of the teachers who have to do the whole work of their school unaided. In the three largest schools these divisions are very much crowded, which causes the labour and difficulty of teaching to be greater than it should be. If funds were procurable I should like to see some expenditure upon material for the teaching of these classes. Improved object-cards, diagrams of geography, cabinets of objects, sets of weights and measures, geometrical models, apparatus for teaching numeration, a large ground plan of the school: these things would be most useful in lightening the labour of teaching, and making school work more attractive. For the upper classes there should be sets of geological and botanical specimens, material and apparatus for simple scientific experiments, models for drawing, good pictures illustrating the habitations, armour, modes of warfare, social peculiarities, and architecture of bygone days; a few good books of reference, such as a dictionary, encyclopædia, atlas, &c., and a microscope; also for geography lessons specimens of the productions of the various countries.

I regret very much to have to draw attention to the generally unsatisfactory condition of the school buildings. At every visit I find proof of the further progress of decay in the school buildings and their surroundings. The condition of affairs is very serious, and in some cases not without the element of danger to the scholars. The discipline is generally good, and the behaviour of the scholars at examination deserving of praise. In a few schools a noisy entrance to and departure from the schoolroom are tolerated by the teachers to the annoyance of other scholars and of the examiner. The thumping of heavy boots on the floor of a verandah, with an occasional loud shout, is not calculated to promote comfort or composure. I should like to see the practice of saluting the teacher, on entering and leaving the room, generally adopted. In the best schools it is never omitted. Attacks have been made upon the present system, principally by those who possess very imperfect and erroneous information upon the subject. The alterations suggested are numerous and various. I believe the system to be working well in this district. The extent to which a programme such as ours can be observed must depend very much upon circumstances, and perhaps a weakness in some direction is inevitable; but schools with a sufficient and capable staff should find no difficulty in giving a good account of themselves, and generally do so. Some desire has been expressed for uniformity in the direction of having the examination papers the same for all districts. It is a mistake to suppose that the remedy for defects is to reduce the Inspector to a sort of recording machine. If any change occur it should be in the direction of giving the Inspectors more liberty of action and choice with reference to the syllabus. I do not assert that the present system is faultless, but changes should be made very gradually and with great caution. Much has been said as to over-pressure in our public schools. I find very little evidence of its existence. One occasionally meets with an exceptionally nervous child who requires careful management to prevent a breakdown. The cause is often traceable to the anxiety of parents for their children to present a good appearance at the examination. This anxiety sometimes leads to indiscretion, as when children are strongly urged to effort, or, as I have in one or two cases discovered, threatened with pains and penalties if not successful. There is one subject altogether omitted in our schools which I think should receive attention. I refer to domestic economy. Some training in the practical duties of life would be of inestimable benefit to the majority of girls attending our public schools. I am sure that the phrase "domestic servant" would not be so generally synonymous with "domestic plague" if this subject were thoroughly and practically taught.

The class for higher subjects at the Greymouth District High School, conducted by Mr Craddock, is still doing exceedingly good work. The average number of scholars for the year was eighteen. Two scholars matriculated, and two passed the Junior Civil Service Examination very satisfactorily. A word of praise is due to the teachers generally for the efforts they must have made to secure so good a result.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD T. ROBINSON.

The Chairman, Education Board, Greymouth.

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Blenheim, 30th January, 1891.

I have the honour to submit my sixteenth annual report on the primary schools in the Westland District.

Thirty-two schools have been in operation during the year ending the 31st December, 1890, and all but those in the southern part of the district have received at least one visit of inspection, besides the visit for the purpose of examination. The total number of children on the school-rolls on the examination day was 1,685, or twenty-two less than the roll-number of the twenty-six schools examined last year; so that, notwithstanding there is an increase of six in the number of schools, there is still a falling-off in the total attendance. This year, however, the decrease is much less than in the year before, when the roll-number was eighty-three less, with two schools more, than

in 1888. The opening of new schools might be expected to increase the roll-number to at least the extent of the average attendance; but it usually happens that some of the scholars have been attending other schools, as at the Haast and the Waiho, the children of which schools were previously taught at Okuru and Waikukupa respectively. Rather unexpected results followed the opening of some of these small schools. The teachers appointed to the Kawhaka and Callaghan Schools were both former pupils at the Goldsbrough School, and their parents are still living in that locality; but upon taking charge of their respective schools they removed the younger members of their families (to the number of nine in all) from the Goldsbrough School. A teacher was also appointed to the Rangiriri School who had also been a pupil at Goldsbrough, and she took away with her three children; so that the attendance at Goldsbrough has been diminished altogether to the extent of a dozen, and the cost of educating these has been thereby doubled. The object aimed at in such cases is partly the securing of some companionship in these solitary situations, and partly the extra capitation gained, to the extent of £5 each per annum. It is not easy to suggest a remedy for this, as the salaries that would be payable to teachers for the ordinary average attendance would be too small to secure the services of male teachers of good character; and female teachers cannot be expected to live by themselves in such lonely situations.

The number of scholars presented in Standards I. to VI. this year was 1,075, or about 64 per cent. of the roll-number. Including Class VII., the percentage of the roll-number above Class P was 66½ per cent, a falling-off of about 1 per cent. on last year's figures. The number of scholars absent from the examination this year was about 3 per cent. of the roll-number, and 5 per cent. of the number presented in standards; or about 2 per cent. in each case less than last year. The number of passes recorded this year is 828, or 80 per cent. of the number actually examined in Standards I. to VI.

* * * * *

Having now handed over the charge of the district to another Inspector, I desire to leave him as much as possible, unbiassed by any adverse criticism of particular schools, leaving only the bare tabulated results to indicate, in conjunction with the "Inspection Reports," the effective condition of each.

As before mentioned, the marks for mental arithmetic, which have hitherto been "bonus" marks, were this year recorded separately, and the subject was treated as an independent pass-subject. This has had the effect of showing more clearly where this very important branch (if indeed it ought not rather to be called the root) of arithmetic has received any amount of intelligent attention.

In writing I notice a marked improvement since the introduction of the "Southern Cross" copybooks, especially in those schools where the subject is properly taught in class, and with plenty of blackboard illustrations; but even in one or two schools where the scholars practically teach themselves the use of these books has led to a much more satisfactory style of writing. The slight falling-off in the subject already referred to as resulting from a severer test would, I am convinced, have been much greater but for the introduction of these copybooks.

The remark in my last report about the danger of a "little knowledge," as shown in the attempts at derivations, seems to have had some good effect, as this year there were very few "random shots" in this part of the grammar paper. The composition, on the whole, exhibits some improvement; the letters of the Fourth Standard were less formal and stereotyped in their beginnings and endings than formerly, the neatly-written address is too frequently absent, it being often crowded up or down into a corner.

Reading continues to be very fairly taught in most of the schools, the smaller ones, being able to devote more time to individual practice, often come up to the best of the larger schools; but in the First Standard the reading may really be better described as recitation, the children being often able "to read" as well with closed books as with open. I have frequently tested this standard by causing the children to read from a book not used in the school; and I think this should always be done, unless it be possible to insist upon two reading-books in this and the Second Standard.

The recitation is also as a rule satisfactory, and particularly so at Ross, Woodstock, Hokitika, and Stafford. At the last-named school the upper standards had got up one of "Park's School Debates," the one selected being that on "Compulsory Education." The scholars were arranged on "Ministerial" and "Opposition" benches, with "Mr. Speaker" to keep order; and the debate throughout was conducted with much spirit and expression. In some schools little or no attention appears to be given to the sense of the pieces recited; a lamentable ignorance of the meaning, for instance, of the expression "noble slain" (in Mrs. Hemans's "Graves of a Household") was given as "workmen;" and this is only one of a number of similar answers to questions on the subject-matter of the piece "specially prepared" for recitation.

As regards class and additional subjects, I have merely recorded the results obtained; and, excepting the larger schools, I consider that the time spent in attempting some of these subjects would be more profitably employed, as far as the scholars are concerned, in acquiring a thorough mastery of the remainder of the programme. I cannot bring myself to brand as idle or incompetent the teachers of small schools, who have made no pretence of attempting every subject of the syllabus, if they have evidently done good work in those which they have undertaken.

Judging from the reports of other Inspectors, I fear I shall be regarded as unorthodox and old fashioned in holding this opinion. In a report which has just reached me, one of the oldest and most experienced of the inspectorate has expressed an opinion that the number of subjects now demanded under the Government regulations need not be felt as oppressive by the teachers, "as an examiner who knows his business will always make allowances in proportion to the quantity of additional matter exacted."

The expression quoted seems (if I understand it properly) to advocate a relaxation of the requirements in all subjects in proportion to the number of subjects demanded; and it appears to me that such a course would be likely to discourage thoroughness in what I cannot but regard as the more important subjects of a primary school course for the sake of acquiring a smattering "of all;" and to carry out the principle to its logical conclusion the addition of half a dozen fresh subjects to the present syllabus would so far relax the requirements of the examiner as to render the examination a mere matter of form, or what the late Inspector O'Sullivan styled "an organised hypocrisy." In large schools, with several adult teachers on the staff, the whole requirements of the programme can be satisfied without any relaxation of the examiner's demands in the pass-subjects, and in such schools "fair to good" work can be and is accomplished in the class and additional subjects; but in all small schools, with only one or two teachers, and with the full complement of classes, I believe it is, under ordinary circumstances, impossible. Of course when, as sometimes happens, a teacher of a small school is an enthusiast in science or music or any other subject, that subject will be successfully treated, but very few men can ride more than one hobby. In the majority of small country schools the teaching of elementary science consists in causing the children to commit to memory the contents of some text-book, and, in this district, at any rate, is seldom supplemented or illustrated by experiment.

The course I have always followed had for its end, first, the encouragement of good sound teaching in the pass-subjects, with sufficient encouragement for the teaching of the class, and additional subjects, in the shape of the annual examination reports, where the actual achievement of each school in those subjects is carefully recorded. It is only when a school has failed to give satisfactory proof of proficiency in the pass-subjects that the deficiency in any of the class or additional subjects has been made a ground of complaint against a teacher. On the other hand, a rather poor percentage of passes in the former is always condoned for a satisfactory performance of the latter, thus doing away with any temptation to neglect the class-subjects for the purpose of cramming for "passes." It is with very great diffidence that I have ventured to express an opinion opposed to that of a gentleman of such acknowledged ability and long experience as is the writer referred to; but I felt called upon to show why my own practice has been so different from that which appears to me to be recommended in the passage quoted.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS, ETC.

Most of the school buildings belonging to the Board are in a fair state of repair. The worst is undoubtedly the Kumara School, which, notwithstanding the constantly-recurring expenditure in petty repairs, is still in a very unsatisfactory condition. This is in a great measure due to the faulty construction of the building in the first instance—much of the timber used was growing in the forest a day or two before it was worked up, and signs of premature decay are visible in all parts of the structure. I believe the Board would find it more satisfactory and economical to take the execution of all but the most trifling repairs into its own hands, as is done in some other districts; the employment of a trustworthy clerk of works to examine, report upon, and, if necessary, superintend the execution of such works would really be less costly in the end than the system at present followed, as much unnecessary and even useless expenditure might thus be avoided.

Some of the small schools are in want of maps, and many of those supplied to the larger schools from twelve to fifteen years ago are nearly worn out, so that a new supply should be procured to replace them as soon as possible. The admission and attendance registers are too often used by teachers as portfolios, a practice which considerably hastens their destruction. This indicates a want which I have more than once mentioned; and I would again suggest that every school should be supplied with a portfolio or letter-book—the latter preferably—in which could be fastened all circulars, printed regulations of the Board and the department, and any correspondence addressed to the head teacher, as such, which it might be necessary to preserve for future reference, or to hand down from a retiring teacher to his successor.

The attempt to foster habits of thrift amongst the rising generation by means of school savings-banks has not in this district been attended with success, possibly on account of the facilities offered with the same object by the post office savings-banks. There is, as far as I know, but one school savings-bank in Westland and that is at Okarito; and this is entirely due to the voluntary efforts of the teacher. In many other respects this gentleman's influence for good, both by precept and example, has been of inestimable value to the inhabitants, both old and young, of the district in which he has so long lived and worked; and, though his name is absent from the classified list of teachers, he has probably done as much for the cause of true education as if he had been entitled to write A B or C after his name.

Before concluding this, my last, official communication to your Board I desire publicly to tender my hearty thanks to the present and former members of the Boards that have had the control of educational affairs in Westland since 1875, for their uniform courtesy and kindly consideration, as well as for many acts of special kindness. I also wish to express in the same manner my thanks to the teaching staff of Westland for (as a rule) their prompt attention to my official communications, and for the readiness with which they have received and acted upon any recommendations and instructions, having for their object the improvement of school work and the general welfare of primary education in the district.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Westland.

JOHN SMITH.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI. ...	44	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	94	5	1	19	69	14 0
" V. ...	147	11	4	30	102	13 6
" IV. ...	175	11	3	31	130	12 7
" III. ...	213	11	6	38	158	11 8
" II. ...	246	11	7	41	187	10 6
" I. ...	202	4	5	11	182	9 4
Preparatory ...	564	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,685	53	26	170	828	*

* Mean of average age, 12.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 8th April, 1891.

We have the honour to present our annual return of the schools in the North Canterbury Educational District for the year 1890, or, more accurately, for the twelve months preceding the 31st March, 1891.

The first three months (April–June) of this period were occupied in the compilation of statistics, in the preparation of standard examination tests, in the examination of scholarship candidates in Classes C and D, and in paying inspection visits to seventy schools. The short time at our disposal did not permit of the inspection of a larger number. The remaining nine months were occupied in the examination of the schools of the district, in teacher and pupil-teacher examinations, and the examination of scholarship candidates in Classes A and B. Periodical visits were also made to the practising department of the normal school to determine the distribution of the staff of student-teachers there employed. These duties were pursued with a near approach to continuity, generally requiring both day and evening work, often filling up public holidays, and not admitting of any substantial vacation, such as persons engaged in occupations of a similar laborious nature usually enjoy. The intervals of leisure included may, however, be set down as amounting in all to about one fortnight.

All the schools (164) under the Board's control were examined for standard classification. One of these, a new school, was examined twice, but the result of the first examination is omitted. In addition, the Burnham Industrial School, which is not under the Board's control, was examined as in former years on behalf of the Education Department.

The examination schedules of the schools included in the return contained the names of 20,779 children, of whom 13,962, or 67·19 per cent. of the whole, were presented in the standard classes, and 6,817, or 32·81 per cent., in the preparatory division. Of this number, 10,507 passed the standard for which they were presented, and 2,429 failed. The officially-required "percentage of passes," estimated on the total roll-number, is 50·57, and the "percentage of failures," estimated on the number examined for passes in standards with the "exceptions" deducted, is 18·78, the highest and lowest respectively yet attained. The subjects in which an individual record of the proficiency of children is not demanded yield in class-subjects an official percentage of 1·85, and in additional subjects the average marks 57·04, a decrease of 0·26.

The usual full information in regard to subjects, standards, and schools is contained in the appendices to this report. As these are identical in form with the appendices to the reports of the previous year a comparison in any detail may easily be made. The salient features only of the comparison need be referred to here. They are, to a certain extent, numerically represented in the following table :—

Comparative Percentages.	1889.	1890.	Increase.	Decrease.
Presented in classes, Standards IV. to VII.	20·44	22·41	1·97	...
Presented in preparatory division ...	35·01	32·81	...	2·20
Absent of standard class roll ...	3·82	3·25	...	0·57
Excepted of standard class roll ...	3·26	3·39	0·13	...
Passed of class roll, Standards IV. to VI.	66·25	64·45	...	1·80
Passed of class roll, Standards I. to III....	79·02	81·40	2·38	...
Percentage of passes ...	48·39	50·57	2·18	...
Percentage of failures ...	19·20	18·78	...	0·42

The differences in the figures are small, and are not all favourable, but on the whole they mark a further advance in the statistics of examination. We have to congratulate the district on the presentation of a larger proportion in standard classes, in part the result of increasing efficiency in the preparatory divisions; on clear evidences, within and beyond the test of pass results, of

continued improvement in the preparation of the three lowest standards; on a further advance in the proportion of children retained at school beyond the Fourth Standard; on a further reduction in the number absent from examination; and a further slight increase and decrease respectively in the general percentages of passes and failures, which, in the absence of a better, we have to regard the chief criterion of progress. On the other hand, we have mainly to regret that the increase of numbers included in the higher classes is not accompanied by evidences of improved preparation. A falling-off has to be noted in the results obtained in Standard VI. and Standard V. Standard IV. maintains a neutral position. Our general impression of the work done is, here as elsewhere, consistent with the figures submitted. The upper parts of our schools have not been advancing in merit at the same pace as the lower. Even where passes are granted, the preparation of children in Standard V. and Standard VI. too often leaves much to be desired in point of thoroughness. But probably we shall not get much further in the better class of work than we have done, until school government narrows the distance now separating it from perfection, in securing to the stronger and more intelligent teachers the better positions in the service.

The class and additional subjects, with the exception of drawing, receive marks which correspond very closely with those assigned in the previous year. In drawing a maximum of 60 per cent. has been retained for freehand alone. This branch of the subject often shows much merit, and is generally promising. Most schools have this year made a beginning, and many a considerable advance, in geometrical drawing; but, while we recognise the growing importance of the use of the ruler and compasses, we have so far accepted fair proficiency in freehand in granting passes in the subject.

It is now five years since the amended general regulations under which our schools are working came into force, and the present is therefore a convenient opportunity to see how far the successive steps, reported year by year with a singular consistency in the interval, have carried us. From one year to another the results of examination in a large and settled district differ so little that it is difficult for one not thoroughly familiar with the circumstances to recognise the progressive or retrograde movement that is taking place. The small increments or reductions reported may be due to some temporary or accidental causes; but, if a wider interval be taken as the basis of comparison, the more marked characteristics leave no room for conjecture. The following table gives all the information necessary, and includes, as an additional ground of comparison, the same facts for the whole of the colony, according to the latest returns procurable. It may be well to point out that during the period concerned our schools have increased in number from 148 to 164, and the examination roll from 18,650 to 20,779.

Comparative Percentages.	North Canterbury District.				New Zealand.
	1886.	1890.	Increase.	Decrease.	1889.
Presented in classes S4 to S7	17·05	22·41	5·36	...	21·99
Presented in preparatory division	37·36	32·81	...	4·55	35·24
Absent of roll in standard classes	6·73	3·25	...	3·48	3·89
Excepted of roll in standard classes	5·80	3·39	...	2·41	4·06
Passed of class roll, Standards IV. to VI.	52·53	64·45	11·92	...	67·43
Passed of class roll, Standards I. to III.	65·45	81·40	16·95	...	79·32
Percentage of passes	38·61	50·57	11·96	...	48·45
Percentage of failures	29·16	18·78	...	10·38	17·75
Percentage on class-subjects	44·60	45·82	1·22	...	52·1
Additional marks	54·20	57·04	2·84	...	49·8

We cannot of course venture to assume in interpreting these figures that the tests applied by us have been year by year absolutely identical; but we are aware of no material alteration in our standards beyond an increasing strictness in drawing, which is probably common to all our neighbours, and few are likely to accuse us of increasing indulgence in other respects. In figures dealing with presentation, attendance, and success in pass-subjects the progress shown is sufficiently conclusive. In class-subjects a material decline in history is made up in other subjects; but the total reached does not afford much ground for gratification. In additional subjects the separate marks keep much the same relation to each other, and, while showing general improving tendencies, nowhere differ more than one point.

Inspection.—On the scarcely less important matters to which Inspectors especially devote their attention during visits of inspection as distinguished from visits of examination, we have few observations to make. We have seen too little of the schools in their ordinary work-a-day dress. In material appointments their equipment leaves little to be desired, and the provisions in respect of the staff of teachers are exceptionally liberal. There is therefore every opportunity of doing the best work. In attendance the successive annual returns have been going up with steady regularity, and are on a level with the average of the colony; but there are yet some well-favoured neighbourhoods in the country where, in spite of excellent weather, excellent roads, and moderate distances, the registers show an attendance of surprisingly poor quality, especially in the first half of the year. In discipline we do not think our schools are improving. In fact, during the past two years the impression has been deepening on our minds that this all-important matter has suffered from some weakening influences, chief among which is the growing tendency of parents to resent the exercise

of corporal punishment, and a certain amount of apprehension among teachers that frivolous complaints may be seriously entertained by School Committees not fully alive to the necessities of school control.

The Chairman, North Canterbury Education Board.

We have, &c.,

L. B. WOOD, M.A.

W. J. ANDERSON, LL.D.

TABLE A.—PASS-SUBJECTS.

Classes.	Number presented.	Number absent.	Number excepted.	Number failed.	Number passed.	Proportion presented of Total Sch'l-roll.	Proportion passed of Total Sch'l-roll.	No. of Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
Above Stand. VI.	107	...	...	...	...	0.51	...	35	Yrs. m.
Standard VI. ...	677	13	29	196	439	3.26	2.11	115	14 1
" V. ...	1,428	43	60	447	878	6.87	4.23	140	13 3
" IV. ...	2,444	99	94	636	1,615	11.76	7.77	157	12 4
" III. ...	3,211	128	157	740	2,186	15.45	10.52	162	11 4
" II. ...	3,058	87	94	251	2,626	14.72	12.64	160	10 2
" I. ...	3,037	80	35	159	2,763	14.62	13.30	160	9 0
Preparatory ...	6,817	...	...	...	...	32.81	...	...	...
Totals for 1890	20,779	450	469	2,429	10,507	100.00	50.57	164	*

* Mean of average ages, 11 years 8 months.

TABLE B.—PASS-SUBJECTS: PROPORTIONS CALCULATED IN PERCENTAGES.

Classes.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Failed of Sum of Passes and Failures: Percentage of Failures.
Standard VI. ...	1.92	4.28	28.95	64.84	30.87
" V. ...	3.01	4.20	31.30	61.48	33.74
" IV. ...	4.05	3.85	26.02	66.08	28.25
" III. ...	3.99	4.89	23.05	68.08	25.29
" II. ...	2.84	3.07	8.21	85.87	8.72
" I. ...	2.63	1.15	5.23	90.98	5.44
All classes	3.25	3.39	17.53	75.84	18.78

TABLE C.

Class-subjects.	Per- centages.	No. of Schools.	Additional Subjects.	Average Marks.	No. of Schools.
Drawing ...	46.42	90	Repetition and recitation ...	12.3	164
History ...	39.87	161	Drill and exercises ...	11.1	141
Geography ...	56.35	164	Singing ...	10.8	138
Elementary science, object- lessons, &c. ...	41.45	164	Needlework ...	14.1	157
Average of percentage on class-subjects ...	45.82	164	Subject-matter of reading- lessons ...	12.4	164
			Extra drawing ...	6.3	4
			Average of additional marks	57.0	164

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 9th March, 1891.

I have the honour to submit my general report on the schools in this district for the year 1890.

I paid fifty-one inspection visits during the year. The Mount Gay School was being removed to the new site while I was inspecting the schools in its neighbourhood. With its change of position the school has taken the name of Hazelburn, and a side-school to accommodate the children who lived too far from the new school has been opened under the name of Waterfalls. Towards the end of the year new schools were opened at Waitaki, Seadown, and Arundel, and in

January of this year a new school was opened at Hakateramea, in the Sandhurst Township. The number of schools now in operation is fifty-seven.

All the schools except one were examined before Christmas. The following table will show the general results of the examinations :—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes on No. examined.	Average Age.	
							Yrs.	m.
Above Standard VI. ...	66	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	192	6	5	42	139	74.7	13	7
" V. ...	342	19	16	116	191	59.1	13	0
" IV. ...	550	29	25	156	340	65.2	12	0
" III. ...	734	38	46	174	476	68.3	11	0
" II. ...	666	32	31	78	525	82.8	10	0
" I. ...	654	15	9	29	601	94.0	8	11
Preparatory ...	1,585	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals for 1890 ...	4,789	139	132	595	2,272	75.7	...	
Totals for 1889 ...	4,765	133	99	539	2,265	78.8	...	

The number of pupils presented on the examination schedules was 4,789, of whom 66 had already passed the Sixth Standard, 1,585 were in the preparatory classes, and 3,138 belonged to the standard classes. Of the 3,138 presented in the standard classes, 2,999 were at school on the day of examination, and 2,272 passed the standard for which they were presented. This gives a percentage of passes of 75.7, as compared with 78 for last year. The decrease shown here is common to all the standards except the first, in which the percentage of passes has increased from 92 to 94. The official percentage of failures, estimated on the standard class rolls, exclusive of absentees and exceptions, is 20.7, being 1.7 per cent. over the figure for last year. The average percentage in class-subjects is 55, the same as last year, and the average of additional marks has fallen from 54 to 53.

Four years in succession it has been pleasant to me to point out the steady improvement denoted by the gradual rise in the percentage of passes, and, though this year we have experienced a check, it has not come upon us unexpectedly. One of the drawbacks which we have to contend with in a district with so many small schools is the frequent changes of teachers. After two or three years of successful work in a small school our teachers pass on to better charges, either in our own or in other districts, and teachers who have been unsuccessful pass out of our service. During the past year we have had more than the usual number of changes. In eighteen schools the teachers had been less than a year in charge at the time of the annual examinations. In half of these the results were under the average, and in one or two cases they were very poor indeed. With so many schools in an unsettled state for longer or shorter periods during the year, the lowering of the percentages for the whole district was almost certain to follow at the first examination; but I look forward with confidence to the district as a whole regaining if not advancing beyond the position from which it has temporarily receded. Besides the schools that showed bad results which could be directly traced to this cause, nine others failed to get a satisfactory pass. In most of these the teachers will have further opportunity of showing whether it is wise to intrust them with the education of children, the success and happiness of whose lives largely depends on the training they undergo during their brief school course.

READING.—The Board's regulations with regard to the introduction of a uniform set of text-books for this district have been so loyally observed by Committees and teachers that I do not think one school can be found where any other than Chambers's Readers are in use throughout the classes. On the whole they are very well adapted to the requirements of the syllabus, though some objection might be taken to the Second Standard Reader on the ground that it does not afford sufficient reading matter for those who have mastered the earlier books of the course. The reading in the lower standards has improved in fluency and naturalness of tone in all but a few schools. Good reading is by no means uncommon in the upper classes too, and, where defects have had to be pointed out, these have usually arisen from undue haste.

SPELLING.—In this subject more pupils have come to grief than in any other of the pass-subjects. The teachers must accustom themselves and their pupils to perfect accuracy in spelling as the only satisfactory end to be attained in this subject; and if the pupil's own preparation is honest, and the teacher is careful and conscientious in the supervision and correction of all written work, there will be little danger of a school breaking down through weak spelling.

WRITING.—The writing shown in copybooks is usually very fair, and slate-writing in the First and Second Standards is often very good. I have frequently had occasion during my inspection visits to impress on teachers the importance of making the slate-writing of the junior pupils conform to the style of writing which they will be required to practise when they begin to write in copybooks; this might be thought an unnecessary precaution, but I have over and over again seen the pattern-writing on the blackboard quite distinct in style from that of the copybooks in use.

ARITHMETIC.—This subject has been improving year by year, and, except in the Fourth and Fifth Standards, really good results are obtained in most of our schools. The method of introducing new rules and problems through a series of carefully-graduated exercises to be worked mentally

is not employed to the extent that it should be; in fact, in many schools it is utterly neglected. Those teachers who have not yet adopted this method, I strongly advise to make trial of it, and I am sure they will not be long in discovering its advantages.

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION.—Analysis of sentences in the Fifth and Sixth Standards continues to be well done in most of the schools, but the formal parsing is too often meagre and inaccurate in details. In looking through the exercise-books I have come across exercises in analysis and parsing in two or three schools which, though marked "correct" by the teachers, were so ridiculously wrong that I could only account for the marking on the supposition that the teachers were ignorant of the subject with which they were dealing. Such ignorance is certainly exceptional; the pity is that it should exist at all. The grammar of the Third Standard was well done on the whole, but in the Fourth Standard it could still be much improved. A good deal of practice in composition continues to be given in most of our schools, and in some this subject is systematically taught; but I cannot say that the exercises given in at the examination show any distinct advance over those of previous years.

GEOGRAPHY.—In the majority of our schools I have been able to award very good marks for the Second Standard geography, and, though the Fourth Standard pupils did not always make quite so good an appearance in this subject, in only a very few instances had I to assign less than half value for their work. The pass work in the Fifth and Sixth Standards was less satisfactory, but in the Third Standard it was often excellent and rarely inferior. Map-drawing has not improved, chiefly, I think, for want of sufficient practice under strict supervision all through the year. After children have carefully copied a map from the atlas about half a dozen times, most of them can draw a very fair map from memory; and I think it is because the teachers rely too much on the ease with which the children can accomplish enough to pull them through their examination that excellence is so rarely attained.

HISTORY.—The introduction of Blackwood's "Short Stories from English History" for use in the Third Standard has made the lessons in history for those just beginning the subject more attractive, and the facts less fugitive than they were, when the children had to depend for their materials on "notes" and oral teaching. Both in this and the higher standards the examination in history was oral, and the teacher was in most cases given a share in questioning the class on some portion of the work professed. The quality of the answering was generally good or bad according to the teacher's skill in questioning, and his idea of what constitutes a good answer; for children are not slow in discerning with how much or how little their teachers will be satisfied, and they adapt themselves to their circumstances. The teachers who are skilful questioners, and who encourage their pupils to give full, independent, and well-expressed answers, and habitually insist on getting these instead of fragmentary outbursts from the class as a whole, are not in the majority.

DRAWING.—Freehand drawing was usually good in the First and Second Standards. Owing chiefly to laxity of supervision, but partly, I fear, to intentional neglect on the teacher's part of the rules printed on every page of the drawing-books, the pupils in some schools had made a very free use of mechanical aids in producing their *freehand* figures. In this as in other things honesty will be found the best policy. Whether the drawing be good or bad let it be what it purports to be; crooked lines are to be preferred to crooked morality. In almost every school a fair amount of geometrical drawing had been overtaken in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Standards. A great many pupils, however, found it a matter of extreme difficulty to explain the working of very simple problems with which they were supposed to be acquainted.

SCIENCE AND OBJECT-LESSONS.—All our teachers make an effort to satisfy the requirements of the syllabus in these subjects. The examination was always oral, and in order that the classes might show at their best the teachers were asked to share in the examination. The average percentage of marks gained was much under that obtained in any other class-subject.

ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS. (Marks 0 to 20).—*Drill*: The average number of marks obtained for drill was 10. In only four schools of the forty-one in which it was professed were very good marks awarded. *Singing*: Singing was taught in thirty schools, and the average number of marks obtained was 11. In all the large schools the children sing very nicely. *Needlework*: In the forty-one schools in which sewing is taught the average number of marks awarded was 15.

The behaviour of the pupils as far as it has come under my notice during my visits to the schools has always been satisfactory, and in only a few instances could exception be taken to the order and discipline maintained in the schools. With regard to the teachers I can assure the Board that as a body they perform their arduous duties with faithfulness and zeal, and that many of them, year after year, achieve such success as comes to those alone who are skilled and enthusiastic workers.

I have, &c.,

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

The Chairman, South Canterbury Education Board.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Education Office, Dunedin, 21st March, 1891.

We have the honour to submit the following as our report for the year 1890.

During the year all the schools in the Otago District were examined, and all but nine were visited for inspection. Five of the latter were closed when the Inspector was visiting the district in which they are situated. Port Moeraki school, which was opened towards the close of the year, was neither inspected nor examined.

The following table shows the chief statistics of examination for the year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes in Standards.	Average Age.
							Yrs. m.
Infants ...	7,961	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard I. ...	2,807	35	35	204	2,533	90	9 0·3
Standard II. ...	3,009	76	107	265	2,561	85	10 2
Standard III. ...	3,097	91	146	559	2,301	74	11 2·3
Standard IV. ...	2,562	82	98	451	1,931	75	12 2·7
Standard V. ...	1,750	53	78	392	1,227	70	13 1·2
Standard VI. ...	1,046	19	31	150	846	81	13 11·3
Above Standard VI. ...	198	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	22,430	356	495	2,021	11,399	...	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 7·3 months.

There were presented on the examination schedules 22,430 pupils, of whom 14,271 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards, being 98 more than the corresponding number for last year. In all 13,915 were present, and were examined in Standards I. to VI. Of these 11,399 passed the standard for which they were presented, a result which gives 82 as the percentage of passes in standards. Last year this percentage was 84, and it was 80 for the two previous years. The percentage of failures in standards (the exceptions being omitted for this computation) was 14, as against 13·8 for 1889, 15½ for 1888, and 18 for 1887.

The anomaly of the percentage of passes in standards having declined more than the percentage of failures in standards has risen is due to the large increase in the number of exceptions, which has advanced from 393 for 1889 to 495 in the present year. The increase is sufficiently remarkable, and is partly attributable to the prevalence of *la grippe* during the early months of the year. The number of exceptions has from the first shown a tendency to increase, and this has doubtless had its influence in swelling the total for the year.

The average percentage of marks for class-subjects was 54—a figure slightly lower than that for several previous years, and the average of marks for additional subjects was 69.

It is of course disappointing to find the results in class-subjects year by year suffering a slight decline, even though the falling-off does not imply any serious want of efficiency in the teaching of these subjects. It is quite unreasonable to expect, as the Minister of Education does (see Thirteenth Annual Report of the Minister of Education, page v.), that the percentage of marks given for class-subjects should exceed the percentage of passes in standards, or even that it should come near that percentage. If all the children presented passed in standards—i.e., if 100 per cent. of them passed—this would mean no more than that all had gained at least 60 per cent. of the attainable marks. But all do not gain 60 per cent. of the marks; not more than 79 or 80 per cent. of them do so. If account be taken of those who fail, the average of the marks gained in pass-subjects will be somewhere about 60 per cent., since the lower marks of those who fail will probably be counter-balanced by the higher marks of those who pass well. From these considerations it follows that the percentage of passes in standards (82 in this district for this year) does not imply a level of efficiency of instruction very much higher than does the percentage of marks (54) assigned for class-subjects. It is quite plain that no valid comparison can be made between a percentage of passes in standards, which shows only what fractional part of the whole number of children examined succeeded in passing, and a percentage of marks for pass-subjects, which shows what fractional part of the total attainable marks had on the average been gained. If passing meant gaining full marks in each of the pass-subjects the comparison would hold, but it evidently means nothing of the kind. In our judgment a percentage of 60 in the marks given for class-subjects should be considered very satisfactory, and even the more modest percentage of 54 shows a fair average of efficiency in the teaching of them.

The percentage of failures exceeds that for last year by the small fraction 0·2, a result more favourable than we had expected, for there have been in operation several causes tending to raise it. Drawing is now a pass-subject in Standards I. to V., and in Standard IV. and Standard V. freehand drawing and practical plane geometry are both required. A good many pupils were found to have done little or even none of the latter division of the subject, and we had no option but to fail them in drawing. A somewhat higher proficiency in reading was demanded in Standards I. to III. than in previous years. Children who had read only a single book were, in every case, tested in a book which they had not before seen. This course we adopted with the full sanction of the Minister of Education, and it no doubt led to a trifling increase of failures in this subject in the lower classes. For this purpose we chiefly used Nos. I. and II. of Longman's New Readers, and Blackie's Century Readers, and we intend next year to use, if necessary, Nos. I. and II. of another series of English reading-books. Besides all this there was a great prevalence of sickness for several months just before the examinations began in the different school districts. When allowance is made for all these circumstances, the results of the work of the schools for the year may be considered quite as good as those of any preceding one.

In every standard except Standard VI. there has been a decline in the percentage of standard passes. This is chiefly due to a slight increase in the number of pupils who were absent from examination, and a very considerable increase in the number of exceptions.

A rough idea of the relative number of schools in which the percentage of failures was low, moderate, or high may be gathered from the following table:—

			Percentage of Failures.
22 schools (equal to 12 per cent. of the total number)	...	...	0 to 5
31 schools (equal to 16 per cent. of the total number)	...	...	6 to 10
57 schools (equal to 30 per cent. of the total number)	...	...	11 to 20
40 schools (equal to 21 per cent. of the total number)	...	...	21 to 30
20 schools (equal to 10 per cent. of the total number)	...	...	31 to 40
13 schools (equal to 7 per cent. of the total number)	...	...	41 to 50
8 schools (equal to 4 per cent. of the total number)	...	...	51 to 62

On the whole, a percentage of failures that much exceeds twenty may be held to indicate an unsatisfactory condition of instruction, and one exceeding thirty very inefficient instruction. In the former category there are a good many schools, and in the latter no fewer than forty-one. But a just estimate of efficiency will not altogether accommodate itself to these hard and fast lines, since well-conducted and fairly-successful schools occasionally rank among those having a relatively high percentage of failures.

The average ages at which the several standards were passed compare very favourably with those of previous years. Standard I. was passed at a trifle over nine years, and Standard VI. at a trifle under fourteen, while the intervals between the ages of passing the several standards approximate closely to a year. We notice that in the Wellington District Standard I. was passed last year (1889) at an average age of eight years and six months. It is more to be wished than to be expected that the pupils of our schools will soon pass Standard I. at such an early age as that. But so long as the age does not exceed nine years there is really but little reason to complain of the progress made in the infant classes.

Persons interested in the public schools of the colony no doubt often wonder how far the passing of Standard IV. (the standard that would be the compulsory one if compulsory education were really enforced) fits a boy for the duties of citizenship and of life. To this mental query, those best acquainted with the working of our system will hardly be able to give a very favourable answer. Such a boy has no mastery of reading. He will be unable to read with ease, pleasure, or understanding a newspaper or magazine article, an average romance, or an ordinary biographical or historical work. Much less will he be able to read and understand discussions on the chief political and social questions of the day. He can hardly hope to add to his scanty store of knowledge without deliberate and continued study of reading. In fact, the key to knowledge, the power of reading with understanding, is not yet within his grasp. Such a boy will be able to indite a very simple letter, but he will hardly know how to divide his sentences or to spell any but the most common words, and he will be quite unable to explain any subject that is even moderately complex or abstruse. He will be much better equipped in arithmetic, which he should be able to apply with little difficulty to the making out of accounts, and to working all the ordinary calculations of practical life. He can write fairly but not quickly, and he can draw a little. He will have a fair general knowledge of the geography of our colony, and a more slight acquaintance with that of the Australian continent, but will know nothing of the Mother-country and the world at large, beyond the names and positions of the countries and capitals of the world, and the principal seas, gulfs, mountains, rivers, lakes, capes, straits, islands, and peninsulas on the map of the world. Of interesting and useful geographical knowledge he will thus have very little indeed, and he will go forth into the world without even a rudimentary acquaintance with the United Kingdom and the extra-Australian members of the great empire of which he is to become a citizen. His studies in history will have been chiefly of use in improving his power of reading, and perhaps in gaining him a slight glimpse into an ancient and obsolete social organization as unlike that of our own day as can well be. Besides all this, he should have learned a good deal about common objects, the more important and useful animals and plants, and such other topics as are treated of in object-lessons. But, mainly through faults of teaching, his training in observation will be of little value. A careful consideration of these attainments reveals several very grave defects. The mastery of reading is evidently much below what is indispensable for every social unit. The failure to gain it in a much higher degree is due to several causes, the chief being the growing ease of the reading-books that are now used in our schools, the inadequate amount of matter which the regulations prescribe to be read, and the needs of pupils who leave school on passing Standard IV. being but little considered in the framing of the standard course of instruction. For such boys a great deal of reading in the lower standards is most needful, and it would be well to provide for it even at the expense of all instruction in history, and by sacrificing some of the drawing of Standard IV. Higher proficiency in reading and understanding what is read would greatly favour the acquisition of a wider knowledge of spelling, and would in a still higher degree promote the power of expression through the art of composition. It is above all in geography that the course of instruction fails to meet the requirements of pupils of the class we are now considering. The capes, and straits, and islands, and peninsulas of the world, and much of the rest of the catalogue, might, with manifest advantage, give place to such a knowledge as can be gained of our own empire, in its central isles and distant scattered members, with perhaps a brief outline of Europe and the United States thrown in. So little real knowledge of history can be gained at this early age (twelve years, on the average) that it would, we think, be a distinct gain to discard it altogether, and devote the time thus set free to gaining a further training in purely English studies—in reading, spelling, and composition.

These changes, which we believe will commend themselves to most friends of education, could be made with a stroke of the Minister's pen, and they are of such a nature that they need not seriously interfere with the best arrangements for the instruction of children who can devote two or three additional years to their education at the public schools. It is as easy as it is common to expect of school children more than can be attained; and not very much can be fairly expected of boys and girls whose school training ends at a little over twelve years. But when every allowance

has been made on this account we think it remains true that more could and should be done for those who pass out into the working world at this early age.

To guard against possible misunderstanding, we must distinctly point out that the foregoing remarks are not in any sense an estimate of the efficiency of the teaching of the work of Standard IV. They are designed to set forth the results in training and knowledge gained by the pupils when the teaching has been as good as can be reasonably expected. The defects noted are not as a rule consequences flowing from inferior teaching, but the normal outcome of the system as it acts in the case of those whose education ends on passing Standard IV. The best remedy for these defects would evidently be to substitute Standard V. for Standard IV. as the compulsory one, but at present this change seems to be beyond the range of what is practicable.

It will not be out of place to consider briefly the average attainments of pupils who pass Standard VI. They, too, though they have a ready knowledge of the class-books read in school, have not the easy mastery of reading that is desirable; and this is no doubt a main reason for current complaints about their having so little love of reading or thirst for knowledge. So long as they find reading, and the acquisition of knowledge that reading promotes, a difficult task, they will be repelled from them, and their interests will take other and less improving directions. There are, however, for these complaints various other obvious reasons that have nothing to do with school training, but arise out of the social and material surroundings of all classes, and especially of the less wealthy. These are difficult to counteract, and of necessity they greatly aggravate the evils that flow from the imperfect knowledge and appreciation of English which the school training gives. The strengthening of the reading in the lower standards could not fail to exert an excellent influence on the higher ones, and pupils passing Standard VI. might then hope to embark with fair ease and some measure of satisfaction on a course of improving and informing study.

In writing and arithmetic the finished public-school pupil is on the whole satisfactorily equipped. His arithmetical training to be sure is general, but he should have no difficulty in applying his knowledge in any special direction that may be required. His power of original thought is of course very limited, for he is only about fourteen years of age. His command of the art of composition is at best on a level with his command of reading, and the close dependence of the one upon the other is sufficiently evident. If he is to compose better he must read more and get a better and wider acquaintance with the art as practised by others. We see no prospect of any substantial improvement in this direction without a previous and corresponding improvement in the power of reading and in the literary study of what is read, and we have little doubt that progress in these directions would react powerfully and favourably on the art of expression. Here, therefore, as in the lower standards, the path to improvement lies in a more extended course of reading. The value of technical grammar as an educative agency has been very variously estimated, and the traditional position accorded to it in elementary education may be hard to justify. It is certainly in part an aid to composition, and in most of its stages it imparts an admirable simple training in the type of reasoning that relates to classification and definition. In particular the analysis of sentences in its most general features, but in these only, is of great value for understanding the construction of long or complex sentences, and is a true handmaid and minister to composition. Serving, as it does, these functions, the prominence given to grammar in the school course is probably justified, and the time devoted to its study fairly rewarded. Of the studies in geography and history little need be said. The scope of geographical study is from the nature of the case slight, and the wording of the regulations relating to it tends to make it mechanical. There is nothing to prevent intelligent teaching and there is nothing to encourage it. The limitations imposed by the age of the pupils, and the time available for its treatment, render it impracticable to make the teaching much deeper or wider, and in these circumstances its value for education and as information is likely to remain inconsiderable. History is chiefly of use for the information it conveys, but even in this respect the time devoted to its study confers but little advantage on the finished public-school pupil. The wide scope of the course, dealing as it does with the long period from 1066 to the present time, makes it impossible, certainly in the smaller schools and probably in all, to do justice to the events of the last hundred years, and to the great political, economical, industrial, and social changes and developments that they have witnessed. A Sixth Standard pupil knows much less than is desirable, and is easily attainable, of the constitution of his country and the government organization under which he lives, and of the nature and growth of the institutions he sees around him. To expect that he should know all this is of course ambitious, but he could certainly learn a great deal of it, if the course of study were deliberately framed with a view to that end. Were the course of reading and study mainly confined to the last hundred years much valuable information on these topics could certainly be acquired, even though the instruction were given only to the two highest standards. Under such an arrangement as this implies, the finished public-school pupil would be much more likely to take a continued interest in such studies after leaving school, and as a citizen and an elector to exert a healthy influence on the industrial and social development of this new land. But, so far as our knowledge goes, text-books that would adequately serve this end are still to be written.

The only other subjects in which the finished public-school pupil is trained are drawing, singing, and science, with sewing in the case of female pupils. Of drawing we need only say that drawing from objects appears to be unduly neglected, while plane geometrical drawing receives a disproportionate amount of attention. It may well be doubted if the course of instruction is even tolerably adapted to the needs of such trades and arts as are established in our midst. The love of song and music is a moral influence of great power in a community, and, on the whole, the school training fosters it to a greater extent than is generally supposed. The number of those who learn to sing even simple music at sight is, indeed, inconsiderable, but a taste for music is being widely fostered. The weight of the course of instruction meanwhile prevents the attainment of more than this, and one of the happiest consequences that would flow from the lightening of its burden would be greater scope for the cultivation of this catholic refining agency.

Under the head of science the finished public-school pupil has gained a large amount of useful knowledge, but of training to observe and experiment, and to reason on the data so obtained, he will rarely get much. This is in no way the fault of the course of instruction contemplated, but is mainly due to the want of sufficient knowledge and of enthusiasm on the part of the teachers, few of whom take up the subject seriously. Want of appliances for the proper study of scientific subjects, and the want of suitable text-books to be placed in the hands of the pupils, also count for a good deal. It seems to us unreasonable to expect children of fourteen to make substantial advances in any single branch of scientific knowledge; the time available for teaching it is too short for that. But something of value should be done in rousing intelligent curiosity, and awakening a lasting interest in scientific inquiry and its results. That these ends are not achieved in a higher degree is on the whole far from surprising, and it will most likely take years of progress, under more favourable circumstances than now exist, before they can be fully attained.

The older girls are generally very proficient in manual needlework, but very few learn, and many are never taught, to cut out and fix simple articles of apparel. Extreme ornamentation of underclothing is carried to a point that is absurd, and simplicity of taste in this domain threatens to disappear. These extravagances should be pruned, and the art of the homely dressmaker be more sedulously fostered.

A review of this summary of the attainments of pupils who have gone through the entire course of public-school education, while it discloses much that is highly satisfactory, reveals some defects which all lovers of education would gladly see remedied. The most obvious of these—the incomplete mastery of reading; the backwardness in composition which is one of its effects; the comparative ignorance about the chief political, social, and industrial arrangements of our own time; and the defective training in the art of observing and of describing and reasoning about what is seen—these defects to a large extent admit of remedy; and we know of no serious obstacle to the immediate application of remedial measures. The course of instruction would, indeed, have to be amended and in part curtailed; but this, instead of being an evil, would allow of a better educative training being given in all the higher standards.

Before leaving this topic we must again point out that our aim in dealing with it has not been to estimate the efficiency of the teaching in the two highest standards, which, except where the contrary is explicitly stated, has been throughout assumed to be good, but to summarise to the best of our knowledge the results of the working of the public system of elementary education in its entirety.

We have, so far, referred only to the intellectual and manual equipment of pupils who leave school after passing Standard IV., or at the end of the complete course. The moral training in habits of neatness order and attention, in industry and application, in truthfulness and honest work, and in mutual forbearance and good behaviour is on the whole as good as can be expected. In all these directions the schools, beyond question, exercise a great and steady influence. It is true that orchards are robbed, and rough boys sometimes behave badly in the streets, but, as a rule, the influence of the schools bears directly against all such practices, and that is all that can be reasonably expected of them.

There is no great occasion to refer in detail to the teaching of the various subjects during the past year. The visits of inspection supply much material for reflection and criticism, but it is best dealt with in colloquy or correspondence with the teachers. We shall, therefore, content ourselves with one or two remarks.

The excellent plan for establishing school libraries that has lately been recommended to headmasters by the Minister of Education (at the suggestion of a Canterbury teacher) deserves, and we hope will receive, a fair trial. In two or three schools it has been found to work very well, and, if judiciously carried out, it should do much to encourage a love of reading. To do this should be a distinct aim with all who are intrusted with the training of the more advanced pupils, and a workable scheme like this should be accorded a hearty welcome. So far as we know, the only Otago school in which the habit of reading has been encouraged for many years past is the High Street School. The headmaster there (Mr. Park) has always taken a warm interest in the excellent school library which he has created, and hundreds of children, he informs us, have through his exertions acquired a taste for reading and study. Probably the difficulty of providing books has prevented others from following so good an example, and the chief merit of the scheme recommended by the Minister lies in its getting over this difficulty. No doubt the chief reason why the elder children read so little is the preposterous amount of unnecessary home lessons that is still, in spite of continued remonstrance, prescribed in so many schools. This is, we think, largely a result of thoughtlessness on the part of the teachers, who, as their frequent public discussions abundantly testify, are becoming more and more prone to regard the passing of standards and the gaining of marks as the be-all and end-all of the school system, rather than the adequate training of the young for the duties, the responsibilities, and the rational enjoyment of life.

During the year we have paid a good deal of attention to the intelligence of the geographical teaching in the higher standards, and where time could be had examined the work orally as well as in writing. We purpose to continue this practice as opportunity offers, for oral examination is very necessary to prevent the teaching from running in the somewhat narrow and mechanical groove which examination on paper encourages.

The answers given to such a question as this—Point out the four most important seaports on the German Ocean—clearly show that the geography of each country is taught by itself, while comparison of one country with another is almost wholly overlooked. In answering this question the great seaport of London was nearly always ignored, and small places like Ostend and Yarmouth were very commonly included in the list selected. We cite this as a readily-understood illustration of the narrowness of the teaching, and of the absence of a large and comparative treatment of the subject. Even such an important and elementary matter as the significance of the lines of latitude and longitude is often overlooked, and every second pupil is puzzled to make out from the map

whether Hokitika on the west coast of New Zealand lies east or west of Dunedin on the east coast. It is perhaps in some measure a result of the weight of the syllabus that in so many schools a knowledge of the contents of the text-book is all that is aimed at in the teaching of geography. Supplementary teaching of wider scope and livelier interest certainly does not in our schools occupy the place it should, and the treatment is proportionately lacking in educative value.

The condition of the school buildings and premises is generally satisfactory, but very little is being done to ornament or improve the school grounds by planting or gardening. It is much to be regretted that the country teachers do not take more interest in these matters, as a little encouragement from them would generally induce the Committees to make permanent improvements for ornament or shelter. Children's gardens are occasionally seen, but only where the teacher sets them the example by keeping a nice garden. Much could be done to form the taste in this direction if shelter from winds were provided, and if the teachers would interest themselves more in the extra-mural employments and interests of their scholars. The constant changing of teachers militates very strongly against any improvement in this direction.

A special report on the work of the district high schools has been already submitted to the Board. Considering the very limited staff of these schools, the quantity and quality of the work done in them are really admirable. We refer to them here only to point out the unnecessary prominence they give to mathematics as compared with English. It is very desirable that the systematic study of composition, with the aid of a good text-book, should find a place in the English course, while the reading of classical English works should embrace a fair amount both of prose and of poetry. The second part of the typical prose extracts, published at the Clarendon Press, would supply varied prose reading for a series of years, and in addition to a selection from this a suitable complete play of Shakespeare, or any of the poems edited for school use and published in Macmillan's series, should not be beyond the power of the pupils who attend the higher classes of these schools. To make room for this development of English study, the scope of the mathematical teaching would have to be narrowed, and this can be done without inconvenience.

We have constantly thrust on our notice the unsuitable line of study adopted for the pupils who remain at the ordinary public schools after passing Standard VI.—the pupils of the so-called Standard VII. class. Latin and algebra are nearly always taken up by them, even when they intend to leave school finally a year or eighteen months after passing Standard VI. Now, the little they learn in this time of either of these subjects can be of hardly any use to them, while the algebra is for the most part a repetition in a more general form of the long training they have already had in arithmetic. It would be better if pupils who do not intend to go forward to the higher schools did not take up either of these subjects, but devoted their time to advanced English, including the study of such a book as the English Composition in Dr. Smith's series, mensuration of plane surfaces (if boys), advanced drawing, elementary geometry, and some suitable course of lessons in science or domestic economy. The study of these subjects would undoubtedly profit them much more than does that of a little Latin or French or even a good deal of algebra. The case of pupils who mean to go forward to higher schools is different, and they might very well take both Latin and algebra. But on the whole, very few pupils in the class above Standard VI., except in a few schools in and around Dunedin, contemplate an advance to any higher educational institution.

In conclusion, we willingly bear testimony to the fidelity and zeal of the Board's teachers as a body. There are those who do not succeed in their work as well as we could desire, but even they labour with excellent intentions, and are rarely without the desire to improve.

We have, &c.,

D. PETRIE,
WM. TAYLOR, } Inspectors.
P. GOYEN,

The Chairman, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 20th March, 1891.

We have the honour to submit our general report on the schools in the Southland Education District for the year 1890.

WORK OF THE YEAR.—Of the 111 schools in operation at the end of the year, 105 had been open for twelve months or over, and each of these was examined in standards. Of the six new schools established during the year, only two were visited for examination—viz., those at Mataura Island and Flint's Bush. The others were of too recent erection to stand the test of a formal examination. It was found advisable to make a change in the date of the standard examination in the case of certain schools; and accordingly all the schools in Lake County, as well as those at Gordon and Ferndale, were visited twice. The total number of examination visits made during the year is thus 119. A large share of time outside of school hours had necessarily to be spent in the work of examining and valuing the papers handed in by the pupils, and in making out detailed reports for the information of the Board, Committees, and teachers.

The work of inspection has been fully overtaken. Ninety-eight unannounced visits were made, and an inspection report on each school was submitted to the Board. One or two schools in outlying districts were inspected and examined on the same day.

In addition to the time devoted to the examination and inspection of schools, no inconsiderable portion of the year was occupied in the preparation of standard test cards, in visiting new districts with a view to the establishment of additional schools, in preparing for and conducting the examination of pupil-teachers and scholarship candidates, in compiling official statistics, in writing special reports, in supervising the teachers' examination, and in attending to many other duties incidental to the inspectorate.

EXAMINATION RESULTS.—The following table exhibits at one view the examination statistics for the year :—

Table I.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI. ...	51	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	237	7	12	39	179	14 4
" V. ...	600	25	50	175	350	13 8
" IV. ...	1,051	42	81	220	708	12 7
" III. ...	1,333	58	103	309	863	11 5
" II. ...	1,220	36	39	74	1,071	10 3
" I. ...	1,223	37	19	67	1,100	9 3
Preparatory ...	3,184	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	8,899	205	304	884	4,271	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 11 months.

The total number of children presented for examination is substantially the same as last year, the apparent increase being explained by the fact already mentioned, that twelve schools were examined twice during the year. Of the 5,664 pupils entered for examination in standards, 4,271 were successful, 884 failed, 304 were excepted, and 205 were absent. If excepted scholars and absentees are omitted from the calculation, the percentage of failures is 17. The average percentage of marks for class-subjects is 55, and the average additional marks 57.

EFFICIENCY.—The Board may be congratulated on the general efficiency of the schools under its jurisdiction. Not more than four or five can be cited as being inefficiently managed, and these not so much from want of effort and will on the part of the teachers as from want of ability. A goodly number are under first-class management, and, while there are all grades, in happily diminishing numbers towards the bottom of the scale of efficiency, no case of absolute neglect has come under our observation during the last twelve months. Suggestions pertaining to improved methods and management are cordially received by teachers, though they are not always readily and persistently acted on. For example, the mistress of an important school being advised at a visit of inspection to teach her classes the simple turnings, at the next appearance of the Inspector gave the order, "Children, face the window." There are three windows in the class-room!

The frequent and absolute collapse of Standard I. classes at examination calls for special remark. There is no good reason why every child presented for examination in Standard I. should not pass; the only requirement is thoroughness. It is to be feared that parents, eager to see their children pass the First Standard, and forgetful of the handicap they are thereby putting on their children and on the teacher at future examinations, do not leave the teacher free to act where his judgment should be frankly accepted.

METHODS.—Progress in this direction, though conspicuous in the case of a few teachers only, is steady, and in a measure general. In not a few schools, however, the teaching is characterised by a certain aimlessness of purpose and fruitlessness of result, which arise from an evident want of conscious method such as is evolved from the studied apprehension of the best means for securing given ends. The necessity for an ever-recurring appeal to the first principles of their art, to the maxims regulating the selection of effective examples and illustrations, to all that gives tone and colour to their life's work cannot be too strongly urged on all engaged in the cause of education. Books on method and management supply many useful hints, which become valuable in proportion as they are successfully carried into practice; but these, good as far as they go, are but poor substitutes for a systematic study of logic, of mental science, and of the history of education. The time cannot be far distant when a knowledge of these subjects will be demanded by the Education Department at the examination for teachers' certificates, which, as issued at present, are a guarantee for a certain amount of knowledge, but next to none for adequate ideas of the foundation of knowledge, and for the most improved modes of imparting it.

MANAGEMENT.—What with teaching, supervision and correction of work, register-keeping, and supervision of pupils during recess, teachers have a very busy day of it. In a well-conducted school each of these demands on the teacher's time follows the other with unvarying regularity. We notice, however, with some anxiety, a tendency to cut out the morning and the afternoon recess, which tendency we consider a grave mistake, for experience has shown us over and over again that what is lost in time is gained in intensity of work. There is an endless demand on the energies of the teacher, especially when he conducts, single-handed, a school of five or six standards, with infant classes. The infants, as a matter of course, receive the smallest share of attention; and this we hold to be an open sore in our public-school system. The evil fruits of this almost enforced neglect become painfully apparent in the standard classes, into which the children often import a pernicious legacy of inattention and idle habits. The hand of the infant trainer is often distinctly traceable for good or for evil not only in the First and Second Standards, but even in the Third and Fourth. As a pleasing contrast to this state of affairs, we note the establishment and efficient management of kindergarten classes in both the South and Middle schools. Many country teachers also, knowing that in proportion as they cherish or neglect their infant classes they will make or mar their school, supply their pupils with a variety of interesting object-work calculated to train the intellect through the senses.

CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.—These cannot be said to receive adequate treatment in the schools of this district, being frequently handled by makeshift methods, and relegated to odd corners in the time-table. Science and object-lessons are so often taken up in a half-hearted manner by unaided teachers that we sometimes wish we could recommend their withdrawal from the list of subjects taught. From teachers of better-staffed schools, however, a more ardent and exhaustive handling may reasonably be expected; and, hereafter, the distribution of subjects over a

three years' course (see syllabus, regulation 19), which some have overlooked, will be uniformly demanded. In many schools only a modicum of success has been achieved in the teaching of history. It is not uncommonly the examiner's lot to put a series of questions to a class with no better result than a vacant stare from the examinees. It is really astonishing how an interesting little book like "Blackwood's Short Stories" should be in the hands of a Standard III. class for a whole year to so little purpose. Again, there is perhaps no part of the school programme to which interesting objective methods are more easily applicable than to Standard II. geography, and yet, to take one example from several, a lesson given by the mistress of an important school consisted of two or three definitions written on the blackboard, copied by the children in an irregular hand much too small for the class, learned at home, and repeated next day; this too in a school with mountain, island, stream, and sea all in view. Singing has received much attention during the year, and the number of schools in which it is not taught is now very small. In most of the large schools it is taught with considerable zeal and skill, though some teachers, eschewing the drudgery inseparable from intelligent training, are content to teach melodies only. The language of the select pieces of poetry is nearly always well remembered, but the mode of delivery is quite often a mechanical sing-song, the pupils, taking their cue from the metre, and appearing quite oblivious that their modulation is not in keeping with the sense, produce little else than an unmeaning jingle. It is, of course, far otherwise in schools where only very few selected pieces are presented for examination, but where these few, besides being thoroughly assimilated as to matter, are rendered with natural expression.

PASS-SUBJECTS.—Under this head there is little to say. The high percentage of passes gained vouches in a general way for the quality of the work; indeed, success here is so much magnified as to almost wholly overshadow the importance of class and additional subjects. It may be noted that during the past year a considerable number of pupils failed in reading through inability to explain the language used in their text-books. It is of no avail to use mere synonyms, lists of which are found at the end of lessons. Pupils should have such a comprehension of the meaning of words as to be able to use them in more than one setting.

ADMINISTRATION.—During the year the new regulations affecting pupil-teachers have been brought into operation. Though it seems a hardship that, by regulation of the Board, a pupil-teacher, after serving it for four years, should, at the expiration of that term, be practically cut adrift, yet the wisdom of the resolution is abundantly proved by the skill and experience that these pupil-teachers, fresh from the better-class schools, carry with them to country districts, more or less remote, to which they may be appointed. Headmasters, knowing that the germ of the teaching power of the district is nurtured by them, cannot fail to be deeply interested in the practical skill and class management of their trainees.

Most Committees, after an inspection visit, carry out suggested improvements with a minimum of delay; from among many we gladly instance the Committees of West Plains, Dipton, and Clifton. On the other hand we fear that some are either culpably inert or altogether unsolicitous of the well-being of the schools under their charge.

In preparing for the standard examinations pupils use one reading-book only. This may be considered a satisfactory amount in standards higher than the Second, and in all standards in schools where the teacher is unaided; but in other cases there is ample time to cover more ground. It is unfair to the children and to the interests of education that a book easily prepared in six months should be kept in the pupils' hands for a whole year. We are accordingly inclined to recommend that, in all schools where there are more teachers than one, two reading-books should be used in Standards I. and II., of which books one only shall be presented for examination in spelling and knowledge of subject-matter.

The attendances of pupils at schools, even in the same district and at comparatively short distances from each other, are sometimes strikingly unequal. The method adopted at West Plains and at several other schools of giving the pupils cards on which are recorded marks for diligence, punctuality, and regularity, and on the presentation of which to the teacher, the pupils may claim remission of punishment, has proved a general incentive to regular attendance.

It has hitherto been customary to re-examine in the work of Standard VI. those pupils who, having passed this standard, have remained at school for another year. We venture to suggest that such pupils should enter on some line of study beyond the work proper to Standard VI., and that due intimation of the subjects studied be furnished to the Inspector before he proceeds to examine the school, so that he may test the progress made by these advanced pupils during the year.

SYLLABUS.—The vexed question of the syllabus requirements continues to be of all-absorbing interest in this as in other districts; and numberless maledictions are showered upon its head. Meanwhile its provisions must be carried out as best they may by both teachers and Inspectors; and, but for several misstatements that have stalked abroad unchallenged, we should be glad to let it rest. It has been stated unconditionally, on what grounds we know not, that our standard of efficiency is percentages *per se*. No statement could be wider of its mark. While we find that satisfactory percentages usually go hand in hand with intelligent teaching, we always gauge the quality of the work done at a school not merely by the proficiency of the pupils, but also, and chiefly, by the efficiency of the teacher. If, therefore, teachers convert the schoolroom, which should be the happy home of co-operative effort, into a mere cram-shop, they have themselves to blame. Their professional reputation is in little danger of waning so long as their teaching is intelligent. It is to be feared that, while some sincerely complain of the exactions of the syllabus, there are some also who are not loth to join the hue and cry merely to screen their own incompetence. Again, the charge is often brought against the syllabus that it is so hidebound as to destroy the teacher's individuality. But surely this a very loose statement; for in the invention of new methods, and in originality of their application, the teacher has endless scope for the exercise of his individual aptitudes.

We have, &c.,

The Secretary, Southland Education Board.

JAMES HENDRY, B.A., } Inspectors.
GEO. D. BRAIK, M.A., }

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