

The more advanced work of the standard course is prepared with fair success, but the results vary very much in the different schools. On the average the schools in the northern division of the district do better work than is done in the schools extending from Napier to the South. This was very pronounced in the recent examination for the Board's scholarships, when candidates from Gisborne and district gained in dictation, spelling, and arithmetic 20 per cent. higher marks than were gained by the Napier and other candidates in the same subjects and under similar working conditions. The "pass"-subjects have been somewhat modified by the operation of the new regulations, but the changes, except as to the drawing, are generally accepted by the teachers with favour. The reading-books in most common use are the "Star" series, but they do not contain sufficient matter for a year's course, unless supplemented by Geographical and Historical Readers. These are being introduced into all the larger schools, and, where possible, I propose to base my examinations upon them so far as they comply with the standard requirements. Errors of pronunciation continue to be common in a number of schools, especially where pupil-teachers are employed, and the most careful watchfulness is necessary from those who have charge of schools where such teachers are at work. It can hardly be expected for young teachers to appreciate fluency, good modulation, and exact pronunciation, and often bad habits are allowed to grow which are difficult to cure when the pupils pass beyond the preparatory and Standards I. and II. classes. Pointing with finger or pencil at the words in a reading lesson is the cause of much bad reading in the schools, as it permits the same stress to be put on each word in a sentence. I have found it necessary to direct the attention of teachers to this defect, which is just as great an obstacle to expressive reading as counting the fingers is to effective arithmetic. In the latter subject there is a tendency to overlook the fact that a thorough knowledge of the tables, with daily mental exercises in them, and in simple processes based on them, is necessary where thoroughness and rapidity are wanted. A knowledge of principles is often shown by children in the arithmetic, but the tables are imperfectly known, and either the work is done at a slow rate, or reference has to be made to the table-book for information which the pupils should know beforehand. In some cases there is a tendency to decry the preparation of memory tests, but the higher requirements of the standard course would be much easier prepared were the systematic cultivation of the memory recognised more by teachers of the young. Geography continues to receive much careful attention, and the new syllabus for Standard IV., requiring the children to be conversant with the more salient facts bearing on the geography of their own country, is a wise arrangement, and will bring about a change for the better in the teaching of this important subject. The preparation of the great trade-routes and of the tourist-routes of New Zealand has already led to the more frequent use of maps in class teaching, but I should be pleased to see a properly-constructed map of New Zealand, and of each education district, issued by the Government, and prepared on the lines of the departmental requirements. It always seems to me a pity that the schools should be using maps of this colony printed in England, when the maps issued by our own Survey Department show how much better the schools could be supplied from the office of the Surveyor-General. Drawing is making good progress, except in the matter of solid geometry. The latter division of the subject appears to be too difficult for the schools, except in places like Hastings, Port Ahuriri, Napier, Gisborne, Woodville, Waipawa, Kaikoura, Clive, Meanee, and Danevirke, where the subject is successfully taught. Good work in all schools is being done in freehand and geometrical, including drawing to scale, and where progress in these has been shown I have taken it as satisfying the requirements. Throughout the schools the writing continues fair, in spite of the inattention which, I fear, is too often paid to this important subject. It is best taught at Te Arai, Kaikoura, Ongaonga, Gisborne, Patutahi, Meanee, Waerenga-a-hika, Kumeroa, Tolago Bay, Port Ahuriri, and Clive (upper). At each place named the copy-book writing and the style of the work generally is very good. Composition has replaced grammar as a "pass"-subject, and whilst the former has been much improved by the change, the latter hardly appears to have fallen off in efficiency. Sewing is taught in all schools, and no subject under the regulations continues to receive more painstaking attention, although the instruction is often given under peculiarly trying conditions. In many cases parents refuse or neglect to supply sewing-materials for months after the standard work of the year begins; in others the wrong material is supplied; and in too many instances the sewing afternoon is made an excuse for keeping girls at home. The difficulties might be minimised by the Board or the Committee supplying the sewing-materials, and selling the specimens made at cost price, after the examination is over. It is needless to pass in review all the subjects of the standard course, but I would remark that, in addition to the work already named, history, drill, singing, repetition, and elementary science are taught, sometimes with very commendable success. The marks gained by each school in the class and additional subjects will be found in the tabulated summary of results appended to this report. History and repetition are the most popular of the subjects, the latter being very well prepared in a number of schools. Drill and singing continue to be best taught in the schools named by me last year. Scientific instruction does not prosper. There is no apparatus provided and the instruction, with a few notable exceptions, is unsystematic, and, as a consequence, ineffective. Unscientific methods can hardly be expected to bring forth scientific results. But practical science is forcing itself day by day into the homes and business houses of the people, and the old ways of living and working are slowly giving place to the new. The education in the schools should be in sympathy with these things, and it would be well if more fostering care were bestowed upon scientific instruction by the Board. This might be done by granting special bonuses to schools instead of the present percentage bonuses, the purpose for which the latter were originally voted having passed away.

The schools continue to improve in tone and discipline, and, although there are instances where one would like to see the conditions improved, it is unusual in my somewhat frequent visits to the schools to find unseemly words in the out-offices or on any portion of the school-buildings.

School games hardly receive such attention from teachers as their importance as a moral