

more difficult ; but it is now more definite, and the study of geometrical form in the lower standards gives the pupils in this class a better idea of the work generally, and obviates any necessity for spending much time over definitions. In Standards V. and VI. the work is much more practical, and cannot fail to be of service in after life to many of the pupils.

PREPARATORY CLASSES.—In the new standard regulations a very important clause has been inserted, which provides that, when a pupil over eight years old is presented in Class P., the principal teacher shall give the Inspector a written explanation of the reason for not presenting the pupil in Standard I. ; and, further, that the Inspector shall report to the Minister of Education on the number of such cases, and on the sufficiency of the reasons assigned for them. Thus, while the Act does not make presentation in Standard I. at the age of eight years compulsory, it clearly fixes the age at which a pupil should, in the ordinary course, pass into that standard. To comply with the regulation, after each annual examination every child over seven years old, or between the ages of seven and seven years and eleven months, of which seven years and a half may be taken as the average, should be transferred to the class preparing for Standard I. ; and this would make the average maximum age for passing the standard about eight years and a half. Now, for each of the years 1890 and 1891 the average age in the whole colony for passing Standard I. was nine years. In the Wanganui District the average age in 1890 was nine years and four months (exceeded by Taranaki only, nine years and five months), while in 1891 it was nine years and five months (exceeded by Hawke's Bay only, nine years and a half). In 1892 the average age was nearly nine years and a half, but no comparison can be made, as the returns from the other districts are not to hand. This would seem to indicate that children have been kept back in the infant departments, and in some cases we know this has undoubtedly been so. But there are many cases in which it is impossible—nay, it would be absolutely pernicious—to present pupils in Standard I. at the age of eight years, for in not a few of the bush schools pupils do not come to school until they are seven years old, or even more, and to force on such children without a thorough grounding in the rudimentary work would be a grave error of judgment.

Of the 2,752 children in the preparatory classes, 610, or 22 per cent., were over eight years old. In the majority of cases the reasons given for non-presentation in Standard I. were satisfactory (especially as when many of the schools were examined the new regulations had not yet been a year in force), and were—(1) the advanced age at which school-life was begun ; (2) incapacity of the Maori pupils for overtaking the work, especially in reading ; (3) irregular attendance. It would be well if teachers, when stating the reasons for non-presentation, filled up some such form as the following :—

| Name. | Age. | Time since Admission. | Attendance for Three Quarters preceding that in which the Examination is held. | School previously attended. | Remarks. |
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During the past year we have been able to devote more attention to the infant department, and we find that, although in some cases they are well organized and conducted, too often the little ones are looked upon as “only the infants,” and, as a consequence, receive less attention than they deserve. Frequently pupils are let “go on” doing the same round of figuring or writing, or not doing it, as the case may be ; and it is not surprising that the work becomes irksome, and that pupils fail to form habits of attention and concentration to which they have to be trained. Shorter lessons and more variety are needed ; for even the most interesting lessons may be too long, and without variety interest cannot be maintained. Tables should receive much more attention. Multiplication tables are fairly treated ; but addition tables are intelligently and thoroughly taught in very few schools, and consequently the mechanical work in Standards I. and II. is often very slow, and the defective training is apparent when pupils persistently count on their fingers. Multiplication tables to at least five times, and all addition tables, should be well known in the upper division.

In the quality of the reading and spelling a marked advance has been made during the past year, and this is due to the more intelligent and frequent use made of the blackboard when teaching the lessons. An additional suitable reading-book is much needed in the upper division, for not infrequently the pupils can repeat the lessons by heart. Where the phonic system of teaching words is used, the enunciation is, as a rule, excellent ; and any Maoris in the class exhibit very little difficulty with the pronunciation of words containing such consonants as are not to be found in their own language. This system also does much to eradicate acquired defects in speech, for in many cases children speak badly not from any organic or physiological malformation but from habit.

The infant departments at the Campbell Street School, Palmerston, and at Hawera are very well conducted indeed. At the Wanganui Infants' School we are glad to see that kindergarten work has been introduced. To pass an opinion upon the success of the venture would, however, as yet be premature.

ORGANIZATION AND METHOD.—Under this heading there is little new to write. Some teachers might read carefully the remarks under “Organization and Method” in our report for 1891. The blackboard still is not used as much as it might be for abstracts of lessons, and for explaining away difficulties. Smart recapitulation towards the end of a lesson might be more general. Full state-