

Spelling and writing are well taught. The papers in every subject, except those in geography of Standard III., are generally free from errors in spelling. Sound methods of teaching and proper gradation of work have effected a thorough change in this respect.

A substantial advance is made from last year's position in arithmetic. In accuracy and rapidity the improvement was most evident. Notation and numeration, always tested by dictation, were strong in Standards I. and II. Mental tests on the relative value of the coins were not so well answered as in previous years. Perhaps the anxiety about the extra drawing for the year may have caused this portion of the work to be overlooked. A good many failed to solve the problems set for Standards III. and IV., wherein the class failures were heaviest. Occasionally, also, questions were not attempted, as the year's preparation had not been fully overtaken. The mental arithmetic was as good as usual; many pupils showed improved dexterity in working the tests.

Loyal effort has achieved a success in drawing. The altered conditions and changes imposed, especially on the lower standards, by the revision of the syllabus have been faithfully observed. The freehand drawing in Standards I. and II., owing to the loss of the guiding squares, was not as firm as it used to be, but the prompt and correct answering of these classes whilst under oral examination in their knowledge of form gave strong proof that the teacher's task was capable of accomplishment, and that the children were highly interested in these lessons. As this work was new to the schools, special care was taken by me in testing the teaching and indicating for future guidance the lines which the instruction should follow. In the use of the set squares I met with much faulty teaching. Very few of the classes had been taught to use them properly. The few directions on the covers of the drawing-books had evidently passed unnoticed, or been thought of little moment. As their proper manipulation is of the utmost importance, whenever I saw that the squares were improperly handled by the teacher, or his pupils, the class was taken by myself, and the tests, either the square or rhombus, completed by the class as a dictation exercise. I desire here to remind teachers that progress in the senior standards will be greatly facilitated by the thoroughness with which this apparently trifling matter is insisted upon. In the standards already referred to the only concession allowed was that the definitions at examination were confined to those of the standard. This, however, did not prevent the preparation of introductory work, as its need was fully recognised. The papers in geometrical drawing done by Standard IV. were more difficult than those previously given. As a rule, the problems were correctly worked, but the definitions and other questions were indifferently answered. The drawing of problems to scale was not insisted on in this standard; this will, however, be a feature in future examinations. The tests done by Standard V. were practical in character. Sketches of out-door objects, such as gates, windows, gables, fencing, and internal school fittings, with their actual measurements, were made by the scholars, and afterwards drawn to a given scale. The measurements on the sketches were frequently set down without the usual mark which shows the extreme points of the measurements, in an indefinite and careless manner. I shall, in future, reject all work that shows this defect, as the omission is clearly owing to the want of strict supervision. No measurement should appear on the finished drawing. Solid geometry has made little progress in Standard VI. The freehand drawing of the senior standards was fairly good. A few schools show work of decidedly good quality, but the majority do not appear to make any effort to attain to excellence.

I cannot speak favourably of the instruction in the grammar of Standard IV. The failures were unusually numerous. Altogether the papers were much inferior to those of former years.

A very fair measure of success has attended the efforts of teachers who have arranged their plan of instruction to lead up to improvement in the composition of the senior classes. This subject is not yet, however, satisfactorily treated in Standard III., where correct use of capitals and punctuation of a disconnected series of statements appear to be the maximum of effort. There cannot have been much class instruction, or blackboard treatment, for the scholars were frequently unable to connect their sentences, or to make the simplest alterations suggested to them. The use of the parts of speech required ought to be frequently illustrated and practically exemplified in the class exercises. I shall, in future, examine the class on the lines prepared by teachers, provided that their plan of instruction, entered in the school-log, is submitted for my approval at inspection visit.

In the early part of the year, lists of routes, ports, and towns were prepared by myself to cover the requirements of the revised syllabus in geography. These were generally used in arranging programmes. I have found this plan to work well. The interpretation of the portion set down for Standard IV. in the syllabus has not been so liberal as it should be; but the subject requires good handling; and it is only in the hands of an experienced teacher, who has a true estimate of its importance, that its lessons can be made popular in the school. Where the subject is classed as a mere memory exercise the instructor has little knowledge of its peculiar educative power.

Of the class subjects and additional subjects, history has been better treated than at any former time. Lessons on the elements of agricultural knowledge have somewhat widely taken the place of those on elementary science. The lessons are popular, and should prove useful. Less time is now given to the study of grammar, which is now one of the most unsatisfactory subjects. I regret that a graded knowledge of prefixes, affixes, important roots, and word-building has not been classed with the composition of Standards IV., V., and VI. Drill is taught with greater or less success in nine schools. A few teachers who take an interest in the musical instruction of their schools are able to give creditable evidences of successful teaching in this subject.

It is again my duty to report in favourable terms of the discipline, manners, and general tone of the schools.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM MURRAY, Inspector.

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.