1893.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:
REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In Continuation of E.-1B, 1892.]

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Auckland, 28th January, 1893.

We have the honour to present our report for the year 1892.

Two hundred and eighty-two schools were examined in standards, and two hundred and sixty-four were inspected. Eight schools were not examined during the year. Of these, seven are new schools, and the remaining one was closed in August. Twenty-six schools were not inspected during the year. Seven of these are taught half-time by teachers whose work was inspected in other schools; nine were not open when the Inspector was in the neighbourhood; the remaining ten were not inspected on account of the pressure of other work and the illness of two of the Inspectors.

The percentage of passes in standards is 51·1; the percentage of failures is 14·5. These figures compare very favourably with those of the previous year, which were 47·9 and 17·5 respectively. Of the 282 schools examined, twenty-nine, or about 10 per cent., were reported on unfavourably. In about one-third of these cases the unsatisfactory condition of the school may be considered to be due to change of teachers or temporary closing of the school during the year. The average ages of passing Standards I. and II. are higher than those of 1891. This may fairly be accounted for by considering the number of new schools opened in districts in which many of the children have grown up without any opportunity of attending school. In the other standards the average ages differ very slightly from those of 1891. The mean of average age remains the same.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	125	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	921	38	37	144	702	14 4
" V. ...	1,757	78	79	372	1,228	13 6
" IV. ...	2,810	119	153	549	1,989	12 6
" III. ...	3,284	153	195	493	2,443	11 5
" II. ...	3,136	117	140	266	2,613	10 4
" I. ...	3,557	116	128	221	3,092	9 1
Preparatory... ...	8,025	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	23,615	621	732	2,045	12,067	11 10*

* Mean of average ages.

There were presented in preparatory classes 1,702 children more than eight years old. We do not consider this number excessive, and we have had no grounds of dissatisfaction with the reasons assigned for not presenting these children in Standard I. Irregular attendance and short time at school form by far the greater proportion of these reasons. There are also attending the schools in this education district many Maori and half-caste children, whose imperfect acquaintance with our language has retarded their progress, and who have consequently augmented the above number.

In expressing our opinion on the condition of any school, we have not been guided solely by the percentages obtained at the examination. Two schools showing similar numerical results may be really in very different states of efficiency. In the one case those who pass do so with ease, and those who fail come very near to passing; in the other case those who pass are barely able to do so, and those who fail do so seriously.

During the past year, by direction of the Board, each Inspector has had charge of the same division of the district as in the previous year. We believe this has been of great advantage, as it has enabled us to more thoroughly judge of the efficiency of the teachers and the condition of the schools, and to acquire greater familiarity with the educational needs of the district. We regret that the Board has not thought fit to continue this arrangement for at least another year.

The new syllabus has now been in operation for a year. The difficulties consequent upon the alterations therein have been on the whole ably met by the teachers. By Order in Council the Inspectors were instructed not to exact full compliance with respect to the new requirements in drawing in 1892. We have, however, found little cause for the exercise of this indulgence. With regard to the geography of Standard IV., the efforts of the teachers have not been attended with much success. We cannot avoid the conclusion that the mathematical geography, which is rigidly insisted upon by the syllabus, is beyond the limits of the intelligence of the great majority of the children preparing for Standard IV. The definite permission granted by the new regulations to group to a greater extent than formerly certain classes for instruction in history and geography has been of great benefit to the teachers of small schools. Many teachers who have thus grouped two or more classes in history, geography, or science have, however, neglected to prepare an extended programme so as to show the distribution of the subject over a three years' course, as required by Regulation 19.

The school-buildings and teachers' dwellings are for the most part in good repair. We have, however, observed with great regret that in some cases where houses are provided they are not occupied, and present an appearance of neglect and decay. Comparatively few playgrounds present a really attractive appearance. Something has been done during the past year in planting a more suitable kind of tree than the funereal pine. We trust that the teachers and Committees will not relax their efforts in this direction.

In the work of the schools steady progress has been made during the past year, and the schools generally are in a very efficient state. The great majority of the teachers have shown zeal and industry in the discharge of their onerous duties, and such defects as still exist in the schools are much more due to unavoidable adverse conditions than to indolence or unskilfulness on the part of the teachers.

We have, &c.,

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

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.

TARANAKI.

SIR,— Education Office, New Plymouth, 25th February, 1893.

I have the honour to submit my report on the schools of the district for the year ending the 31st December, 1892.

All the schools were inspected, and thirty-four were fully examined. Midhirst and Cardiff Road Schools were examined in part only, as the progress of their classes had been interrupted by the change of teachers and the closing of both schools for a few months. A partial examination was made at Upper Mangorei also, where the teacher had resigned her appointment after several months' service. The schools that I have not fully examined this year will in future be examined early in the year. This departure has been forced upon me by the increasing number of the schools and the steady growth of those in the early-settled parts of the district. There are about a dozen of this class that now take two or three days each for examination. The bush roads also, after the winter rains, are impassable before the end of September or the beginning of October; and the time remaining before the Christmas holidays is of too short duration to allow me to complete the examinations. Besides being advantageous in many other ways, this change will enable me to take the examinations at a time suitable to the special circumstances of those schools whose attendance and progress are so frequently interrupted either by epidemics or by changes of teachers.

The unusual weather of the past year has hindered the contemplated improvement of several of the school-grounds; still, the results of past work are seen in the cleared land and in the substantial fences, and the belts of trees now beginning to give shelter to the buildings and beauty to the areas they enclose. Two residences are unoccupied by the teachers, who prefer to reside elsewhere. New dwellings are, however, required in cases where the teachers are compelled to travel several miles over very bad roads to and from their lodgings. All the buildings are in good condition and repair. All the suggestions I have made to the Committees have been well received by them.

Additions have been recently made to the Midhirst and Stratford school buildings, and the enlargement, now decided upon, of the Cardiff Road School will supply the last remaining defect of school accommodation. Should the increase at Ngaire continue, it will be imperative to again enlarge the school there. The rapid increase of settlement also in new districts is certain to tax the finances of the Board heavily for several years to come.

The roll-number at December quarter, 1892, was 3,148. At the examinations 2,697 were presented. Deducting 1,042 presented in preparatory classes, 108 returned as absent, and 6 presented in classes above Standard VI., the remainder is 1,541, the number actually examined in standards. In classes above Standard VI. six scholars were presented, of whom only three attended. The attendance on examination day was 93 per cent. The number of exceptions is somewhat higher than formerly; the bad roads and severe weather, doubtless, being the chief causes of irregular attendance.

In all standards save the Fourth, a decided improvement has taken place in the ages at which the standards are passed. There can be no doubt as to its cause. The schools are gradually passing into the hands of capable teachers, whose efforts are bringing about improved results. The action of the Board in improving the teaching power is receiving the approval of the Committees. Members of Committees, and parents, have repeatedly expressed to me their satisfaction with the changed conditions under which the schools are now conducted.

Coming to the numerical results of the year's work, it is satisfactory to record an advance from the position of the past two years. The numerous changes of teachers—about forty in number—were fatal to progress in 1891; but no ground was lost. About half as many changes occurred in the beginning of this year, and caused me to anticipate similar results. The work, however, suffered but little interruption, and the results may be accepted as an indication of steady progress. The following table shows the percentages gained:—

Year.	Of Failures.	Of Passes.	On "Class"-subjects.	Mean of Additional Marks.	Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.	Grammar.	Inspector's Marks.
1890	23·8	41·1	54·9	49·7	90·9	84·2	92·9	86·4	73·5	...	69·4	57·8	63·9
1891	23·9	40·5	60·7	46·9	82·7	85·8	92·3	68·4	69·2	...	57·2	52·1	63·2
1892	21·3	41·5	62·1	48·6	85·4	91·8	93·4	78·2	78·9	78·7	77·3	48·9	30·1

It will be noticed that the entry for the year under "Inspector's Marks" is much lower than those of former years. The wide difference is due to the method of reckoning the percentage, which is now computed on an assignment, after the pass-marks have been earned, of four or a less number in each subject. Any marks obtained by scholars failing in a subject do not appear on the schedules, so that the percentage indicates numerically the degree of attainment above the pass requirements shown by the scholars who have passed in the various subjects.

The instructions to Inspectors now require from them a statement of the number of children over eight years of age who have not been presented in Standard I. In compliance with this instruction, the following information has been collected from the head teachers. The number returned is 352, or about 34 per cent. of the pupils in the preparatory classes. The reasons assigned for their non-presentation have been classed as under:—

Irregular attendance	142
Weak health	19
Admitted within six months, 62; within twelve months, 30; within fifteen months, 14	106
Incapacity	31
Not sufficiently advanced	54
	352

Irregular attendance is again to the front, and will continue to be so until, by legislation, the Committees are relieved of the burden of the enforcement of the compulsory clauses of the Act. The large number of recent admissions shows that a rather large proportion do not enter school until the age of seven is reached. The number (31) returned under "Incapacity" represents, I consider, a fair estimate of this unhappy class; and of those, unfortunately, "Not sufficiently advanced," the majority owe their backward state of preparation to inefficient instruction, as well as to the frequent changes of teachers in the schools of the district.

Some of the preparatory classes obtained excellent reports, but in not a few others the work was found to be uneven and sometimes poor. The instruction of such classes is too often left to the pupil-teacher, with but little assistance from the master, whose time is fully occupied by the demands of his standard classes. This is especially the case in schools with a high roll-number and an indifferent average attendance. In the schools, also, where the attendance of two pupil-teachers taking the place of an assistant is allowed, the classes are backward and unworthy of the school; neither can they be favourably compared with those under the control of a mistress. The pupil-teacher's position is that of a learner, and his place is either in a school of about fifty scholars, or where there are one or more certificated assistants, who are responsible under the head teacher for the proper instruction of the classes. Written instructions and schemes of lessons may, and ought to be, put into the pupil-teacher's hands; but unless these are supplemented by the frequent criticism of lessons, and the practical aid of the trained instructor, the pupil-teacher is more likely to pull down than to build up. I am again able to report favourably on the increase of the number of good readers in the preparatory classes. There are several schools where this work is of excellent quality. I have often wished that some of our teachers, whose ideas of reading even in the standard classes do not rise above the mere utterance of the printed words, could attend one or more of these schools, to take a lesson from the little folk. I have frequently drawn attention to the instructions in Regulation No. 16, and pointed out that intonation and emphasis must begin with the lowest preparatory class if the standard of the regulation is to be reached in Standard I.

Reading in the standard classes is improving year by year, the number of schools where the subject is better taught than formerly is on the increase. Although I have had in this subject to fail nearly every scholar in one or more classes in a few schools, the percentage of passes is higher than last year's. No hesitation was shown in my treatment of the subject. Now that the majority of the teachers are working with me to give it its due prominence, good results should follow in a year or two.

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.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	6	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	50	2	2	14	32	14 6
" V.	179	18	8	47	106	13 6
" IV.	264	16	15	86	147	12 8
" III.	442	30	42	87	283	11 7
" II.	353	18	31	32	272	10 3
" I.	361	24	23	36	278	9 3
Preparatory	1,042	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	2,697	108	121	302	1,118	11 11*

* Mean of average age.

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Education Office, Wanganui, 28th February, 1893.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ended the 31st December, 1892.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS; ROLL-NUMBER; ATTENDANCE.—At the close of the school-year ninety-five schools were in active operation, with an average weekly roll-number of—males, 4,353; females, 4,040; total, 8,393: and an average attendance of—males, 3,322; females, 3,043; total, 6,365. The roll-number is 228 higher, and the average attendance 471 higher, than in the last quarter of 1891. For the four quarters of the year the mean average weekly roll-number was 8,368, and the average attendance 6,104, the former showing an increase of 144, and the latter a decrease of thirty-seven for the twelve months. At first sight it seems strange that, considering there are four more schools this year than in 1891, and that settlement is so rapidly progressing in the district, the roll-number shows such a small increase. We know, however, that to some extent this is accounted for by the fact that the majority of those parents who have taken up new land have simply gone further back in the bush, and that, consequently, their children went merely from one school to another.

The average attendance for the year expressed as a percentage of the roll-number barely reaches 73 per cent. This is very low indeed, and shows a decrease for the year of 1·7; while it is 7·3 lower than the percentage for the thirteen districts in 1891, and 10·3 lower than that for Otago. Certainly the attendance was most seriously affected by diphtheria, which was very prevalent for quite six months. On account of this epidemic one school was closed for just a whole quarter at a time, and later on for some weeks; another school for eleven successive weeks; and so on with others for varying periods. The fact of the Board's capitation grant for one quarter falling over £500 will give a good idea of how the attendance was affected by this disease. Putting epidemics aside, however, the attendance in this district, as all are well aware, has ever been far from regular. A few months back the Board, with a view to improve it, resolved to request the police to act as truant officers, and to reward them with a certain sum per head on the increase in the average attendances of the schools.

Irregularity in attendance is the greatest bane of the enthusiastic skilful teacher, but is often a valuable friend to the incompetent one. Bad roads and long distances to travel do not always account for it, for we often noticed, when looking over the registers of the schools, that families who are the worst offenders as regards bad attendance are the most favoured in both these respects. To our mind, teachers might do a great deal to improve the average attendance by making their schools as attractive as possible, by establishing in their pupils' minds happy associations with the duties and employments of every day (a valuable factor in the training for after-life), and by fostering among their pupils a feeling of loyalty and pride in everything—work, conduct, sports, &c.—connected with the school which they attend.

STAFF.—The ninety-five schools were officered as follows: Principal teachers, 41; sole teachers in charge of schools, 54; assistant teachers, 30; pupil-teachers, 71; probationers, 4. A relieving teacher also was employed during the year. In our last annual report we wrote: "We consider the average attendance—fifty—now required at a small school before the first pupil-teacher is appointed is too high; at all events, if the six standards are represented at the school." The Board has since kindly lowered the required average to forty, but, as it is demanded that this average be maintained for two quarters before the addition to the staff is made, the concession is not as great as appears at first sight, or as we should like to see.

* * * * * * *

INSPECTIONS.—All the schools were duly inspected, with the exception of two aided (or, rather, "household") schools, three schools opened during the latter half of the year, and Bull's and Hawera Schools. In all, eighty-eight visits were paid. Bull's and Hawera were closed, owing to diphtheria, when the Inspectors were in the district, and time did not admit of special visits being made.

EXAMINATION IN STANDARDS.—Of the ninety-five schools in operation at the end of the year, all open for twelve months, or ninety, were examined in standards. This number shows an increase of

nine for the year. Of the five schools not examined, Foxton was closed so frequently and for so long (at one time for just a whole quarter), owing to diphtheria being very prevalent, that nothing would have been gained by the examination of the pupils; while Hurleyville and Long Acre Valley were opened only in August, and Ohingaiti only in September. Of the ninety schools, seven were examined in May, and the remaining eighty-three between the 25th July and the 15th December.

On the days appointed for the examination there were 7,827 pupils (4,101 boys and 3,726 girls) on the school-rolls, of whom 5,043, or 64·4 per cent., were presented in the six standards; 2,752 were in the preparatory classes; and 32 had already passed Standard VI. Of the 5,043 presented in standards, 4,655, or 92·3 per cent., attended and were examined, 388 were absent, 358 were excepted (that is, failed, but, not having made half the possible attendances during the three quarters preceding the quarter in which the examinations were held, the failures were not counted against the schools), 972 failed, and 3,325 passed the requirements and were promoted. Of the 388 absentees, Wanganui Boys' and Girls' Schools, and Palmerston, Campbell Street, and Terrace End Schools were responsible for no fewer than 88.

In the following tables, Table A gives a condensed summary of the examination results for the past two years, while Table B gives the particulars of results in each standard, and the average ages of children that passed in each standard. Table C, which gives every information with regard to individual schools, has not been printed, but it may be seen at the Board's office.

TABLE A.

—	1891.	1892.
1. Presented in Standards I. to VI. inclusive	4,734	5,043
2. Preparatory class	2,929	2,752
3. Above Standard VI.	32	32
4. Number on rolls on days of examination	7,695	7,827
5. Percentage of roll-number presented in Standards I. to VI. inclusive ...	61·5	64·4
6. Absent	300	388
7. Excepted...	239	358
8. Failed	931	972
9. Passed	3,264	3,325
10. Percentage of passes, calculated on roll-number (4)	42·6	42·48
11. Percentage of failures "	22·2	62·92

TABLE B.

Number of Schools examined in each Standard.	Standards.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Failures.	Average Age of those that passed.
								Yrs. mos.
18	Above Standard VI. ...	32	...	...	...	...	...	...
51	Standard VI.	226	17	9	44	156	22·0	14 1
72	" V.	493	35	30	149	279	34·8	13 7
81	" IV.	833	77	70	240	446	34·9	12 9
86	" III.	1,117	85	91	282	659	29·9	11 9
84	" II.	1,117	80	76	114	847	11·8	10 7
90	" I.	1,257	94	82	143	938	13·2	9 5
90	Preparatory	2,752	...	...	...	...	...	...
*	...	7,827	388	358	972	3,325	22·6	12 0†

* Number of schools examined in one standard or more, 90. † Mean.

The following figures for the past two years will prove interesting:—

Year.	Presented in Standards.	Per cent. of Roll. No. Presented.	Absent.	Examined.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Per Cent. of Failures.
1892	5,043	64·4	388	4,655	358	972	3,325	22·6
1891	4,734	61·5	300	4,434	239	931	3,264	22·2
Increase for 1892	309	2·9	88	221	119	41	61	0·4

The most noticeable feature brought to light by the foregoing figures is the very large increase in the number of exceptions, and the by no means inconsiderable increase in the number of absentees. There can, however, be no doubt that such increases were brought about by the diphtheria epidemic

before referred to, for in some schools from one-third to even over one-half of the pupils presented in standards had, on account of this disease, failed to make half the possible number of attendances.

The increase in the percentage of roll-number presented in standards is a pleasing feature of the table. This increase no doubt was chiefly due to the new regulation requiring teachers to give written reasons for the non-presentation in Standard I. of any child eight years old.

In the percentage of failures there is a slight increase—viz., 0·4. This was only to be expected, considering how unfortunate the district was during the year in the way of epidemics. Indeed, it appears to us a matter of congratulation that the percentage of failures is as low as it is, for some schools were closed for many weeks at a time, and others were kept open though over half their pupils were absent.

On the work brought to light by the examinations, exhaustive reports were written in duplicate, one copy being sent to the teacher interested, through his Committee, and the other to the Board. Percentages, as usual, varied very much, but, as hitherto, we formed our judgment rather upon the *quality* of the passes than upon the *number* of the passes, provided, of course, the number was not quite below what might reasonably have been expected when allowance was made for epidemics, &c. In several annual reports on the work done in the district it has been pointed out that percentages are very deceptive. In all examinations there must be some standard fixed beneath which if examinees fall there can be no pass. The line must be drawn somewhere; and it is a fact well known, to examiners at all events, that the difference between the attainments of those candidates just below the line and the attainments of those just above the line must be very little. Now, at some schools obtaining good percentages the majority of the successful pupils were just above the line, while at others with not quite so good percentages the majority were a long way above it. Yet we consider that the school with the slightly-worse percentage had done the better work. Sometimes a teacher of the former kind of school with the higher percentages expresses surprise that the Inspector's written report was not more favourable, because "My percentage was so good"; but the Inspector's view of the matter was that the work of the majority of children, so close was it to the limiting line, just escaped being characterized as poor, while that of none, or of hardly any, could be styled good. Teachers it is who are responsible for the fictitious value put by the public upon percentages. Should their percentages be high, they advertise them in every possible way, and themselves create a false standard for estimating the educational value of the school-work, and make a rod with which to smite their own backs when the percentage for any reason falls.

INSTRUCTION.—As for several years exhaustive reports were written on the treatment of every subject in the course, we purpose this year to confine any lengthy remarks under the heading "Instruction" to whatever appears to us of special importance, more particularly to anything connected with the recent changes in the syllabus.

As far as percentages go, there was an improvement for the year in the higher three standards, notably in Standard VI., where the percentage of failures fell as much as 14·4. In the lower three standards the percentage of failures rose—0·7 in Standard III., 2·7 in Standard II., and 3·7 in Standard I. As there was no falling-off in the work of Standard I., the increase in the number of failures was no doubt mainly due to the new regulation requiring all children of eight years of age to be presented for the standard unless sufficient reason can be shown for keeping them another year in the preparatory class.

The number of schools in which *Reading* is well taught gradually increases. In the small schools the practice of grouping two classes is becoming more general, and where this is done the pupils, in consequence, get more actual teaching of reading. We should like to see two books used in each standard during the school-year.

Spelling, which was severely condemned in our last report, showed considerable improvement this year; but there is still much to be desired, especially in Standard III.

Writing generally was a very strong subject. At many schools the writing and the arrangement on the examination-papers were very fine.

Arithmetic varied very much, especially in Standard V., which was seldom a strong class in this subject. In Standard IV. reduction and compound practice often were very poor, owing to pupils being ignorant of their tables. That long measure is one of the tables for Standard III. seemed to be not generally known to teachers. In schools where the discipline and control were weak, so invariably was the arithmetic. If questions were read more carefully, and answers when obtained were compared with the questions, there would be fewer failures in arithmetic. At many schools, however, the arithmetic was excellent.

Grammar by the new syllabus was made a "class"-subject in Standards III., V., and VI., being retained as a "pass"-subject in Standard IV. only. We were sorry to find that the subject showed a woful falling-off, especially in Standards V. and VI. Indeed, at more than a few schools the pupils in these two highest standards showed almost utter ignorance of the subject, especially in parsing. Analysis used to be particularly strong in this district, but last year it was quite a common experience to find Standard VI. pupils quite ignorant of analysis of complex sentences, as far as ability to pick out and name clauses was concerned. This is much to be regretted, for in a poorly-inflected language like English the study of its grammar should be begun, and based throughout its course, on the logical relations of the parts of speech (not on their inflexions), or, in other words, on the analysis of sentences. In Standard IV. grammar and composition formerly counted as one "pass"-subject; now they count as two "pass"-subjects. In this standard alone did grammar not deteriorate, while composition showed some improvement. In all standards from Standards III. to VI. composition is now a "pass"-subject by itself. Presumably the object in taking grammar away from composition and relegating it to the "class"-subject list was to improve composition. Granted this, we cannot say that the object has been accomplished, except in Standard III., as far as this district is concerned, for the composition in Standards V. and VI. showed no improvement on that of former years. Paraphrasing was a new feature of Standard V. composition, and it evidently had been

often neglected. At many schools pupils asked the meaning of the word "paraphrase," and frequently we found attempts at keeping the passage in poetry, but with a few words changed. It was astonishing how many pupils failed to grasp the meaning of the verses, which were invariably taken from very well-known stock poems, to be found, as a rule, in the reading-books in use.

In the requirements in *Geography* the new syllabus has made considerable alterations. Political geography has been on the whole curtailed; but physical geography is now required in Standard IV., while in Standard VI. it is reduced to the one subject of "climate." This arrangement makes Standard IV. geography relatively much heavier than that of any other standard, but the leaving of it in its old place among the "class"-subjects somewhat lightens the burden. Other new and important matter (trade-routes, leading products and industries, interprovincial transit, places in New Zealand of interest to tourists, &c.) has been introduced into the work of this standard, and, although its value is manifest both on account of its everyday importance and on account of its particular importance to New-Zealanders, it has been frequently neglected, for in several schools the pupils displayed a total ignorance of this department of the work. Teachers sometimes stated that they did not know where to obtain the required information. Surely this is a very lame excuse, when the shipping advertisements of any of the papers of the larger towns of New Zealand show the principal trade-routes and ports of call, and a penny railway-guide contains a map showing all the railways. The "Zealandia" geographies, recently published, have been written to suit the new syllabus, and they may be used in future.

Physical and mathematical geography are still unsatisfactory. The phenomena resulting from the earth's rotation and revolution, combined with the inclination of its axis, were not at all understood, and good answering was very rare. We believe that this arises to a great extent from teachers trusting too much to diagrams for illustration, which are very well as far as they go, but are always less effective than models. In those schools where the explanation was shown strikingly and clearly by means of a lamp on a table to represent the sun, and a globe or a ball carried round it to represent the earth, the results were much more satisfactory.

On the whole, the questions in geography answered best are those requiring the names and the approximate position of places. We should like to see more attention paid to commercial, industrial, and physical geography, as appealing more to the imagination and less to mere memory, and as bringing into play the reasoning and observing powers rather than the mere operation of receptivity, for the names are merely the nails, as it were, to which the mental pictures are attached.

Drawing occupies a very prominent position in the new syllabus; and, owing to the importance attached to this subject, it was one which teachers generally viewed with fear and trembling, as they deemed it would, to be taught successfully, require too much of the school-time. We found that, as a rule, the work for the past year was covered in about two hours per week; but as in 1892 teachers were permitted, in compliance with the regulation requiring drawing to be examined more leniently, to omit part of the work in some of the standards, it still remains to be seen whether, when all the requirements are demanded in this and the following years, the subject will require more time, or whether the training and grounding in the lower branches will compensate for the small amount of extra work to be done. To our minds, no more time will be required.

Last year the method of examination was altered, the pupils being required to make drawings, in our presence, on leaves taken from the Colonial Drawing-books. Preparing the papers for examination gave us a great deal of extra work, but we were more than repaid by observing the satisfactory results, much of the work even in the lower standards being very creditable indeed.

The freehand drawing was generally good. The definitions and the manipulation of set squares and rulers had been quite overlooked in a few schools, but in the majority—especially in those examined towards the end of the year—the instruction in these respects was satisfactory. Pupils in Standard I. are not required to give "strict scientific definitions." As far as angles are concerned, however, more care is required in the wording of the explanations. "An acute angle is a sharp angle" is an answer frequently given; yet, if an angle of 80 degrees be shown, pupils at once call it "a blunt angle," for they use the term as applied to some cutting instrument, and not as relating to a right angle. Indeed, the words "sharp" and "blunt" are misleading (not so the word "square" for a right angle); and it is much easier for pupils to see that angles are "less than right angles" or "greater than right angles," than that they are sharp or blunt. It is much better, therefore, to start with the right angle as "square," and then to define the others as "less" or "greater."

In geometry in Standard IV. the pupils found considerable difficulty in drawing the problems to scale. We are inclined to think that this was partly due to the geometrical and the scale—two distinct subjects—being taken together. If pupils were first put through a short course of geometrical drawing pure and simple, and had the principles involved thoroughly explained to them, they would be better able thereafter to grasp the idea of drawing the figures to scale, or of merely making them a certain size. But to attempt to teach both simultaneously leads to confusion, and to a want of a thorough grasp of either. At the same time we must point out that several teachers did not notice that the books required some figures to be drawn to scale.

In scale drawing in Standard V. a valuable and important addition, requiring pupils to make sketches of common objects as preliminary to scale drawing, has been made. This is of great practical importance, and is a most commendable innovation.

In Standard VI. last year model drawing was omitted, and solid geometry on only two planes of projection was demanded in addition to freehand. This year the full requirements of the syllabus in all branches must be complied with.

In Standards I., II., and III., while the definitions and the study of geometrical figures make the work in these standards heavier than formerly, the new series of drawing-books does not require so much from the children. In Standard IV. the geometrical drawing is somewhat

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.

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-

ments in answers are now required by the majority of teachers; but at a few schools the pernicious habit of indiscriminate answering is still allowed, and what may be called the "no-answer-at-all plague"—the habit of giving an answer that has nothing to do with the question, simply for the sake of saying something—is still sometimes found. "Second shots" and guesses never should be allowed; they both denote total absence of mental training and thought. In some cases better progress would be made if teachers took more pains to have a definite aim in their teaching. As Mr. Thring puts it, they should clear a little bit of ground at a time, in place of running about in an aimless way, pulling up weeds at random. Sometimes children are kept too long sitting in desks. We recommend that they always be required to stand in oral lessons, and would again point out that lazy attitudes never should be allowed, but that the pupils should be required to comport themselves in an intelligent way, like persons eager to learn.

Discipline.—We are pleased to be able to speak highly of the discipline of most of the schools in the district. At the examinations we generally found the pupils earnest in their work, attentive, and eager to please. Class motions were not always performed as well as might be expected. At our inspection visits, also, we generally found the discipline very satisfactory. Occasionally the need for less friction at change of lessons was apparent.

The manners of the pupils were, as a general rule, very pleasing.

We have, &c.,

W. H. Vereker-Bindon, M.A., Inspector.
W. E. Spencer, M.A., B.Sc., Assistant Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

HAWKE'S BAY.

Sir,— Education Office, Napier, 31st January, 1893.

The completion of the annual examinations enables me to submit for the information of the Board a general summary of the educational work of the district for the year 1892.

The standard examinations were closed early in December, but the revision of the pupil-teachers' papers, and the papers of the pupils in the upper division of the Gisborne District High School, was not completed until a few days ago.

School Supply.—The year just closed has been one of unusual activity in school extension. Since the date of my report a year ago, schools have been opened at Port Awanui and Waipiro, in Waiapu County; Tiniroto, in Cook County; Pukahu, in Hawke's Bay; Maharahara, in Waipawa County; and Wimbledon, in Patangata,—being an increase of six during the year.

There are now fifty-four schools in full working order, but fifty-three only have been examined, as the school at Wimbledon was not opened at the time of my last visit to the district. These schools are scattered over a wide extent of country, Port Awanui, the most northerly of them, being about 330 miles distant from Woodville by road. The opening of the two subsidised schools at Waipiro and Port Awanui has extended my work in a northerly direction by about sixty miles, these schools being situated in the midst of a Native district, where there are many Native children, and a number of Native schools. It seems to me a great pity that arrangements cannot be made to obviate the necessity of two Inspectors of Schools visiting this sparsely-populated district, when one could do the work quite as well, and at much less cost. At Port Awanui and Waipiro there are forty pupils, half of them being Natives, and for the examination and inspection of these I travelled more than 240 miles on horseback, at heavy expense and loss of valuable time, because the Native and public schools are not controlled by the same authority. In three of the six districts named, schoolhouses have been provided by the Board, and at Waipiro the residents themselves have made suitable school provision. At Tiniroto and Port Awanui a raupo whare and an iron shed have done duty as school-buildings, and the instruction of the children has been carried on under conditions which, I submit, ought not to be permitted anywhere. Both places are without out-offices; there are no desks for the children; and no arrangements have been made whereby water may be obtained at the school. I can only remark that the moral effects of conducting a school under conditions such as have been pointed out are disastrous.

In the large majority of districts the school accommodation, if not always sufficient, is suitable and well adapted to the modes of instruction now carried on. The fences, grounds, and out-offices are usually in good order and repair, and show that Committees and teachers give much careful attention and supervision to these important matters. In many instances the school-sites are planted with ornamental shrubs and English trees, which add greatly to the appearance of the school-buildings. The institution of "arbor-day" appears to have given a great impetus to tree-planting, and is likely to have a good effect upon the children. "Arbor-day" was duly kept last year at Napier (Hastings Street), Port Ahuriri, Patangata, Makaretu, Tolago Bay, Woodville, Patutahi, Takapau, and Norsewood, and many trees were planted in the schoolgrounds by the children, teachers, and members of the School Committees named.

The school-buildings at Te Karaka, Makauri, and Waerengakuri, in the Cook County, and at Mohaka, in Wairoa County, though they provide sufficient accommodation, are quite unsuitable for successful teaching. The buildings were originally erected at the expense of the residents to supply a temporary want, but the attendance now, especially at Makauri, warrants the erection of buildings suited to the requirements of the districts. Napier calls for a separate remark. The size of the main school, with its too limited space for recreation, is a subject of almost pressing importance. The infants' division, with an attendance of over four hundred children, occupies buildings standing on a quarter-acre section of land. On the same section are the out-offices and a caretaker's residence. The land not occupied by buildings is 56ft. by 28ft., and this is the quantity of playground provided for the physical and, in some measure, the moral training of the children. With all due deference,

I would point out that, owing to the limited area of land, further extension of the school-buildings at the infants' and main school is undesirable, as even now the unsatisfactory conditions existing constitute a serious drawback to the successful preparation and training of the children. Recently an interesting experiment was carried out by Mr. Alfred Levi, oculist, for the Napier School Committee. Mr. Levi instituted a series of tests for the discovery of faulty or defective eyesight among the children attending the upper division of the main school. Four hundred and fifty-seven children were tested, with the following results: 159 had normal sight; 241 were slightly hypermetropic, or far-sighted; 46 were far-sighted, with weak sight, or esthenopia; 11 were suffering from myopia, or short sight, two being very bad cases. Seven children were blind, or nearly so, in the right eye, and seven others had a similar defect in the left eye. In my report to the Board several years ago reference was made to the absence, or nearly so, of myopia among the children. Even now there are very few instances of short-sighted children in the country schools, and nine of the eleven tested in Napier appear to have developed myopia in consequence of the bad light supplied in several class-rooms at the school. As a rule, the Board schools are excellently lighted, and it is the situation of the Napier main school that is the sole cause of the bad quality of light in certain of the class-rooms. Much valuable information as to the growth of myopia and other forms of defective eyesight would be obtained were similar tests made at intervals in a number of the principal schools of the district.

In nineteen districts where there are schools no residence is provided for the teacher in charge. I have observed in Native districts the residence is deemed an essential part of school-buildings, and much of the success that has attended the work of the Native schools can be traced to the supply of neat and well-arranged buildings, and I am convinced it would be a great gain to education were a similar plan followed by the Board when erecting schools in this district.

Fifty-three schools have been inspected and examined. These contained 6,202 pupils, compared with 5,923 for the corresponding period of 1891. The presentations in standards, including 43 pupils in the class above Standard VI., numbered 4,026. Ninety-two of these were absent from examination, 142 were excepted, 780 failed, and 2,970 passed for promotion to a higher standard. The following summary contains information for each standard, and the total results are also given for the corresponding period of last year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes to Presentations	Average Age of those that passed.
							Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI.	43	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	196	1	5	45	145	73·3	14 1
" V. ...	418	5	8	139	266	64·4	13 0
" IV. ...	648	11	22	194	421	66·1	12 3
" III. ...	824	29	32	145	618	77·4	11 4
" II. ...	898	16	49	114	719	82·6	10 3
" I. ...	999	30	25	143	801	82·6	9 5
Preparatory ...	2,176	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	6,202	92	141	780	2,970	74·5	11 8
Totals, 1891	5,923	75	142	742	2,851	74·7	11 9

The interpretation of this table is interesting. It shows that out of 6,202 pupils in the public schools at the time of examination forty-three had passed through Standard VI., and that 3,983 were considered by the teachers capable of passing in one or other of the standards. If the 198 failed, excepted, and absent pupils in Standard I. are deducted from this number there remain 3,785 pupils who have passed in a standard at some time or other. The 2,970 passed pupils for the year, or 47·7 per cent. of the whole, simply represent the number of pupils who have passed the requirements for promotion to a higher standard; but the 3,785 pupils, or 61 per cent. of the whole, represent the actual number who have passed a standard either this year or in some previous examination. To obtain a standard "pass" three conditions must be satisfied. The pupil must be examined in a standard not already passed; he must display satisfactory knowledge in all the "pass"-subjects of the syllabus of instruction; and he must be present in class during the examination of the standard pupils in the "class"-subjects. In each standard, reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, and drawing are "pass"-subjects, and above the First Standard new subjects are introduced, either "pass" or "class," so that a wide course of instruction is prescribed for every pupil passing through the standard course. It will readily be seen that many children receive instruction in subjects beyond the three R's, and all those marked as failures in any standard above the First have already satisfied the requirements in the standard next below the one they have now failed to pass. Nor do the failures necessarily mean ignorant or dull pupils, but they include the weak, the sick, the irregular, and in too many cases the class of unfortunates whose parents fail to realise their parental duties, and who keep their children from school for the most trivial and paltry reasons. It seems doubtful whether force—or, in other words, the enforcement of the compulsory clause of the Education Act—will cure the indifference of parents who have themselves received an indifferent training; still, it must be confessed that force is the only instrument in government with which it is possible to touch some human hearts on behalf of their offspring.

The new syllabus under which the schools were examined for the first time only came into full force at the beginning of July, so that all those schools that have their examination in the first half of the school-year have not yet been tested under the freer conditions of the new syllabus. The experience already gained, however, leads me to think that with due care the amended regulations will be productive of much good. The bestowal of more freedom upon the teachers in the choice of some of the standard work, and the wide discriminative powers granted to the Inspectors in the standard examinations, will tend to greater thoroughness in the schools, and to a better understanding between the great body of teachers and the inspectorate. A conference between the Board teachers and myself in the early part of the year has already had this effect. The new syllabus of instruction was discussed, and explanations were made regarding what was deemed to be a fair demand for a pass under the regulations. A circular-letter was subsequently issued from the Board's office, based upon the explanations made by me at the conference, and I am satisfied the result has been beneficial to all concerned. But, wide as the powers of Inspectors are, I could wish the further introduction into the regulations of a "permissive clause," allowing teachers, with the Inspector's approval and written consent, to keep in the same standard as the one last passed those children who, through natural dulness, irregular attendance, or some similar and reasonable cause, find it difficult to keep pace with the average of their class or standard. The examinations frequently bring under notice cases where unfortunate circumstances have tended to keep back in their studies certain pupils of the kind described, and who become disheartened and indifferent because of their inability to keep pace with their fellows. The operation of a "permissive clause" would allow an Inspector to consider cases such as these, by which means encouragement would be given to strong and weak pupils alike.

The average age of the children who pass the standards year by year shows little or very slight alteration; but the differences in the various districts are very marked. The average age when children pass the First Standard for the whole of the district is nine years and five months. At the last examinations the average age of Standard I. pupils in the Napier Main School was nine years and five months; at Gisborne it was eight years and eight months, at Hastings nine years and a half, at Port Ahuriri seven years and ten months, whilst Standard II. at the latter school was the same average age as the Napier Standard I. These wide differences in the case of four schools taken at random are a type of what one finds existing over the whole of the district. Some schools pass their children through the standards at a low average age, and there are others where the average is always high; nor does the cause appear to rest solely with teachers. Generally, the country schools pass the lower standards at a later age than the town schools, but the former overtake the latter before the completion of the full standard course. The new regulations require an Inspector to include in his annual report a statement of his opinion with respect to children presented for examination in the preparatory classes who are more than eight years of age. In some schools far too many children are so presented. Napier affords a notable example, where 121 pupils, or more than 10 per cent. of the whole, were examined as preparatory pupils, although at an age when they might fairly be expected to pass Standard I. At Gisborne, twenty-one children over the age of eight years were examined in the preparatory class, and at Port Ahuriri there were twelve. A careful analysis of the causes for the low presentations shows that bad health, natural dulness, inability of parents to provide boots or clothes, and irregular attendance of children are among the principal reasons stated by the teachers, but irregular attendance is urged as the chief cause of all. The results of the examinations in their effects upon irregular pupils support this view, as the standard failures are mostly made up of children who do not attend school at least 320 times within the school-year.

My separate reports on the work of each school will already have placed the Board in possession of information showing the progress of Education in particular districts. The preparatory classes in the majority of schools are doing well; indeed, there is no aspect of school-work more marked in its progressive and beneficial effects than what may be termed the "new training" of young children now so generally adopted. Musical drill, cutting-out, drawing, instruction in form, colour, and definition, are among the subjects now included in the school routine for infants, and, judging by the way the work is prepared, their introduction has made the preparation of subjects like reading, writing, and arithmetic more thorough and agreeable. It will appear from this that more work is attempted, often with very commendable results, by the preparatory classes than was the case a few years ago; and much of this success must be set down to the fact that more rational and intelligent methods are being brought to bear on the work of infant training. In the standard classes the widening of the requirements has not been followed by the adoption of more skilful methods of instruction, and a little inquiry often leads one to the opinion that too few of the teachers appreciate their profession, either as a science or as an art. A "pass" and a good percentage satisfies their wants, and is the sole end of their ambition. How many are there, I would venture to ask, who form the rank and file of the teaching profession that consider what particular faculties ought to be exercised in the preparation of particular subjects? And yet the success of teachers and pupils alike depends in the main upon such an inquiry being made. It is here, at the outset, one sees success and failure written in the case of two teachers, both equally industrious, and both desirous of doing well, but one adopts rational processes and the other does not. Some of the most earnest and deserving teachers I know in the district fail in the successful accomplishment of their work because they do not comprehend which part of the standard syllabus requires the application of the memoriter system of instruction, which the dogmatic, and which the truly inductive or intellectual. Those who take the trouble to analyse the standard requirements will find how much real success, as instructors and teachers, depends upon the proper application of these three instruments of instruction to their daily work, and many a hard-working (though unsuccessful) teacher would find his work lessened and his joys increased by studying to adopt right processes in the training of his pupils.

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

agent would suggest. The play-ground is the place for character-development, and good games, inducing healthy rivalry, not only influence the tone and government of a school, but, being regulative in character, they encourage self-reliance among the children. During the time set aside for recess teachers ought to be in the play-ground with their pupils, as their presence tends to stay listlessness and indifference among some, to excite emulation in others, and to benefit all.

Looking back at what was the condition of the schools a few years ago, and comparing it with what may be seen to-day, one feels that, whatever defect the present system of public education may have, there is in it a great power for good. In behaviour, in manners, in the manifestation of kindness toward each other and their elders, the children of to-day show through the dimness of the new development now going on that there is hope in the humanising and refining influences that are operating in the public schools. And these influences will become more and more effective as the governing authorities realise how largely the choice of good, temperate, and capable teachers can improve the whole tone and character of the schools, and give a right direction or disposition to the children who pass through them.

There were fifty-two pupil-teachers examined in December, and my report upon their work has already been submitted to the Board. In a number of cases the results are below fair, and it would be well if the places could be supplied by other teachers more competent. But, whilst expressing this opinion, I should like it to be understood that no class of workers in the schools toil as hard as the pupil-teachers. With lessons before ordinary school instruction begins, and hours of preparation in the evening, the position of a pupil-teacher is one of toil and anxiety. Some of them labour under serious disadvantages during the term of their engagement, and often their training is defective in some of the subjects now considered of importance in the preparation of standard pupils. For these reasons I should like to see classes formed in several centres for the instruction of the pupil-teachers on Saturdays in subjects like drawing, singing, science, language, and school-management. These subjects are of great importance, and every opportunity should be given to teachers to prepare them, as it is by this means that the country schools will be efficiently staffed in the future. The plan of instructing the pupil-teachers in special centres is now commonly adopted by the School Boards in England, and a neighbouring education district has lately adopted a similar plan.

The Gisborne District High School continues to make satisfactory progress. The senior pupils of the upper division passed the December matriculation examination of the University, and the work of the juniors of the same division is well done. Mr. Mann, B.A., is the master in charge of this portion of the Gisborne school.

I have, &c.,
H. Hill, B.A., F.G.S., Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

NELSON.

Sir,— 4th January, 1893.

I have the honour to submit to you my report on the public schools of this district for the year 1892.

Ninety-six schools were at work at the close of the year, several of them having been opened quite recently. The establishment of four more outlying schools has also been lately sanctioned by the Board. Ninety-three schools have been examined, eighty-one of which have also been paid separate visits of inspection. There were 5,830 names on the rolls of the schools when they were examined, 5,452 children being present. The state of the weather and the roads during a portion of the time when the examinations were going on will fully account for the unusually large number of absentees. The total number of scholars on the rolls at the end of the September quarter was 5,863.

Judged by every test that has been applied, the result of this year's examinations was, on the whole, creditable to our teachers. The children had evidently been carefully and intelligently trained; and, as a rule, gave one the impression of being bright and orderly. The numerical test, which is worth something, if not nearly so much as is too often claimed for it, shows that 88 per cent. of those who attempted standard work were able to satisfy the demands of the syllabus fairly well. The number of schools that did badly has diminished from twelve last year to eight at the last examinations.

It cannot be said that the interests of the outlying settlers are being neglected in this district. There are already twenty-four aided or household schools actually at work, and a few months will see a considerable addition to this number. From the geographical peculiarities of Nelson—abounding, as it does, in narrow glens and isolated bays, cut off from all communication even with schools that, so far as mere mileage goes, might be termed neighbouring—establishments containing a mere handful of children must somehow be maintained. The alternative is that some hundreds of children shall grow up untaught. Although the cost of educating each child under such conditions must, of necessity, far exceed the statutory grant of £3 15s., it is not easy to see how this difficulty is to be got over. Struggling settlers in outlying districts have seldom much spare cash to contribute, even for the education of their offspring. It is clear, however, that, if the larger schools are not to be starved, the day will arrive when the aided schools must become what their name imports, and be content with a simple grant-in-aid, instead of, as at present, a sum larger by 16s. a head than the allowance received by the Board from Government.

A short criticism of the way in which the several subjects included in the syllabus have been dealt with will not, it is to be hoped, be without its value:—

Reading continues to receive that ample share of attention which so supremely important a subject deserves. The use of two reading-books for each class, so long recommended, has at last

become very general, and there can be no doubt that our scholars, as a rule, thoroughly understand what they are reading. A slight tendency to pompousness and a certain exaggerated enunciation of the initial "h" are occasionally observable. But these peculiarities will doubtless wear off in after life, and are, at any rate, better than a slovenly indistinctness. Although various nationalities help to make up the staple of our scholars, the result of this blending together seems, so far, to have resulted in the disappearance of any marked accents or provincialisms.

Writing.—The introduction into a large proportion of our schools of Jackson's vertical style of handwriting, which has been sanctioned but not enforced by the Board, has had a remarkable effect in improving the handwriting in such schools as have adopted this system. Scores of children whose letters formerly sprawled irregularly over their copy-books have been trained, in an almost incredibly short period, to write a compact, quick, serviceable hand, nearly as legible as print. As an examiner, part of whose duty it has been to read very rapidly thousands of schoolboy papers, I feel entitled to speak with confidence as to the relief to overtaxed eyesight afforded by the new style. This method can claim also as a collateral advantage that the way of holding the pen, and the posture of the writer, correspond exactly with those required in drawing, so that in this respect there is nothing to unlearn.

Spelling.—The stringent demands for more accurate spelling made last year have, as is almost invariably the case in the end, brought about the supply. No difficulty is now found, as a rule, among the upper classes in complying with the "newspaper" test. Extracts from the *Home News* of reasonable difficulty have been given out, and the average number of mistakes has rarely exceeded one or two, the spelling of the older scholars in some of our best schools being nearly faultless.

Recitation.—The same good result has followed what appeared to some the harsh strictures contained in last year's report on the poor quality of the recitation. Even the worst of the performances are now, at any rate, tolerable, much of what was formerly barely tolerable being now good. More care and taste are also now shown in the selection of pieces to be committed to memory, though some of the trash that was condemned is still chosen by a few of the younger teachers, who have apparently not thought it worth their while to read what I had written on this head.

English.—The essays sent in, which were invariably on matters that the children knew something about, were somewhat disappointing, showing but little power of clear expression, and an astounding meagreness of vocabulary. Nor were these deficiencies by any means compensated by general proficiency in formal grammar. Persons, numbers, and cases were as often as not given quite at random, and the simplest questions on moods and tenses were usually answered incorrectly, or altogether evaded.

Arithmetic.—It is doubtless largely owing to the cumbrous and complicated system of money-tables, weights, and measures that still remains, and seems likely to remain, unreformed that so monstrous a portion of the short school-day should be devoted to this subject. Yet it seems pitiable that a full third of a child's school-life should be engrossed by elementary arithmetic. As might be expected from the time and pains bestowed on it, considerable proficiency is attained in the handling of figures. The article turned out, though dearly bought, is certainly, in the main, of good quality.

Geography.—This year's examinations brought to light some unlooked-for weaknesses. It was not that the children had not been taught many things, but that, as it turned out, they were not the things wanted. For instance, a query put to some of the older scholars as to the form of government of each of the six Great Powers brought out the fact that very few could so much as tell what was meant by the Great Powers. An equal amount of ignorance was betrayed by those who attempted to name the naval and commercial ports of France, or to write out the names of some of the Crown colonies and the self-governing colonies. Yet, surely such every-day matters as these should not be absolutely unknown to decently-taught scholars of thirteen or fourteen years old.

History.—The teachers have evidently fully understood the scope of the new and much improved syllabus for history, which aims at giving "a clear view of a few prominent persons and salient facts." These were usually judiciously selected, and fairly well mastered by the learners, the dates being invariably correctly given. The task of the examiner was also much lightened, and a great deal of aimless groping in the dark on his part avoided.

Drawing.—Owing to the shortness of the time that had elapsed since the new regulations on this subject came into force—to say nothing of the difficulty of getting at once the requisite drawing-books and instruments—a fair trial of the new system has hardly yet been made. The difficulties, in fact, have been rather postponed than fairly met. But time enough has already gone by to justify my forebodings as to the disastrous effects upon other more important subjects that would probably follow an attempt to carry out the programme to its fullest extent. In most of our schools the teachers have contented themselves with allotting from an hour and a half to two hours weekly to the teaching of drawing—about as much time as is usually devoted to writing. Within these limits they have contrived to turn out very respectable work, but in few instances, so far, is there any close approach to compassing the entire circle of the syllabus. For my own part, I am well content with what has been achieved in this direction during the past year.

Vocal Music.—The ever-increasing exactions of drawing, the full pressure of which will not, however, be felt until the coming year, have, as might have been expected, checked to a large extent the spread of the teaching of singing by note, which promised to become very general. In several schools where it was formerly taught efficiently it has been discontinued, for a time at least. There are, however, twenty-eight schools where it is still a part of the school course. In about fifteen of these the results may be termed satisfactory. The tonic-sol-fa system is that generally adopted.

DRILL.—For the same reason, the teaching of this, as it seems to me, by no means unimportant branch of an education has fallen off considerably, not only as regards the number of schools where it is taken up, but, in all save a few cases, in the thoroughness of the work done.

PRESENTATION OF CHILDREN MORE THAN EIGHT YEARS OLD IN CLASS P.—In compliance with the latest instructions to Inspectors, I have ascertained from head teachers what are their reasons for not presenting such children in Standard I. I find that there are in all 200 such cases in this district. The reasons assigned may be grouped under three heads: Shortness of school-life, irregularity of attendance, and exceptional dulness. Sixty-nine children had attended school for a month only before the examination, eighty-nine had attended very irregularly, and thirty-eight were set down as being hopelessly dull. The number held back for these reasons does not seem to me excessive, and the explanations of the teachers are apparently fully borne out by the facts. The fact is that hitherto, in the Nelson District, the tendency to be guarded against has been in quite an opposite direction to that of unduly keeping back scholars from presentation in the First Standard.

In September, finding that owing to interruptions from bad weather and other causes I should be unable to complete my round of examinations by the end of the year, I obtained permission from the Board to engage the services of Mr. Walter Ladley, the master of Lower Wakefield School, for a period of six weeks, as assistant-examiner in the West Coast and Takaka schools. Mr. Ladley rendered me valuable help, and proved himself to be a most painstaking and capable examiner.

I append the usual short summary, embodying my opinion as to the state of each school up to the date of its being examined. [Not reprinted.]

I have, &c.,

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

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	182	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	378	16	14	35	313	13 11
„ V.	591	27	33	113	418	12 11
„ IV.	701	30	23	42	606	12 1
„ III.	767	29	23	63	652	10 9
„ II.	708	21	33	55	599	9 10
„ I.	741	25	15	30	671	8 7
Preparatory	1,762	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	5,830	148	141	338	3,259	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

GREY.

SIR,— Education Office, Greymouth, 20th April, 1893.

I have the honour to report upon the schools of the district for 1892.

Twenty schools were examined, and three aided schools have yet to be examined. The following particulars furnish a means of comparing the condition of the schools for the years 1890, 1891, and 1892:—

—	1890.	1891.	1892.
Roll-number on day of examination	1,729	1,670	1,713
Number of above already passed standard course	26	28	20
Number within standard classification	1,161	1,079	1,091
Number enrolled in standard classes present at examination ...	1,080	990	1,030
Number promoted to a higher standard	912	843	869

There is very little in the work of the year calling for special comment. On the whole the schools of the district have reached a very fair level of efficiency, and the maintenance of that may be accepted as proof of good honest work on the part of the teachers.

The amended regulations under which the teachers now work came into operation in the beginning of the year. Their tendency is in the direction of lightening the teacher's work; but the extra requirements in drawing will be heavily felt in a district such as this, where no facilities exist whereby the teacher can get special instruction. The opportunities given for grouping classes in history, geography, and grammar are decidedly beneficial, though during the past year anything but full advantage has been taken of the concession.

As to history, I should like to see the subject treated more as a reading-lesson, though we have yet to find the books which succeed in making it really interesting to children. With reference to the events and dates required by the regulations, there is an inclination to treat them too briefly —to convey to the scholars the bare matter of fact without any attempt at enlargement. Whatever excellence may exist in the books used, the greater part of the information conveyed must come from the well-stored memory of the teacher, who, to become a really good teacher of English history, must be a diligent student of not that only, but collateral history also.

I made this time considerable changes in the mode of conducting the examination. To prevent the expense of printing cards, the questions in all subjects were placed on the blackboard; and I am disposed to continue this plan for all subjects excepting arithmetic. The questions in the latter subject occupy so much room that the blackboard accommodation is generally insufficient, and consequently time is lost in the process.

The arithmetic work was done on slate by all classes, and corrected in the school. The principal recommendation for this is that teachers are able to overlook the work of their scholars, and take a part with the Inspector in the correction. The remainder of the examination was conducted orally, the only portion done on paper being the composition of all classes, part of the grammar of Standard IV., the analysis of Standards V. and VI., part of the geography for Standard III., and maps for Standards IV., V., and VI.; also transcription of all classes.

I believe that the extension of the system of oral examination will have a beneficial influence upon the work of the schools. As compared with the practice of using examination-cards containing a limited number of questions, oral questioning allows a much wider range to the examiner, and a much better chance of judging the extent to which a class may have benefited by the instruction given. It also furnishes a better test of the quality of that instruction.

The chief difficulty experienced arose from diffidence on the part of the scholars in giving expression to their knowledge, but this may be expected to quickly disappear, particularly if teachers take the hint to resort less to written work, and make their lessons brisk, lively, and interesting. Teachers may help greatly in this matter also by refusing to accept fragmentary answers.

Composition in the majority of schools shows decided improvement, though in some cases very serious defects still exist.

I did not attempt to adapt the subjects upon which the scholars were required to write to the work done in the schools during the year, but I took care to mention subjects only with which children may be supposed to have some familiarity, and I gave a choice of subjects. Generally speaking, the result is satisfactory. The writing is good, punctuation receives attention, and the mode of expression, considering the age of the writers, leaves little to be desired. In the best schools there is an absence of uniformity in the wording, which shows the teaching to have been something better than mechanical.

The defects most apparent, and which are intensified in those schools which do not come up to the general standard, are negligence in writing, disregard of punctuation and the proper use of capital letters, a lavish use of capitals, becoming sometimes quite ludicrous, and obscure and cumbrous sentences and paragraphs. It may safely be said that, where these defects co-exist to any great extent, the teaching has been not only ineffectively but carelessly performed. In this subject the use of abstract topics should be carefully avoided.

In correction of composition exercises specimens of the best and the worst should be read to the class, and the scholar's co-operation demanded in their correction and improvement. If this were regularly and systematically done the blemishes I have referred to would quickly disappear.

Grammar is generally a fairly strong subject. Standard III. does very well in picking out parts of speech from reading-book.

The parsing of Standard IV. is generally equal to the work of Standard V., but oral questioning on the inflections of noun, pronoun, and adjective revealed some deficiencies.

The work of Standards V. and VI. deserves praise, but in analysis in some cases a departure from the most straightforward arrangement of the parts of a sentence caused disaster.

The manner in which the concession made in the new regulation with reference to grammar is used by the teacher will furnish a test of his diligence and zeal. There may be a few who would regard the alteration as an inducement to relaxation of effort. The great majority, I am sure, will welcome it as leaving them at greater liberty as to method of teaching. The tendency should be to render the teaching less mechanical.

The alteration in programme for geography, while fixing the work more definitely in some classes and curtailing the work in others, offers more inducement for variety of treatment on the part of the teacher.

There is more encouragement to go outside of merely political geography, and to teach something of natural productions, trade, manufactures, forms of government, &c. There are indications that the opportunity will not be disregarded, for the subject shows evident symptoms of improvement as compared with any previous year. Physical geography is taught as well as can be expected with such a deficiency of apparatus. Maps are generally well executed, and show good knowledge of location. Some schools show that Standard III. can be taught to spell geographical names correctly, while others would appear to regard the matter as hopeless.

Reading generally is fluent and distinctly articulated. The difficulty with emphasis is not so much its omission as its use in the wrong place. With reference to the intelligent comprehension of the subject-matter, there is room for improvement. In questioning as to the meanings of words, difficulty of expression is no doubt answerable sometimes for an apparent want of knowledge. There is a perceptible necessity for thorough drill in this work, and the various uses and applications of the same word should be pointed out. I have before suggested that encouragement should be given to the use of dictionaries. Those used by the upper classes should give examples of variety

of application. But I am afraid that the parent who buys the indispensable reading-book under protest will hardly invest in a dictionary. This difficulty is not the least of the teacher's troubles. In a few schools a desire to secure a due regard to stops and loudness of tone has led to an exaggeration of observance, with sometimes rather comical effect. There are also a very few cases where the tone is so low as to render the reading almost inaudible.

Writing still receives very careful attention, and in some schools reaches a high standard. The best writing, as may be expected, is in those schools in which carelessness is never permitted, whether the scholar is writing a piece of transcription at the examination, doing his daily work in copy-book or exercise-book, or writing on paper or slate an exercise of any description.

In some schools the writing in copy-books is unexceptionable; the books are clean, and are evidently carefully supervised. On the other hand, if we turn to the exercise-books, we find pages written most carelessly, without any appearance of a protest from the teacher. In some schools the composition exercises written on examination-day are a pleasure to read, excellence in writing being added to general perfection. In others—though I am glad to say these are few in number—the exercises are merely scribbled. Now, this half-and-half sort of work can never be productive of good results. If a school is to become celebrated for good writing, the slightest approach to carelessness, whether in copy-book or exercise-book, on paper or slate, must be strictly prohibited.

Arithmetic calls for little comment. The results are generally good, and, considering the proportion of the school-time devoted to the subject, they should be so. This subject is often made unnecessarily laborious through defective method; and this is an important factor in connection with the matter of time. The value of appropriate apparatus in connection with this subject appears to be seldom realised. Numeration and notation should never be taught without the material for ocular demonstration, and the same may be said of vulgar fractions and questions concerning area, &c. I hope to see the larger schools furnished with full sets of weights and measures.

Class and additional subjects do not call for special mention. They receive generally as much attention as can be expected.

Drawing is still well taught, though the amended programme is as yet only followed in a few schools, and then not completely. As far as the smaller schools are concerned, I think it would be injudicious to insist upon its strict observance at present.

A circular was issued during the year drawing attention to the opportunities offered for examination in the several branches of drawing by the Wellington Technical School.

The Greymouth District High School submitted fifteen names, including scholars and pupil-teachers, for the first grade freehand examination. The results were four passed excellent, one good, seven passed, and three failed. Encouragement will be given to other schools to follow this example, and by this means the observance of the full programme in the larger schools will be eventually secured. The instructions for the teaching of the lower standards may be best followed by the use of large drawings and charts, giving examples of the various angles and figures. Without these aids, little progress is likely to be made.

The infant classes are generally well taught, but in one or two cases it would be better if the head teacher exercised a stricter supervision of the work of his subordinate. It is certainly better to do this than to have the trouble of eradicating tendencies acquired through faulty teaching in the lower classes.

Spelling is generally a good subject, but a Sixth Standard scholar whose spelling drill is confined to the words contained in the reader leaves school with a poor and limited equipment in orthography. This is sometimes strikingly illustrated in extra examinations, such as that for the scholarship, &c., and with the pupil-teachers.

The sewing examiner reports that the work for the year has been very well done. There are one or two schools where greater attention to cleanliness is desirable; otherwise the work generally is most satisfactory. Teachers complain of the practice of keeping scholars away from these lessons, as interfering materially with results.

The head mistress of the Greymouth District High School, who had charge of the infant department, was unable to resume duty at the beginning of the year owing to ill-health. This lady had done excellent service during her occupancy of the position, by the introduction of the kindergarten system, and by general improvement in organization and method, and the loss of her services is to be regretted.

The class for higher subjects at the Greymouth District High School has done excellent work. Of a roll-number of twenty scholars of all classes, four matriculated, four passed the Civil Service examination, and one gained a junior scholarship, ranking sixth on the list for the colony. Since the opening of the school on the 1st July, 1887, there have been twelve matriculations, six Civil Service passes, two credit passes in junior scholarship examinations, and one junior scholarship gained.

On the whole, the teachers of the district deserve recognition of their efforts to maintain a good standard of efficiency; and it is to be hoped that the Board will be able to give that recognition a practical shape in the way of increase of salary, for in many cases the salaries are ridiculously disproportioned to the services rendered.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD T. ROBINSON, Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Greymouth.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI. ...	20	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	97	10	1	15	71	14 3
" V.	161	9	4	23	125	13 1
" IV.	206	21	5	39	141	12 2
" III.	209	8	6	16	179	11 4
" II.	193	6	2	16	169	9 9
" I.	225	7	4	30	184	8 10
Preparatory	602	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,713	61	22	139	869	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Hokitika, 2nd February, 1893.

I have the honour to present my second annual report on the work done in the Board's schools, and the state of education generally throughout Westland.

The number of schools in the district is now thirty-three, as against thirty-one last year, the increase being due to the opening of a small aided school at Cook's River, South Westland, and the reopening of another in the Otira Gorge, closed last year. On the other hand, judging, at least, by the statistics of examination-day, the number of children in attendance throughout the district has slightly decreased, the number on the roll on examination-day this year being 1,633, or fifteen less than last year. Not much importance, however, need be attached to this circumstance—first, because the decrease is very small; secondly, because it is considerably less than that of last year, which was thirty-seven; and thirdly, because the opening of two more schools, the buildings for which are now in hand, will more than efface the loss.

The year differs from the previous one in the circumstance that very few changes have occurred in the teaching-staff of the schools, the members of which have worked on perseveringly at their posts, and, as I am about to show, in most cases not without good results. The chief feature of the year, from a schoolmaster's point of view, has been the adoption in the actual work of the school of the revised syllabus of education, which came into force on the first day of the year. In virtue of this, several important changes have been made in the plan of the school work, intended to lighten somewhat the toil both of teacher and scholar. The chief changes effected are these:—

1. English grammar, a knowledge of which has hitherto been required for a "pass" in all standards above the Second, is now no longer so required except in Standard IV., whilst in the other standards it is now taught as a "class"-subject only. Remembering the important mental discipline furnished by the thorough study of grammar—how it is the best and necessary introduction to almost all departments of abstract thought, and almost the only training in clear and accurate thinking which most of our scholars will ever know—I cannot help viewing this change of plan with some misgiving, as impairing the value of the education hitherto implied in a "pass."

2. A second change made by the new syllabus is consequent on the first. English composition, which was formerly only an exercise included in grammar-work, is now made a separate and independent subject in the "pass" programme—a subject in which every scholar is expected to show some proficiency. On this topic I shall have something to say presently.

3. A change has also been made in the teaching of drawing, though not the change which many practical teachers desired, for not only is the subject still retained as a "pass"-subject, in which every child, whatever his natural inaptitude, must be made proficient, but it has received additional elaboration and development. From the First Standard upwards considerable knowledge of technical terms and a considerable facility in freehand drawing are now rendered imperative, whilst a large addition to this is required of the highest three standards in the shape of geometrical drawing for the Fourth Standard, scale drawing for the Fifth, and no less than two further varieties of the art for the Sixth Standard—viz., model drawing and solid geometry. Of course, there is nothing in all this that might not fairly be required in every public school, nor would any efficient teacher complain of the elaborate programme of prescribed work, such a programme being a help to him and not a hindrance; but the trouble is that all this is imposed as a "pass"-subject in which every child is required to be proficient, and that in a limited and short time, so that not only is the task in itself difficult of attainment, but the requirement has this additional disadvantage: that it obliges teacher and scholar to devote to the art of drawing an amount of time and attention quite disproportionate to the relative importance of the subject in a primary-school curriculum, and to the neglect of those essential subjects for instruction in which primary schools were originally established.

4. The only other change I need notice is in "class"-subjects; it is the new programme of geography for Standard IV. The amount of work involved in this is now very large, the topics being very numerous, and many of them by their nature very indefinite—*e.g.*, the chief ports and trading centres of the world; in fact, as it stands, it is a programme difficult to carry out, and must, I think, remain so until the department itself prepares and publishes a text-book of geography specially adapted to the New Zealand syllabus.

Whilst I am on this subject of geography I should like to notice the strange peculiarity, whether designed or otherwise, which, unless I misunderstand the terms used, is exhibited in the revised programme of geography for Standard V. Of the large towns of Europe of which a knowledge is required from the scholar practically all are excluded which are not at the same time ports; so that such important cities as Leipzig and Breslau in Germany and Lyons in France may in future be unknown names to the New Zealand scholar. It is true that in the case of Great Britain and Ireland towns of more than two hundred thousand inhabitants are expected to be known; but, as there appear to be only five such towns in all Great Britain, exclusive of ports, it is plain that a New Zealand child may under the new syllabus grow up in great ignorance of the Home-country.

My object in referring thus at some length to the revised syllabus is to show the Board the new conditions under which teachers and scholars have this year been conducting their work. I should not, however, be dealing fairly with the document in question if I did not recognise at the same time one excellent feature of the new arrangement by which, in the department of "class"-subjects, a teacher may now group together the three highest classes in the subjects of geography and history, and so at once economize his own time and make his methods of instruction far more efficient.

Education is a large subject, and an education report ought to deal with the theme in a comprehensive spirit and with a wide grasp. It should refer not only to the intellectual attainments of the children, but to the mental habits formed and the interest awakened in their minds in mental pursuits; it should refer to morals and character as well as to book-work, and show how far the system is fitting the children for the duties and responsibilities of life. Such is the true ideal of the educator; but such a report is not possible to the School Inspector of the present day; and with this protest I yield to the inevitable, and confine myself as usual to the statistics afforded by examination-papers, and a record of the facts stored up in the minds of the children during the past twelve months.

Of this minor issue I am pleased to be able to give a good account, and to inform the Board that satisfactory progress is being made by the children of this education district in their school-work. The evidence of this will be found in the statistics attached to this report. Of course the most crucial test of the work done during the year is afforded by the percentage of failures made by the whole district in "pass"-subjects at the annual examination. Table II. shows this to be 24·3, which is more than 6 per cent. below that of the previous year. Although, therefore, the statistics of failures are still abnormally high, they are evidently on the decline, and the figures show conclusively that improvement has been made in the quality of the work done in the schools generally. I may add that the three schools which show the greatest improvement are, in those above the first grade, Blue Spur, Goldsborough, and Stafford, with an improvement of 29, 27, and 24 per cent. respectively; or, if the grouping of last year be adopted, Gillespie's, Blue Spur, and Goldsborough. Amongst the schools of the first grade Waikukupa has made the greatest progress. It is satisfactory, too, to notice that it is in the higher standards that the improvement is chiefly found, the failures being less in Standard IV. by 7 per cent., in Standard VI. by 21 per cent., and in Standard V. by no less than 27 per cent., or very nearly so.

As a sceptical critic might perhaps be inclined to suspect that the progress indicated is only apparent, and that the real cause of the decrease in the percentage of failures is the circumstance that the difficult subject of grammar is no longer required of candidates for the highest two standards, I have constructed another table (Table III.) showing the percentage of passes obtained in each "pass"-subject, and a comparison of the results here presented with the corresponding ones in Table III. of last year will demonstrate the genuineness of the improvement indicated by the figures already given.

It will be remembered that the subjects in which the schools, and especially the higher standards, failed most conspicuously last year were those of arithmetic, grammar, and geography. Between the grammar results of this year and those of last it is hardly possible to institute a comparison, since grammar, as has already been noticed, is no longer a "pass"-subject, except in Standard IV. So far as the comparison can be made, however, Table III. shows that the children are more efficient in this subject, to the extent, indeed, of more than 16 per cent. But setting grammar aside, and confining our attention to the other two subjects, the same table shows that arithmetic has improved 10 per cent. and geography more than 13 per cent. It seems therefore incontestable that the efficiency of the schools has increased this year very considerably, and that in the most important subjects. The same result, too, is arrived at, at least in most cases, if particular schools are referred to. Last year it may be remembered four schools were mentioned by name as exceptionally weak in arithmetic in the upper classes—viz., Lower Kokatahi, Kanieri, Stafford, and Kumara. Of these, the corresponding percentage of failures this year is in the case of Kanieri, 15, or an improvement of 65 per cent.; of Lower Kokatahi, 57, or an improvement of 43 per cent.; of Stafford, 45, or an improvement of 28 per cent.; and of Kumara, 62, which at least shows an improvement of 8 per cent.

Granting, then, that the progress claimed has been really made, the objection might still arise that it refers to the "pass"-subjects alone, and may be purchased at the expense of the other subjects comprised in the public school curriculum, which are certainly not unimportant. Let us ask, therefore, further, What do the statistics of examinations testify as to the proficiency of the scholars in what are technically known as "class"-subjects and additional subjects, amongst which I may remind the Board is that of elementary science, a subject the knowledge of which is becoming every day more essential to the success of the individual in life and the prosperity of the colony?

The reply to this question is given in Table II., which shows amongst other things the percentage of marks obtained by each school in "class"-subjects, and the total of marks obtained by each in additional subjects; and, taking the mean of these, we get for "class"-subjects a per-

centage of 48·6, or 8·4 in excess of last year, and for additional subjects an average of 37·9, or 7·3 above previous results. It seems to me, therefore, plain that all parts of the school work received a fair proportion of attention from the teachers, and that the improvement in the "pass" work has not been achieved by the neglect of other subjects. In short, and not to make too much of the matter, I think I may congratulate the Board on the work of the year and the progress exhibited by the scholars, a progress not unexpected by me, to whom the devotion of the present staff of teachers generally to their duty and their anxiety to achieve the best results possible under present conditions are well known.

Commenting on the "pass"-subjects seriatim, it will be well to begin with—

READING.—In many schools the mechanical part of the reading is well done; it is correct, fluent, and well inflected, so that to listen to it is often a pleasure. One defect in this exercise is, however, very general in the district, and that is, the reading is not intelligent; the children are unacquainted—in some cases entirely unacquainted—with the meaning of too many of the words read. In not a few schools it is plain that instruction in the significance of the words used has never been attempted; the whole subject has been overlooked; so that the scholars are not only ignorant of their own tongue, but are strangers to the mental discipline and the mental pleasure to be derived from the intelligent discrimination of meanings. The authorised syllabus of instruction, however, is emphatic in reference to this subject, and not only enjoins that all school work shall be intelligent work, but distinctly forbids the Inspector to pass a child in reading unless he shows that he understands the meaning of what he reads. Indeed, a very little reflection shows that anything short of this is quite unworthy of the name of education—that, in fact, to learn the meaning of words must ever be a very important part of a child's school work. In the recent examinations I have not hesitated to "fail" a child in the subject wherever want of fluency was combined with ignorance of meanings.

SPELLING.—Closely associated with the art of reading is that of spelling, an art that tests the thoroughness of an English boy's education more perhaps than any other, and differentiates in after-life between the educated and uneducated man. The boy who is launched into the business of life deficient in knowledge of orthography has good ground of complaint against his teachers; he "occupies the place of the unlearned," whatever his other attainments may be. I must acknowledge that I am dissatisfied with the work of many schools in this branch of study, and the statistics of Table III. show that the number of passes in it has declined 6 per cent.—the only "pass"-subject, it may be observed, which shows any serious retrogression. At the best, proficiency in orthography only means with us proficiency in spelling the words of the reading-book, and in several schools this year, especially the Ross School, there has been serious failure even in this very limited field. The subject is a simple one, and requires only hard work on the part of teacher and scholar; perhaps, therefore, enough has been said on it when attention has been called to the neglect of it. I know that in some schools special methods are employed to secure good spelling, scholars and teachers both keeping manuscript note-books in which are entered as they arise the words which have occasioned difficulty. I need scarcely say these are not the schools in which bad spelling prevails.

ARITHMETIC.—I have already alluded to the increased proficiency in this subject throughout the district generally, an improvement, however, which is not shared by all the schools. It would not be just to quote the Hokitika School as an instance of inefficiency in this respect; but even here in the case of Standard IV. a simple example in bills of parcels was not so much as attempted by the majority of the class. At Kumara many of the scholars are, I much regret to say, nearly as ignorant of the subject of arithmetic as they were last year. In Standard V. in this school, notwithstanding the remarks made in this report last year, the old and cumbrous method of dealing with fractions is still maintained. But other conditions in this class also foster inefficiency. Instead of sums written on the board before school commences, a text-book is used by the scholars, and this, being Barnard Smith's large book, is too expensive for all the scholars to obtain; consequently you find several sitting with their heads huddled together over one book, and seeing, of course, a good deal more of one another's slates than is at all desirable, to say nothing of the fact that the author has good-naturedly printed the answers to the sums at the end of the book lest the scholars should develop too great self-reliance. Of course, it will excite no surprise when I say that of twenty-four scholars present on examination-day in this class twenty should fail. It may be hoped, however, that, the Board having now authoritatively prescribed a cheap and suitable text-book—the "Southern Cross Arithmetics," without answers—at least one cause of inefficiency in this class will henceforth be removed.

In other schools also defective methods are only too prevalent, methods fatal to all thorough knowledge and correct working, and that not in arithmetic alone. I allude especially to a practice not yet extinct of dismissing an arithmetic class without any investigation of the answers arrived at by the scholars, or, what is nearly as bad, without insisting on the correction of the erroneous sums, or, as in one case, assuming that the answers arrived at by the majority of the class are necessarily correct answers. Equally useless, as far as efficiency in arithmetic is concerned, is the practice of suffering each scholar to supervise his own slate when answers are read out; in fine, only the utmost thoroughness will avail to procure that definite knowledge and correct working without which the study of arithmetic is almost worse than useless.

GRAMMAR.—This is now so little a "pass"-subject that I should not refer to it at all in this connection but for the circumstance that I am able to speak of the improvement made in it in most schools as very marked. There is a more intelligent treatment of the verb in the parsing exercise, and a better knowledge of its inflections generally, than was apparent a year ago, whilst in only two schools—viz., Ross and Okarito—is the unphilosophical treatment of the gerund referred to in my last report still persisted in. At one school, indeed, there is a short and easy method in use for avoiding the chief difficulties of the parsing exercise—viz., by uniformly omitting all reference to

the governing power of the verb. But I am glad to say the indolence implied in this omission is not common in the schools.

Composition.—Many teachers have set themselves this year to systematic instruction in the art of composition, and there is no doubt this will have to be done by all in future if the requirements of the syllabus are to be complied with. Composition is an art, and, of course, can be taught like any other art; but the method of doing it will require a good deal of study, and even of experiment, before satisfactory results will be obtained. The best course to be adopted is not yet so fully ascertained or so widely known as in the older subjects of instruction. Still, a large number of the essays written for me on examination-day this year have been excellent in more than one respect. They have been satisfactory to this extent: that the children have had something to say on the subject proposed, and have succeeded in saying it, so that often their productions have been chatty little communications which it was a pleasure to read. I need hardly say, however, that everything depends on the topic set them to write upon. Of course, it will often be necessary that this should be taken from the lessons of the day—the history lesson, or the object-lesson, or even the reading-lesson. But my experience is that these are not the themes on which children will be able to write most freely: something that has come within their own personal experience out of school sets them off much more readily, and makes their pens much more facile. Thus, on examination-day a request for an account of their pet animal from the children of Standard III., or a description of the Chinese in New Zealand from the higher classes, has generally produced lengthy and often clever compositions, developing the skill of the writer, and creditable to his intelligence, though not always to his scholarship. Unfortunately, the list of subjects equally suitable is very limited. One mine of topics, however, suitable for the higher classes seems to have been discovered in imaginary letters from eminent persons of the past, such as a despatch from the Duke of Wellington after the Battle of Waterloo, a line of thought that has been found by experiment to afford free exercise to many young students. But a good supply of suitable topics can only be obtained by careful observation and some fertility of resource on the part of the teacher, who, if his heart is in his work, will not grudge the thought necessary for the discovery of new veins of mental gold on which his scholars may operate.

The faults exhibited in the essays from several schools have led me to doubt whether the teacher has been in the habit of correcting the essays after they have been written—a laborious task, of course, but one absolutely necessary if children are ever to learn the art of composition. In most of our schools the children have accomplished the preliminary steps; they have acquired the power of saying something, but in very few schools, even in the senior classes, have they mastered the art of expressing themselves grammatically. The chief faults are two—(1) A want of concord between the verb and its nominative; and (2) the insertion of pronouns where sense or clearness requires that nouns should be written instead. These faults may easily be made manifest to children by a little blackboard teaching; but, even then, experienced teachers will agree with me that something more remains to be done. That for a child to know the theory of a sentence and the theory of correct writing is not enough, as he will not be likely to take the necessary pains to utilise his knowledge as long as he is aware that his essay will not be revised, and that he will not have to correct his faults. Science and art, knowledge and practice, are two widely different things; and it is the *habit* of correct expression that we have to produce. The nurse must guide the steps of the infant—to lecture to it on the theory of walking will not avail.

There are two difficulties from which a child suffers in his first attempts at composition—the want of ideas and the want of words. The first is undoubtedly his greater trouble, and should be met by encouraging him to discuss with others the subject on which he is expected to write. An excellent remedy for the second defect, the want of words, is the old-fashioned one of committing to memory choice passages from standard authors, as it is in this way that a child's vocabulary is most easily enlarged, a fact of which readers of biography are very well aware. With us probably the standard authors would have to be represented by the reading-book of the class.

Geography.—From composition to geography is no great step, as without a knowledge of geography even a Shakespeare ceases to be infallible, as, for instance, when he gives a seaboard to Bohemia. There is scarcely any subject in which the *manner* of teaching is such an important factor of the instruction given as geography; and, although the oral efforts of the teacher should undoubtedly be supplemented by the text-book, it is by oral teaching almost exclusively that geography should be taught. To a large extent I have reason to believe this has really been the case throughout the district during the past year, judging both by examination-papers and by what I have seen in the schools on my inspection visits. I am not sure, however, that the wall-map is utilised to the full extent that it should be, as experience shows that it is not enough for the teacher to indicate places on the map to the class—the scholars must themselves be called forward for the same purpose, and find the places for themselves. No doubt many will object that time will thus be lost which can ill be spared; but the reply is self-evident; it is the only way by which geography can be thoroughly taught. Time, however, would be greatly economized if all children could be persuaded to provide themselves with a school atlas, such as Collins's "New Shilling Atlas," not, of course, for use in class, but to enable them to verify at night as a home-lesson the places indicated by the teacher on the school map, so as to be themselves ready to demonstrate their knowledge publicly and quickly next day on the wall-map.

The chief fault to be found with the geography papers this year, but by no means in all schools, is the indefinite character of the answers given, showing again a want of thoroughness in the knowledge of the scholars, and sometimes, I fear, a mere parrot-like repetition of the words of the text-book. Thus I have often been told that the City of Cadiz is on the Isle of Leon; but to what country the city belongs, or where the Isle of Leon may be, I am left to guess. Into what utter rubbish the learning of a geography text-book may degenerate is shown by an examination-paper from the Gillespie's School, a school which in most other subjects did remarkably well this year.

In the authorised text-book of geography used in the school the situation of the City of Naples is described, and then the writer adds, "Near it are the ruins of Pompeii, once a favourite Roman watering-place." This reappears in the examination-paper, in answer to my question as to the locality of Naples, "Near it is the ruins of Pompie, once a famous Rome and watery place." History is often taught in connection with geography, and, as the subject of history will not reappear in this report this year, I will here give an extract from a history paper from the same school. The answer was from the class above Standard VI., and was to this effect: "Shakespeare was a great English poet, who lived in Elizabeth's reign. He wrote many famous plays, such as 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard,' 'Moses at the Fair,' &c." As these answers are not exceptional in these subjects at the school in question, they will at least show how desirable it is that the teaching there in these subjects should be raised to the same degree of efficiency as in the other subjects.

Before passing away from the topic of geography, I must express my regret that in many schools the geography of the British Islands is so little known. This was particularly the case at the Stafford School, although in some others acquaintance with this important section of geography is scarcely less defective. The subject in question forms part of the pass-work of Standard V., and it is certainly a branch of that work we can least afford to neglect. Only second to his knowledge of New Zealand should be a child's knowledge of the home of his fathers, the heart of the great Empire to which he belongs.

Drawing.—I shall comment on one other "pass"-subject, and one only: it is that of drawing. This subject has laboured under special disadvantages this year, partly in consequence of the new and more elaborate programme of work already referred to having just come into force, so that teachers had first to ascertain for themselves what they were expected to teach—a task not without its difficulties—often, too, to instruct themselves in one or more branches of the art, for all have not had the opportunity of qualifying themselves previously; and also on account of the delay occasioned by the publication of a new series of drawing-books adapted to the revised syllabus. Under these circumstances, it would have been unreasonable, and, indeed, unauthorised, to insist at the annual examinations this year on the full requirements being complied with. My own practice has been to "pass" in the subject every child who showed satisfactory skill in freehand drawing or any one branch of the art, provided the other requirements had received reasonable recognition in the work of the year, and this is all that my statistics of efficiency in this subject imply, although many schools have done more than this. Speaking generally, the schools throughout the district excel in freehand drawing, which is often bold, symmetrical, and neat, especially in the girls' drawings; but in only a few schools is geometrical drawing, even the problems of Standard IV., really known. Even in Hokitika and Kumara the scholars of Standard IV. failed almost without exception in this subject. Possibly this may be due to the fact that, though the children have worked through the prescribed course, they have not yet gone through it sufficiently often to be able to recall the constructions on demand. I am not at all disposed, however, to despair of better results ultimately, as geometrical drawing is popular both with scholars and teachers, and the subject, I need hardly say, is one of the most practically useful on which boys, at all events, could be employed. As to the model drawing of Standard VI., the less said about it at the present stage the better. The first principles of the art have yet to be learnt: as yet parallel horizontals fail to vanish, or more often vanish at the wrong end; and the best thing I can do is to echo the advice given by the Director of the Art Department at Wellington, that teachers should provide themselves with a copy of the little work on model drawing by Nesbit and Brown. I should not be doing justice to the labours of the teachers, however, if I did not add that in many schools the Sixth Standard and the class above it had made some progress in the prescribed course of solid geometry. The school at Staffordtown had omitted this, it is true, and some other kinds of drawing as well, but there was some excuse for the omission, as plane geometry was found by the new teacher to be an unknown science in all the upper standards.

Elementary Science.—The only "class"-subject on which I shall detain the Board is that of elementary science and object-lessons, with the present treatment of which in the schools I am not at all satisfied. Elementary science does not even appear on the time-tables of many of the smaller schools, and in most schools object-lessons seem to have degenerated into little more than a form. The regulations provide that the Inspector on examination-day shall be furnished with a list of the object-lessons during the year. In practice, however, this list is too often found to consist of half a dozen lessons only, whilst the names even of these frequently bear a suspicious resemblance to the headings of the reading-lessons. Such object-lessons as I have heard given on my visits of inspection have necessarily been given for the most part by the younger teachers, and, with some exceptions, these have not impressed me favourably. Too often they have been very meagre and unprofitable. The cause of this seems to me to be want of careful and thorough preparation over-night. The young teacher must study his subject beforehand, until he has got up a real interest in it in his own mind, and not until then will he be able to interest and instruct his class on that particular subject. Equally important is it that a specimen of the object should be provided to show to the class, or at least an engraving of it, and, failing this or a blackboard sketch, it is not desirable to select the subject, as the lesson in that case can by no possibility be regarded as an object-lesson, whatever else it may be. In spite of the trouble which this branch of his work involves, no true teacher will willingly neglect it, or fail to see in it a means of educating and training the younger scholars for the study of elementary science later on. Lessons entirely original are best, but young teachers will find most valuable assistance in some recent text-books on the subject, such as "Longman's Object Lessons," by David Salmon.

As to elementary science, it seems ungracious to complain of the way in which this is taught, knowing well, as I do, the efforts which many teachers have made this year to instruct their scholars in the course of agricultural science prescribed in the syllabus, and that in spite of the difficulty and, indeed, impossibility of obtaining the text-book desired. In the cases referred to good results

were generally secured, within, of course, the very narrow limits to which the lessons were generally confined. Not all teachers, however, took agricultural science as the subject of the year; some took physics; and it is in this connection that the course of lessons given, if the work done may be dignified with such a name, is most open to criticism. In at least two schools "Huxley's Introduction to Macmillan's Science Primers" was adopted as the text-book, a book quite beyond the capacity of the primary scholar, and calculated for nothing so much as to disgust him with the whole subject. What is wanted by the primary scholar is something concrete, not abstract—a few simple, striking, and interesting facts from which principles may be educed, such as are afforded in Paul Bert's "First Year of Science." In this way the peculiar charm of natural science becomes evident to the young student, who, there is some reason to hope, will endeavour to prosecute the subject further when he leaves school, perhaps to become a learner in nature's own university for the rest of his life. I may add that a plan not unlike this, and one almost as good, was adopted this year by the teacher of the Arahura School, who, dispensing with all text-books, took in succession the large wall-plates of "Johnston's Scientific Course," and gave a lesson on each diagram in the sheet. The success of this plan, both in the interest excited among the children and the satisfactory character of the answers on examination-day, was very marked.

In concluding this subject, however, I would give it as my deliberate conviction that elementary science will never take its proper place in our school work, never receive the attention its importance demands, or be taught in the systematic manner it ought to be, until the department maps out in detail a whole three years' course of science, as it has already done in the case of one branch of it, and publishes a text-book adapted to its syllabus.

Class S7.—The custom in this district has been that S7 shall do the same work as S6, but of course be subjected to a severer test in it at the annual examination. The plan seems to work well, and is certainly in harmony with the first principles of the educational art, which require that in order to be thorough there must be much recapitulation in the school work, a principle in which I sometimes think our syllabus is deficient. The thought, indeed, has often passed through my mind when assessing the examination-papers of some particular school, what an advantage it would be to these scholars if one could put the whole school back a class! Anyway, the year spent in S7 is certainly not a lost year to the scholars, and the work as at present arranged is quite sufficient to tax their best powers, as is seen in the fact that this year the mean percentage of passes in the standard is only 48·1. It is only right to say, however, that five of the nine schools presenting this class passed as many as 66·6 per cent. The total number of scholars in S7 was this year thirty-six.

Infant Class.—At the bottom of the school, but not the less important on that account, stands the infant class, the numbers attending which would alone give it a claim to special prominence, as will appear when I say that in this education district the members of this class form very nearly one-third of the whole school-going population. My chief purpose in referring particularly to this section of the school this year is to ask the question, "What constitutes an infant in the eyes of the department? Who may properly attend the infant classes?" Attention has this year been specially directed to this point in consequence of a new Order in Council (Reg. 5) issued with the new syllabus, by which it is rendered imperative on all teachers, should they on examination-day have in their infant class any scholar above the age of eight years, to furnish a list of these to the Inspector, accompanied in each case with a written statement of the reason why such scholars are not presented in Standard I. The order has brought to light some rather startling facts. For instance, in the two largest schools of the district the combined infant classes show a muster-roll of 245 children, and of these no less than 69, or more than 28 per cent., are eight years old or more, a few of them, indeed, ten and even eleven years old. At this rate the number for the whole district would be 146; and the question naturally arises, Why are these so-called infants not presented for Standard I., the work for which is so very elementary? Who is to blame for this loss of time—the child, the parent, or the teacher? Various reasons are assigned by the teachers for the backwardness of these children and their consequent detention in the lowest class of the school, the chief being irregular attendance, whilst several of the children are described as hopelessly lazy. It is right that these cases of exceptional incapacity should be brought to light; but I do not think that anything would be gained, whatever the age of the children in question, by thrusting them forward into a higher class whilst they are incapable of doing that of the lowest in the school. Of one thing, I think, we may be sure, that every infant teacher would gladly be rid of all scholars above the normal age for an infant class, and certainly would not detain them in it unnecessarily. But it cannot be denied that the existence of many such cases in an infant class would justify inquiry as to the skill or industry of the teacher.

District High School.—Although the Rector's class at this school taken as a whole did not pass a satisfactory examination this year, it should be mentioned, on the other hand, that one member of the class, a scholarship-holder, succeeded in passing the Matriculation Examination of the New Zealand University.

Attendance.—As the efficiency of the schools depends so largely on the regular attendance of the scholars, it is undesirable to omit some reference to this important subject in the annual report. Last year I illustrated my remarks by the case of the Kumara School, where irregular attendance had long been the rule rather than the exception. Judging by the statistics of examination-day this year the attendance at this school would seem to be improved, as out of a roll-number almost identical with that of last year the number of absentees was reduced by one-half. Unfortunately, however, the statistics of attendance for the year demonstrate unmistakably that no improvement whatever has taken place in the daily attendance of this school, the ratio of attendance to roll-number being as low as 74 per cent., as against 75 per cent. last year. Surprise has been expressed that the Inspector should this year have given the school nearly as bad a report as he did the year before, but, in view of the fact mentioned, it becomes plain enough that had he this year given the

school a good report it would have been simply because he had not the courage to do his duty. As I said in my report for 1891, this percentage of 74 may be interpreted to mean that every second child stays away from school every second day, with what disastrous results to his education may be easily guessed.

The mean ratio of attendance to roll-number for the whole district this year is 83·4, as against 81·7 last year, thus showing a general improvement of nearly 2 per cent. As the average for the colony generally for 1891 was 80·3, it is plain that the attendance in Westland as a whole, unsatisfactory as I cannot but think it, is at least as good as that in other places.

As a contribution towards the solution of the difficult problem of securing a better attendance at school, I think it is only right to call public attention to a plan brought under my notice by one of the teachers of this district—a plan which I am assured is highly successful in the locality in which it is in operation—viz., the North of Ireland. It seems that there is a regulation of the Education Department—first, that no child shall be promoted to a higher standard in the school who does not pass the Inspector's annual examination; and secondly and chiefly, that no child shall be allowed to sit at that examination who has not made at least three-fourths of the possible number of attendances, *i.e.*, who has not been present at least three-fourths the times the school has been open, and this whatever the cause of absence may have been. The efficacy of this plan of course depends on the interest felt by children and their parents in school-life and school standing, and some may think that the principle of emulation is not sufficiently strong in our colonial communities to hope much from this source; but if the experiment at Home is as successful as it is reported to be, where it is said to have turned all the parents into truant officers and the teachers have no difficulty on the score of attendance, so simple a plan seems at least worth a trial amongst ourselves.

Aided and other Small Schools.—I do not like to close this report without a word on the number of small schools, most of them merely aided schools as they are called, under this Board. These schools, situated for the most part in remote and sparsely-peopled districts, receive larger grants than the Board can well afford, yet exist notwithstanding under conditions most unfavourable for the work they have to do. Held not unfrequently in settlers' houses, usually in one of the family rooms, ill-equipped with school furniture, in fact hardly equipped at all, without maps, and often with the merest apology for a blackboard, the State school, forsooth, with its half a dozen scholars, feebly attempts to discharge its functions, and to keep the torch of learning alight for the next generation. The teachers of these schools I need hardly say deserve the fullest sympathy and encouragement the Board can give them. Necessarily young persons of slender attainments, their own education is often merely that of the school standards they are required to teach, and their own experience of school work just what they have gained a few years ago when themselves pupils in the same small country school. Uncertificated of course, and, what is worse, untrained, they do their best to interpret the syllabus and carry out its requirements as they understand them, or, at least, some of them. Nor is this all. The quiet so necessary to school work cannot be obtained in the immediate neighbourhood of the settlers' barn-yard fowls, who first make the walls resound with their din, and then startle the scholars, and once a year the Inspector, by making a hurried though erratic rush through the apartment; and, in order, perhaps, that the school may not suffer from monotony, the noises and incursions of the settlers' fowls are pleasingly varied by visits from the rising generation of his dogs and pigs, whilst the drone of the domestic scrubbing-brush at work on the floor of the next room, or the squalling of the family baby, or more frequently both together, complete the charm of scholastic peace and order. A few years of this, assisted by the circumstance that the school-room windows never open from the top, wear out the nerves of the teacher and give her a chronic headache, so that she is no longer able to pass her scholars at the Inspector's annual examination. She is then told by the local authority that she is no longer fit for her post, and must resign to make way for the correspondent's son, who has just passed the Sixth Standard.

This is no fancy picture; every word of it can be fully substantiated, and I have drawn attention to these facts to show—

1. The absolute need there is for securing greater comfort and privacy for these little schools, which can only be done by the erection in every instance of a small schoolhouse, entirely separate from the settler's dwellinghouse, and, if possible, some distance removed from it. It might even be made the indispensable and preliminary condition of Board help that this should be done, as the expense to the settler himself need be but small. And

2. The comparative inefficiency of the teaching in many small schools, whether merely aided schools or not, shows how mistaken was the policy that abolished the training colleges for teachers, and left the colony without any means of assisting candidates for the humbler school appointments to qualify themselves for their work. Small schools and small salaries for them there must ever be, and it is vital to the best interests of the colony that the children of outlying settlements in which alone these schools are found should receive sound and efficient teaching. Young teachers of exceptional ability who have attended University classes and write D.1 after their names will never accept such appointments, and hence some provision is indispensable by which young persons of small attainments and inferior abilities, who alone will accept them, should be initiated into their life-work, as well as receive some little additional stimulus to mental activity. For this purpose it is not examinations that are wanted—we have too many of them already—but teaching, instruction in the subjects the trainees will have to teach, and practical acquaintance with the routine of a large and first-class school in actual work. This can only be attained under present circumstances by residence at a training college free to *bonâ fide* candidates—even a residence of six months only would be better than nothing—whilst if such institutions existed it might be made illegal to appoint to the smallest school receiving State aid any teacher destitute of professional training. This is what ought to be, and our smaller schools at all events will never be fully efficient till something of this sort is done.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Westland. John Gammell, B.A., Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Percentage of Failures for each Standard.	
						Yrs. mos.	1892.	1891.
Above Standard VI.	51	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	76	7	0	21	48	14 4	30·4	51·2
" V. ...	150	9	6	45	90	13 7	33·3	60·6
" IV. ...	178	3	5	47	123	12 7	27·6	34·5
" III. ...	264	11	12	69	172	11 10	28·6	31·6
" II. ...	185	7	3	26	149	10 2	14·8	10·9
" I. ...	209	6	3	33	167	9 2	16·5	17·5
Preparatory ...	520	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Total ...	1,633	43	29	241	749	11 11	...	...

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Christchurch, 17th February, 1893.

We have the honour to present for the year 1892 the annual return which it is our duty to make as Inspectors of the North Canterbury Education District.

The record we have to submit is again, we regret to say, almost exclusively a record of examination results, and must necessarily continue to be so until the Board sees its way to provide an adequate inspecting staff to carry out the requirements of the regulations. For the past four years our functions have been becoming more and more the functions of mere examiners, until now, after subtracting the time spent in preparing statistics, and the month's annual vacation which the Board has recently been pleased to grant us, the work of examining, or work connected with it, leaves us little opportunity of fulfilling other equally important duties prescribed by the regulations, or duties which, though not specially demanded, Inspectors who have an earnest desire to improve the state of education in their district must still regard as equally incumbent on them. That the lament is not without just cause must be evident from the comparison of other education districts—Otago, with substantially the same number of children in standard classes, with fifty fewer persons employed whose work has to be estimated, and with only twenty-five more schools, maintaining, as it has done for years, three Inspectors and an assistant examiner, and yet suggesting (*vide* Inspectors' Report, 1891) further assistance as a "great relief," which would enable inspecting work to be fully carried out; Wellington, with little more than half, and Wanganui and Southland, with considerably less than half the number of children in North Canterbury, having each two Inspectors, while districts with one Inspector each show a similar or even greater disproportion.

There are now in operation in the district 175 schools, reckoning the Model School separately. Of these, two falling due at the end of the year were closed on account of illness, and could not therefore be examined. One new school not a full year in operation it was found convenient to group with next year's series; and one aided school in an outlying position, invited to send its children for examination to a convenient place, omitted to do so. The remaining 171 schools were examined during the year in accordance with the standard regulations, and one of them received in addition an interim examination to determine the progress made.

In the schools examined there were presented in the schedules 20,497 children, of whom 6,156, or 30·03 per cent. of the whole, were included in the preparatory classes, and 144 in the class above Standard VI. Of the 14,197 in the Standard Classes I.–VI., 13,746 were present, and were examined in subjects of the "pass" group individually, and with reference to "class" estimates in other subjects. Of this number, 11,404, or 55·64 per cent. of the total roll-number, satisfied their respective standard tests, and 1,917, or 14·39 per cent. of those examined in the Standard Classes I.–VI. (excluding exceptions) failed. The 6,156 children below Standard I. were examined as usual in classes with more or less detail, and the instruction they gave evidence of receiving was reported on in general terms. A majority of the children presented in the class above Standard VI. were examined again in the work of the Sixth Standard simply, superior proficiency being taken as a fair equivalent for the extra time spent in school; but in a considerable number of cases a special programme was submitted of work done in English, Latin, Euclid, or algebra, of which such an examination was made as the Inspector found time to give. The usual tabular statements of the summarised results in "pass," "class," and additional subjects respectively, and the required return from each school, form the appendices to this report.

In comparing the figures contained in these tables with the corresponding figures of the previous year, a considerable increase in the number of children presented in the upper classes is again the first thing to be noted, the totals for the classes Sv, Svi, and Svii being 284 above the total for 1891, which was itself an advance of 297 on the total for the previous year. In the preparatory division and Standard I. the tendency is in the other direction, the total for 1892 being 450 below that of 1891, while the latter is 532 below the total of 1890. In the preparatory classes themselves, the movement for many years has been steadily downwards, until from 1882, when, as far as we can make out from the returns available, 45 per cent. of the roll-number were included in this part of the schools at the time of examination, the proportion now reaches its lowest point, 30 per cent. —a very remarkable difference, which can be attributed only to the increased efficiency of our infant departments.

During the year a fillip has been given to the presentation in Standard I. by the departmental regulation which prescribes that a reason shall be assigned where children over eight years of age are still retained in Class P. It is not clear that the object of the regulation is to hasten the presentation, and any hastening of the presentation, unless the children are thoroughly well prepared or are exceptionally old, we have consistently deprecated; but there is no doubt its tendency is in that direction. We have kept a more or less complete record of children for whom the required reason has been assigned, and find that the proportion is substantially the same in town and country schools, though the town schools might naturally be expected to have an advantage in the earlier age at which children are able to attend. In both cases the proportion is as nearly as possible 5 per cent. of the total school enrolment. The probable explanation of the equality is that a higher ideal of what is necessary for the First Standard requirements prevails uniformly in the town schools than on the average in the country. The reasons assigned are almost invariably such as fall conveniently under the four heads—(1) insufficient time at school, (2) irregular attendance, (3) mental or physical incapacity, and (4) ill-health. Though these groups are not exclusive of each other, and though little may be learned from group (3), which is made up of very mixed elements, ranging from dulness to imbecility or physical deformity, yet the numbers ranked under each head may contain some features of interest. In fourteen city and suburban schools, with a roll-number of 8,161 children, there were in all 410 over eight years included in Class P on the date of examination. Of this number, 165 belong to group (1), 87 to group (2), 102 to group (3), and 56 to group (4). With the sufficiency of the reasons given we have pleasure in expressing ourselves fully satisfied: in this district there are, we believe, comparatively few children ranked at examination below Standard I. who ought, so far as the teacher's efforts are concerned, to occupy a higher position in the school classification.

The summarised results (Tables A and B) showing the proportion of passes and failures present a favourable appearance when placed side by side with the corresponding results of the previous year; but whatever values these proportions may under any circumstances possess—and it has never been pretended that they are to be taken as the full measure of progress in efficiency for the district as a whole, and still less for any individual school—it is necessary to bear in mind the altered conditions of the standard syllabus before coming to any conclusion from the comparison. Our own impression is that the efficiency of the standard preparation remains in general very much the same as before, the difference in numerical result being due in large measure to alterations in the programme prescribed, while something may also be set down in the two highest classes to the application of slightly easier tests in arithmetic. In the more mechanical features of the work, however, an upward tendency is still observable, and we think the Board has reason for congratulation in the progressive improvement made during recent years in schools of the smallest type. These are now frequently taught by young people of good attainments, who, while they take a healthy interest in physical sports and social enjoyments, yet retain the habit and ambition of self-improvement.

In Standard I. the new syllabus makes some addition to the requirements, but the addition is a slight one, if the apparently alarming demands in geometrical drawing are treated as "class"-subjects are treated. The children we have frequently found take much interest in their corners, squares, and triangles, and even derive some amusement from the use of the learned terms which give to the programme its formidable character. Though we have not thought it desirable to exact individual knowledge of these matters, and think, further, that the use of simpler terms in the lower classes would have been a wise restriction, yet the increasing importance of drawing has led us to advance another step in requiring the freehand and ruler exercises in this standard to be done on blank paper, whereas previously squared paper was generally employed. It has, then, been a little harder to secure a "pass" in the First Standard under the new syllabus than before.

Standard II. is in a very similar position with reference to any change in the requirements. The ground to be covered in spelling is a little wider, and more is prescribed in drawing; but only in requiring both curved- and straight-line exercises to be done on blank paper has any advances been made in testing individual ability in the subject, and we may here state that these exercises in quite a large number of cases are very well done indeed. In a good school it is not unusual to get Second Standard drawings that a year or two ago we should have been very thankful for in Standard III.

In Standard III. the chief change is the substitution of composition for grammar and composition as a "pass"-subject. As a result we get in more cases creditable exercises in the latter branch; but the "pass" is on the whole easier, since, if the subject is imperfectly taught, there is little difference shown between the better and worse members of the class, and to apply a rigid test would then be inexpedient. The mountains and rivers to be included in the geography are also defined. The list given, if several of the mountains be subtracted from it and a few rivers added, is co-extensive with the list to which questions have been confined in this district for several years, and does not therefore introduce any reduction in the work to be done, but it no doubt favours the children's success in so far as it prevents the teacher from going too far afield in the mistaken idea of what the Inspector may require.

In Standard IV. there is no easing-off of any moment in the work prescribed, and the inclusion of both grammar and composition as separate "pass"-subjects forms a distinct addition to the difficulty, though it does not often happen that a child's failure is determined by inability to satisfy the demands of the examination in these two subjects alone. In Standard V. and Standard VI., on the other hand, the standard "pass" is distinctly easier to obtain than before. Grammar, which is so often a stumbling-block in the way of teachers who have little taste for or knowledge of the subject, is no longer reckoned, and in most cases if a boy gets through in arithmetic he runs a very good chance of success.

Taking, then, the new syllabus as a whole as compared with the old one in respect of "pass" requirements, we may fairly expect as the result of the change considerably more success in Standards V. and VI., and a certain increase in Standard III., but in Standard IV., and to a very small extent in Standards II. and I., a certain decrease; and this is almost exactly what we find in making up the summary for the past year, the only exception being in Standard II., where the number representing the proportion shows a slight advance.

As regards the qualities generally observed in the more important subjects of instruction in this district, the reading is nearly always fluent, but only in the best schools of such a character in respect of enunciation as to give any pleasure to the listener. In point of intelligence or comprehension, as tested by oral or written questions, it is not often commendable, though this branch of the subject rarely gives evidence of complete neglect. In many cases where there is reason to believe, from the reading and answering, that the scholars have a fair idea of what is meant, the lack of training in precise expression, where a definite answer to a definite question is required, is a conspicuous defect, which it is hard to get our teachers to recognise and remedy.

In spelling, dictation, writing, and freehand drawing we are well satisfied with the proficiency to which our schools have attained. These subjects are for the most part distinctly good ones.

In arithmetic the teaching is commonly on the lines of proper methods, but the degree of success varies much, depending, as it does, very largely on qualities of intelligence and "thoroughness" in the teacher. Generally speaking, the mechanical part of the arithmetic up to Standard III. is very creditably done, and readiness in adding (without recourse to unit counting) is quite a usual feature in schools having any pretensions to good work.

More attention has been given to composition during the year. Composition has always been a necessary part of the "pass" in grammar; but, as correct grammar is a good deal harder to get than the very moderate kind of composition we could require along with it, the grammar previously received the larger share of attention. Grammar now very properly occupies a secondary place, and a better class of composition is at least an object of ambition; but we regret to find that in too many cases the grammar has so far fallen away in the two highest standards in consequence of the change as to be quite worthless. The training grammar affords is of no value whatever if the work is done in a slipshod fashion, and, although we are prepared to make our tests in the subject above Standard IV. somewhat easier than before, we certainly expect them to be done with a fair amount of precision.

The alternation now permitted in the geography and history of Standards IV., V., and VI. has proved of great advantage to the country school, and is in every way to be commended. To leave to the teacher the choice of matter in history also appears to us a very desirable thing, and is perhaps, with the limited time now left at the teacher's disposal, the only way of securing due recognition of anything that has been done; but the permission to rearrange the programme in geography is a gratuitous embarrassment to the examiner in dealing with a subject that is still required to be treated as a "pass"-subject. In this case the regulation should, in our view, make a better graduation than it does, and ask teachers and Inspectors to adhere to it.

In the kind of geography prescribed, the new syllabus is a very great improvement on the old one. While limiting the details that the "pass-grinder" makes it his highest ambition to compass, it gives scope to the intelligent and well-instructed teacher to impart valuable information and to make of the subject a true means of education. But there is this danger to be feared: that we shall now in many cases have to rest contented with the limited details, and get nothing more.

In science and object-lessons the work done in the district continues to present the same general features. Nearly always something is done, whatever be its value, the branch generally finding most favour with country schools being agriculture. In the large schools the triennial rotation of chemistry, physiology, and physics is the common arrangement, and the teacher is generally both competent and effective. In the choice of object and similar lessons for the lower classes there is too seldom a judicious exercise of discretion. The subjects chosen are such as are to be found in the published text-books, and there is rarely much evidence of an attempt to graduate and arrange them into a complete course having any relation to the kind of instruction provided in the upper classes. Too frequently also it is difficult to choose from the list submitted any substantial number that might be considered specially designed to cultivate the power of observation and give an interest in surrounding things—the main purpose of such lessons in the elementary stages.

Under the head of "additional subjects," as much is done in our schools as we can reasonably expect from them. In poetry, matter of lessons, and needlework nearly all are represented. In singing there must always be a number where the subject is not taught, and on drill there is little profit in spending time where the children are few. We could wish that the matter of the reading-lessons possessed more substantial value, but the fault is here the fault of the reading-books. In poetry, pieces might occasionally be selected from other sources with much advantage, especially in the Second Standard, where the pieces contained in the reading-book are exceptionally poor. The needlework of the schools receives the earnest attention of our mistresses, and for the time at their disposal—generally two hours weekly—very creditable work is produced. It is particularly gratifying to find our young teachers taking so much pains with it. School Committees generally regard a good needlewoman with favour, but for the interest taken we have also to thank the spirit with which the head mistresses have taken up the matter in the large schools.

We have, &c.,

L. B. Wood, M.A.,
W. J. Anderson, LL.D., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, North Canterbury Education Board.

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.
									Yrs. m.
Above Standard VI.	144	...	...	...	...	0·70	...	59	...
Standard VI. ...	905	16	16	135	738	4·42	3·60	131	14 1
" V. ...	1,744	48	51	362	1,283	8·51	6·26	151	13 1
" IV. ...	2,559	120	89	565	1,785	12·48	8·71	162	12 2
" III. ...	3,352	113	164	565	2,510	16·35	12·25	167	11 2
" II. ...	2,921	84	79	163	2,595	14·25	12·66	168	9 11
" I. ...	2,716	70	26	127	2,493	13·25	12·16	167	8 9
Preparatory ...	6,156	...	...	...	...	30·03	...	171	...
Totals for 1892	20,497	451	425	1,917	11,404	100·00	55·64	171	11 6*
Totals for 1891	20,816	511	350	2,065	11,237	100·00	53·99	165	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

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

Classes.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Failed, of Sum of Passes and Failures: Percentage of Failures.	
					1892.	1891.
Standard VI.	1·77	1·77	14·92	81·55	15·46	21·39
" V.	2·75	2·92	20·76	73·57	22·01	27·43
" IV.	4·69	3·48	22·08	69·75	24·04	22·02
" III.	3·37	4·89	16·86	74·88	18·37	21·78
" II.	2·88	2·70	5·58	88·84	5·91	7·42
" I.	2·58	0·96	4·68	91·79	4·85	3·68
All classes ...	3·18	2·99	13·50	80·33	14·39	15·52

TABLE C.

"Class"-subjects.	Average Marks.	No. of Schools.	Additional Subjects.	Average Marks.	No. of Schools.
Grammar	46·57	167	Repetition and recitation ...	12·68	170
History	44·39	168	Drill and exercises ...	10·99	146
Geography	55·51	169	Singing	11·16	129
Elementary science, object-lessons, &c.	43·83	170	Needlework	14·58	167
Average of percentage on "class"-subjects ...	47·79	170	Subject-matter of reading-lessons	12·49	170
			Average of additional marks	57·20	170

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Education Office, Timaru, 7th March, 1893.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1892.

At the beginning of the year there were fifty-nine schools open, and during the year new schools were opened at Blackburn and Ashwick Flat. The Redcliff School was closed for the greater part of the year, but was reopened after being removed to a site approved by a majority of the householders as being more convenient for their children than the old site. The Otaio School, which has had a very small attendance for several years, was closed at the end of the year.

The scholarship examination, the preparation of statistics and reports relating to the previous year's work, the annual inspections of the schools, and the pupil-teachers' examination occupied my time till the end of July; and from the beginning of August to the end of December every school-day was taken up with work connected with the standard examinations. The results of the examinations were forwarded to the teachers within a day or two of my visit to each school.

The following table shows the results of the examinations for the whole district:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed. Yrs.	mos.
Above Standard VI.	84	..	..	...	...	...	
Standard VI.	225	9	17	25	174	14	0
" V.	391	21	10	84	276	12	11
" IV.	602	33	27	127	415	12	2
" III.	770	40	32	142	556	11	2
" II.	662	20	7	46	589	10	1
" I.	685	23	19	54	589	8	9
Preparatory	1,583	...	...	...	...	...	
Totals for 1892	5,002	146	112	478	2,599	11	6*
Totals for 1891	4,975	184	131	616	2,322	11	6*

* Mean average.

The number of pupils presented on the examination schedules was 5,002, of whom eighty-four had already passed the Sixth Standard, 1,583 were in the preparatory classes, and 3,335 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards. Of the 3,335 in Standards I. to VI., 3,189 were at school on the day of examination, and 2,599 passed the standards for which they were presented. Of those who were not successful, 112 were exceptions, and 478 failures. The percentage of failures, estimated on the standard class rolls exclusive of absentees and exceptions, was 15·5, as against 20·9 for last year. The percentage of passes was 51·9, as against 46·6 for last year; but it is to be remembered that the highest possible percentage of passes is not 100. Had no child been absent from the examination, nor any one failed in his standard, the highest possible percentage of passes would then have been achieved, and in this district it would have been 66·4, which is the proportion that the number presented in Standards I. to VI. bears to the total school-roll. The average percentage of marks for "class"-subjects was 52, and the average of marks for additional subjects 55. The results as a whole indicate an advance in the efficiency of our schools, and this is quite in accordance with what has come under my notice, both on my inspection and on my examination visits.

In accordance with Regulation 5, whenever children more than eight years old were presented in Class P. the teachers gave me a written explanation of the reason for not presenting such children in Standard I. The number of cases requiring explanation amounted to 281, and they were distributed over fifty of the fifty-eight schools examined. After a careful analysis of the explanations submitted, I find that 40 per cent. are set down to irregularity of attendance, no particular cause being assigned for this irregularity; 10 per cent. to irregularity caused by the delicate health of the children; 30 per cent. to shortness of the period of attendance since their first enrolment; while 20 per cent. of the children were returned as too dull to be prepared for the examination. As far as the teachers are concerned, I am quite satisfied that they have honestly striven to do their best for the children, and that their explanations on the whole should be received as sufficient. I say "on the whole," for I believe that several of the teachers have made a little too free with the plea of dulness on the part of the children, when a truer explanation might have been found in some deficiency of teaching skill on their own part, an explanation, however, which it would be too much to expect to be forthcoming. Though the teachers may be exonerated from blame with respect to the irregular attendants, from the parents the plea of irregularity could never be accepted as a sufficient reason for their children's backwardness, for they might very well be asked to go back a step and account for the irregularity. In my opinion, the total number of children concerning whom an explanation was demanded is too great by about one-third, and those parents whose negligence or indifference leads to the too frequent absences of their children will be most to blame if a substantial reduction is not made in the future.

"PASS"-SUBJECTS.—In the majority of our schools one generally finds the reading of most of the pupils pleasant to listen to. Now and then, however, a school is visited where this part of the examination is a trying ordeal for the scholars and a tiresome business for the examiner. The usual excuse proffered by the teachers in these cases is that with so many subjects to attend to they cannot give the necessary time to the teaching and practice of reading. But this explanation counts for very little, since in other schools where the stress of subjects is equally heavy, and the conditions as to staff and numbers are in every way similar, not only is the reading of first-rate quality, but the other subjects also are successfully taught. It is not a question of a little more or a little less time that makes the difference; it is altogether a matter of teaching. More time might mean more practice; but this might not mend matters; it is practice of the right kind that tells.

The dictation and spelling tests have in every instance been taken from the reading-book in use by the class, so that none can complain that the pupils were given words to spell with which they had never had an opportunity of becoming acquainted. And, further, it has always been my practice to allow the class-teacher to give out the passages for dictation and the spelling tests. Even with these advantages, the appearance made by the pupils in a great many schools was disappointing. There were some splendid exceptions, prominent amongst which were the two largest schools in the district. On examination-day, if strict account were taken of all mistakes in spelling occurring in the compositions and letters of the children, the number of those who pass in spelling would be considerably reduced. Teachers and examiners get used to seeing the commonest words tortured almost beyond recognition; and one must groan or smile, according to his humour, as he scores his pencil through the blunders in the body of a pupil's letter; but there is clear proof of negligent supervision when one letter after another has the familiar "Yours truly" written "your's

Truly," or "Your's truely." The letters which closed with "your's struley," "You's Trury," and "Your truthly love" were beyond criticism.

The writing in copy-books is generally good, and in a large number of schools both teachers and pupils take pride in having the exercise-books well kept and the writing and figuring carefully done. The effect of this is seen in the improved appearance of the examination-papers, which are now less seldom open to objection on the score of scribbling and general untidiness.

Notwithstanding the improvement which has been made in the treatment of arithmetic in our schools during the last few years, failures in this subject are still very numerous, though not more so than in spelling and in composition. Every year greater attention is being given to the form in which the sums are set down, and this of itself is a very great aid to accuracy. As a rule, neatness and correctness go together, and with these rapid working is frequently conjoined. The untidy worker—the boy who scribbles down his computations, and is in too great a hurry to put down the explanation of each step as he proceeds—frequently gets into a fog before he is done, and, groping about to find out his position, he finds his time has slipped away, for time never flies faster than when you are working against it on an examination-paper. As a relief from the severe strain of problems in vulgar and decimal fractions, from the puzzling over questions in proportion, stocks, discount, partnership, &c., it would be an excellent thing to give the higher standards an occasional half-hour at simple addition or at addition of money columns. Let the pupils have a fair fight for the first place in accuracy and speed. The boy who is dull enough when problems are to be solved brightens at the prospect of a struggle in which everything is plain and straightforward. Carrying it through with spirit and good-humour, the teacher will find this practice keenly relished by his scholars, and a capital training for them.

In the revised syllabus composition takes rank as a "pass"-subject, grammar, with which it was associated in the old syllabus, being now relegated to the list of "class"-subjects, except in the Fourth Standard, where it still holds its place as a "pass"-subject. The prominence thus given to composition has had the effect of procuring for its teaching a larger share of the teacher's time and attention, and the scholars have had more practice in this subject than they were accustomed to have in former sessions. Considerable improvement was therefore to be looked for in the essays and letters of the scholars, and in the majority of the schools this expectation has been realised. Numerous defects still mar the exercises given in by the pupils, even where the teaching has been efficient, and the instances of really worthless exercises were more common than they might have been if certain of the teachers had taken pains always to prepare themselves for the lessons they were to give, and had been more careful to have all faults in the children's exercises corrected, and the exercises rewritten.

In spite of the flutter of excitement produced by the changes in the drawing regulations, and the despairing attitude assumed by some teachers with regard to the new requirements, a great deal of excellent work has been accomplished by those who set themselves at once to make the best of what every one must admit was no light undertaking. In the majority of the schools the requirements have been fully complied with in Standards I., II., and III.; and in the best-taught classes it was a positive pleasure to see how deftly the little hands manipulated the rulers and set-squares in drawing horizontal lines and vertical lines, angles and triangles, squares and hexagons. The children appeared thoroughly to enjoy this part of their examination; and in the oral questioning on their knowledge of the various figures they eagerly contended with one another for the privilege of answering. In some schools, again, "the fingers were all thumbs"; and the whole business—acute and obtuse angles, isosceles triangles and scalene triangles, diagonals and diameters, segments and sectors—was a confusing puzzle. In the higher standards there was a wide range in the quality and amount of work done in different schools, but on the whole there was good reason to be satisfied with the endeavours of the teachers to comply with the requirements.

"Class"-subjects.—Among the "class"-subjects the highest marks were awarded for geography, which is a "class"-subject in Standards II. and IV., and a "pass"-subject in Standards III., V., and VI. There is great want of intelligence in the treatment of this subject in many schools; and in very few is full advantage taken of the numerous ways and means by which the teacher of capacity and resource can make the geography lesson one of the most instructive and delightful lessons of the day. Grammar, formerly a "pass"-subject, was placed among the "class"-subjects in the revised syllabus. On this account teachers have devoted less time to it; but where it was well taught before no great falling-off in the quality of the analysis and parsing has been strikingly noticeable. In about a dozen schools very good marks were obtained; but there were just as many schools whose marks for grammar were far from satisfactory. The freedom which the revised syllabus allows to teachers in the selection of lessons in history has not so far led to any marked improvement in the appearance made by the children while under examination. The dozen dates stipulated for in the regulations were almost always as well known as the multiplication table; but, strange to tell, some had learned the dates of events which were not included in the selected lessons. They had the date, but nothing more. In every school science and object-lessons were taught; and in many instances the character of the work done was deserving of commendation.

Additional Subjects (Marks 0 to 20).—In every school the children were presented for examination in recitation and in the subject-matter of their reading-lessons, and the average mark obtained was 12 in each subject. Drill was taught in all but six of the schools; but singing had not been taken up at all in about one-third of the schools, and in only ten schools was there any part-singing. For drill and for singing the average mark was 11. In ten schools no sewing was taught, these schools being in charge of men, and the average attendance being below the limit which must be reached before a sewing-mistress is allowed by the Board. The average mark for sewing was 14.

In my report last year attention was directed to the question of irregularity of attendance. An analysis of the quarterly returns discloses no improvement this year. It is so far satisfactory that

we have not gone back. In 1891 the average attendance for the year as the percentage of the mean of the average weekly roll of the four quarters was 80; and we stand at 80 for the year 1892. A most gratifying feature of the year's work was the excellent attendance of the children at the examinations. In nineteen schools not one child belonging to the standard classes was absent, and in eleven schools only one child from each school. In one school with 547 on the roll two children were absent; in another, with 289, three were absent; and in a third, with 180, two were absent; and in each instance a satisfactory explanation of the child's absence was forthcoming. In the schools as a whole, out of every hundred in the standards, ninety-seven were in their places on the examination-day.

In concluding this report I gladly bear testimony to the faithfulness with which our teachers as a body continue to discharge their onerous duties; and, though all did not command success, few indeed did not deserve it. I have, &c.,

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

The Chairman, South Canterbury Education Board.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

We have the honour to submit the following report on the schools of the Otago District for the year 1892.

During the year all the schools were examined, and nearly all were visited for inspection. Of those not visited all but one were closed when the neighbouring schools were inspected. The examination of the schools occupied us continuously from the 16th May to the 16th December, with a break of four weeks at midwinter chiefly devoted to inspection. Of these weeks, one was the midwinter holiday time. Inspection, the selection of pupil-teachers, and various inquiries occupied us continuously from the 15th February to the 16th May. The remainder of the year was filled up with the preparation of questions for the pupil-teacher and scholarship examinations, conducting these examinations, examining the written answers, and preparing the usual report and the statistical returns required by the Minister of Education.

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. mos.
Infants	7,555	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard I. ...	2,783	58	52	131	2,542	91	9 1
" II. ...	2,843	64	99	146	2,534	89	9 11
" III. ...	3,056	63	130	450	2,413	79	11 3
" IV. ...	2,655	68	121	519	1,947	73	12 3
" V. ...	1,925	50	60	317	1,498	78	12 11
" VI. ...	1,205	23	20	88	1,074	89	13 10
Above Standard VI. ...	300	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	22,322	326	482	1,651	12,008	...	11 6·5*

* Mean of average age.

There were presented for examination 22,322 pupils, of whom 14,467 were entered for examination in one or other of the standards, being 225 more than the corresponding number for last year. In all, 14,141 were present and were examined in Standards I. to VI. Of these, 12,008 passed the standard for which they were presented—that is to say, 85 per cent. of the pupils examined in standards passed. Last year this percentage was 81, and in former years it has never been higher than 84. The percentage of failures (the exceptions being omitted for this computation) was 12, a number considerably lower than those of recent years.

The average percentage of marks for "class"-subjects was 58; last year it was 54. The average of marks for additional subjects was 71, and, as the total marks that can be gained for these subjects is now 100, this result shows a marked advance on the number for last year—viz., an average of 69 marks out of a total of 120.

The number of absentees continues remarkably small—326 out of a total of 14,467; and the number of exceptions has not increased.

We give, as usual, the following table, which shows the number of schools in which the percentage of failures was low, moderate, or high, and furnishes a rough idea of their efficiency :—

	Percentage of Failures.
27 schools (equal to 14 per cent. of the total number)	0 to 5
45 schools (equal to 23 per cent. of the total number)	6 to 10
57 schools (equal to 29 per cent. of the total number)	11 to 20
43 schools (equal to 22 per cent. of the total number)	21 to 30
19 schools (equal to 9 per cent. of the total number)	31 to 40
5 schools (equal to 2 per cent. of the total number)	41 to 50
2 schools (equal to 1 per cent. of the total number)	51

A comparison of these figures with those of previous years shows a very decided increase in the number of schools with a comparatively low percentage of failures—*i.e.*, of comparatively high efficiency.

The revised regulations of the Education Department came into force at the beginning of the year, and all the schools, except the small one at Nevis Valley, were examined in accordance with their provisions. In the larger schools examined before July, the headmasters were unanimous in preferring that the examinations should be conducted under the revised syllabus. The course of study in the new syllabus remains substantially the same as before. Contrary to expectation, the changes made by it are not all in the direction of lessening the heavy burden of work imposed on teachers. The course of instruction in geography has been considerably curtailed in Standards V. and VI.; that in history remains much as it was; while the course of instruction in drawing is now considerably heavier than before. In one respect, however, the new syllabus is a great improvement on any of its predecessors; it allows great freedom in grouping classes for instruction in grammar, geography, and history, a boon which the teachers of the smaller schools greatly appreciate, though they do not always take advantage of it as fully as they might. If the requirements in drawing, especially in Standards IV. and VI., had been more moderate, and history had been treated in all the standards as a supplementary reading subject, without special examination, beyond requiring that the language of the history-books read should be understood, the new syllabus would, in our judgment, be well adapted to the circumstances of the larger public schools.

The examination results for the year show a very considerable improvement on those of recent years. The percentage of passes in standards has risen very decidedly in Standards III., V., and VI., and slightly in the other standards, except Standard I. The age at which the standards are on the average passed has declined one month in Standards II., V., and VI., and has gone up one month in Standards I. and IV., as compared with that in the corresponding standards for last year. No fewer than 1,217 pupils over eight years of age were not presented for Standard I., but in most cases what appeared to be sufficient reasons were assigned for their being withheld from examination. The reasons most commonly given were lateness in entering school, irregularity of attendance, and dullness. Of the validity of these reasons it is very difficult for us to form a trustworthy opinion, but we cannot but feel disappointed that the age at which Standard I. is on the average passed should continue to be so high as nine years and one month. With regular attendance and efficient teaching, pupils should pass at that age if they did not enter school until they were six and a half years old. It seems certain that the great majority of infant pupils enter school at a lower age than this, and, indeed, that the rate of progress in the infant classes is less than in any of the higher classes. There can hardly be a doubt that the yearly standard examination in the latter is the cause of their more steady progress.

There is little occasion for our referring at any length to the various branches of instruction. The work of the schools has been in hardly any respect inferior, and in several ways it has been superior to that of previous years. Except in a few schools, and in cases where changes of teachers have been frequent, reading improves in readiness and natural expression. There is less progress in the comprehension of the language of the lessons, and the treatment of this matter often strikes us as barren and mechanical, and but little fitted to stimulate the interest and understanding of the pupils. They are too seldom led to picture and realise in imagination the scenes of which they read, and to carry light from their conception of the whole to illuminate points that are difficult or obscure. In spite of much insistence on the benefits of preparatory study of English lessons, and the need of direction and training of teachers in the art of conducting it, we fear there is, in the majority of schools even, little intelligent preparation, and perhaps equally little effort to encourage it by testing it shortly at the opening of every English lesson. This the teacher cannot do unless he has himself given the lesson some careful study, and there is reason to think that this is much more rarely bestowed than might be expected. We see in many cases evidence of preparation of a sort—viz., a diligent conning of the list of words explained at the end of the lessons, the scholar learning them much as they would the multiplication table, without any reference to the context in which they occur, or consideration of the sense of the passage as a whole. This mechanical process is one that no true teacher should rest satisfied with or even tolerate. Dictionaries are seldom seen in the pupils' hands, and when they are they are usually so meagre as to be of little use. In this and some other matters parents show great indifference to providing their children with the necessary aids to study. Their notion seems to be that everything should be poured by the teacher into the minds of their children, while the friends of education and the foes of cramming desire above all things to see him train his scholars to use their own powers, to make intelligent use of dictionaries and other helps to study, and to work out as much at first hand without assistance or prompting as may be. It is especially in the smaller schools that well-directed preparatory study is so necessary, for in them the time for teaching reading is brief, and a wise economy in the use of it is of the highest importance.

The extra time needed to overtake the increased requirements of the new syllabus in drawing has been generally found at the expense of writing, for the practice of which, particularly in the smaller schools, too little time is now available. Two or three short lessons a week are wholly insufficient to give an adequate training in this art. We notice with satisfaction that vertical or upright handwriting has been introduced in a number of schools with very promising results. In writing in this style the pupil can sit straight up, with the spine erect, and the head and eyes looking fair and straight at the sheet—an advantage of great importance for the physical well-being of the scholars. We shall be glad to see this system of writing more widely used. The attitudes in which children are allowed to sit at writing, and the way they are allowed to hold the pen, frequently call for censure. We can explain the prevalence of these faults only by remarkable indifference on the part of teachers. In recent years a penholder, known as the Archimedean penholder, has come into the market, and has found its way into some schools. The use of this holder in the lower classes would go far to prevent the acquisition of bad habits of writing.

The formidable-looking body of instruction in the form and relations of lines and simple geometrical figures now added to the drawing course of Standards I., II., and III. has proved less burdensome than teachers at first expected it to be. Where the figures, &c., have been taught with constant reference to drawings and concrete examples, as the syllabus manifestly contemplates, the work has proved easy and not uninteresting. Young children readily notice differences in the sizes of angles, in the positions of lines, and in the forms of simple rectilineal figures, and when they are made quite familiar with these by the study of drawings and concrete examples, they have no difficulty in remembering their technical names, which, indeed, are found convenient labels for facts which they perfectly apprehend. In a good many schools there has been far too little study of concrete examples and conspicuous drawings; and formal definitions have been committed to memory before the figures they describe have been sufficiently illustrated to make their forms and obvious properties readily understood. In nearly all the larger schools this error has been avoided, and we there found abundant concrete examples of the figures studied, the handiwork for the most part of the pupils themselves, to enable us to readily test their knowledge of them. In most of the smaller schools such concrete examples were conspicuous by their absence. In a few schools the figures to be studied by each standard were conspicuously drawn in chalk on a large sheet of brown paper affixed to the wall of the class-room. This is an excellent arrangement, and it might be adopted with advantage in all schools. These charts allow comparison of the figures to be made without loss of time, and should be so placed as to be readily accessible for measurement of the lines and angles by the teachers or pupils, a large pair of compasses being used for this purpose. Compasses should be provided for every class-room, as they are necessary for the construction of many of the figures, and for comparing the length of lines are much more convenient than a ruler. Teachers, without exception, are of opinion that the drawing course is now very heavy, and they find that the geometrical drawing in the Standard IV. class takes up so much time as to render it extremely difficult to give sufficient practice in the more important freehand drawing. In this opinion we entirely concur.

Grammar is now ranked as a "class"-subject in all the standards except Standard IV., an arrangement that meets with unqualified approval. Few would regret if that of Standard IV. were placed in the same position. We have found it much easier to examine grammar orally than any of the "class"-subjects, and have been well satisfied with the efficiency of the teaching in a large number of schools. In the smaller schools, however, a considerable proportion of the rather numerous failures in Standard IV. is due to weakness in this subject. There is a tendency once more to allow the children of this class to give the parts of speech off-hand without first clearly working out the use and relation of the words to be dealt with. This is to substitute guessing for observation and reasoning; it is making a deliberate sacrifice of the educative value of simple parsing.

Composition, formerly bracketed with grammar, is now a separate "pass"-subject in all the standards. Throughout the year the composition subjects were taken from a list of topics on which the scholars had already written exercises or essays for their teachers, an arrangement of which notice was given by circular more than a year ago. By taking only subjects with which the children were familiar we hoped that the difficulty in finding matter to make up an exercise of reasonable length would cease. This expectation has been largely realised, but in a number of the smaller schools there has been little improvement in this respect. In the majority of schools, including nearly all the larger ones, very fair work is done in this subject. The selection of topics for exercises has usually been made with good judgment; but there are cases in which all are taken from the reading-books, and not a single exercise deals with topics connected with the daily life and experience of the children. Such subjects are of great value, as they stimulate really original work—the work of original observation and original construction; and we think such familiar topics should form at least a third of the composition exercises of the year. In a few cases we were surprised to find the composition exercises of classes of considerable size almost word for word the same. This is a mark of cramming rather than of teaching, and is chiefly due to mistaking drill in the construction of sentences of the simplest type for the whole art of composition, a mistake fostered by one of the text-books most commonly used in this district. Variety in the treatment of the topics written about should be specially encouraged, original handling should be commended, and exercises showing this quality might with advantage be read out for the improvement of all. It is quite evident that in many cases the virtue of variety of handling is little considered. For the future the required number of subjects will be more strictly insisted on.

Geography is now a "class"-subject in Standards II. and IV., and a "pass"-subject in the other standards. In the two higher standards the scope of the teaching has been very much curtailed, but we have seldom found a corresponding improvement in thoroughness and intelligence of study. Physical geography has on the whole been poorly taught. The oral examination of the work of Standard IV. has left on our minds a less favourable impression of the skill with which the subject is taught than the partly-written and partly-oral examination of the higher classes. The work for the class is, however, wide and multifarious, and during most of the year useful aids to its study have not been available. We fully expect that our experience in the coming year will be more satisfactory. The mathematical geography prescribed for Standard IV. requires a good deal of practical illustration which has not been attempted in many of the smaller schools. A small revolving globe is for this purpose indispensable, but many schools have nothing of the sort. Pictorial plans and illustrations of the cause of the seasons should also be found in every school. In former years numbers of terrestrial globes were distributed among the larger schools. It is now quite unusual to find one of these fit to be used, and we regret to say that they have been very badly cared for. Considering how these somewhat costly globes have been abused, we would not advise the Board to incur much expense in supplying globes; still, a revolving globe of some kind is now a necessity for even the smallest school.

To teachers who care for history, the freedom in the choice of subjects of study accorded by the new syllabus should be very welcome. But there are not so many who do care for history, or know it well enough to make their treatment of the chosen twenty-five persons or events very interesting or instructive. In the great majority of cases the teaching of the subject has followed the lines of the book read, and few have seriously attempted to give a picture in outline of even the greatest personages in the history of England. It appears to us that this is sometimes due to want of adequate knowledge. To those who desire a fuller knowledge of the history of England than the necessarily brief and all too political text-books used in the schools supply, we would recommend the excellent text-book of English history by Mr. Osmond Airy, published a year or two ago by Longmans and Co. Every teacher should have books of this kind at hand from which to draw inspiration and information too. Wisely used, the lines of historical teaching laid down in the new syllabus would make the subject attractive as well as instructive to children, and we hope that an earnest effort will be more generally made to attain this end. Teaching about a prominent historical personage that is exhausted by two or three questions given by the teacher himself is not likely to minister much to information, or to fostering a taste for biographical and historical reading, which ought to be one of the teacher's chief aims in his handling of this subject.

We generally look through the school exercise-books at the time of inspection, and in the majority of the schools they are well kept and neatly and carefully written. These exercises are in such cases an important aid to writing. There are not wanting, however, schools in which the work in exercise-books is positively discreditable and a serious hindrance to progress in writing. Occasionally we have found the correction of the work in exercise-books much neglected; and it is very doubtful if the corrections made with so much pains and perseverance by most teachers are to any considerable extent helpful to their pupils. If the errors were marked or underlined by the teacher, and corrections were then made by the pupil to the best of his knowledge, the exercises would be much more profitable.

It is some years since the arrangement of the science course was left largely in the hands of teachers, with a direction that a three years' course of lessons should be made out and followed. In a good number of schools a suitable three years' course has been arranged, but in many it is still a desideratum. The subject is well taught in a few schools, moderately in a considerable number, and in the rest, for the most part, poorly, without enthusiasm and insight, and too often without adequate knowledge. But it must be recognised that worthy instruction in science demands much more time than can at present be allowed for it—at any rate, in the smaller schools. More time could be found for it if history were made a reading-subject only.

The other subjects of instruction receive, for the most part, adequate attention, and do not call for special comment.

Owing to the enthusiasm with which the "Arbor-day" movement has been taken up, a good many young trees have been planted in the school-grounds in most rural districts, and, as they have been nursed through the summer with some care, many should grow up to give beauty to the school-grounds and shelter to the scholars of the future. Many of the School Committees have shown a lively interest in this matter.

We have, &c.,
D. Petrie,
W. Taylor, } Inspectors.
P. Goyen,

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

Education Office, Invercargill, 7th March, 1893.

Sir,—

We have the honour to present our general report for the year ended the 31st December, 1892.

At the close of the year 120 schools were in operation, 119 of which were examined, and 117 inspected. The examination-results for the whole district are summarised in the following table:—

Summary of Results for Whole District.

Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	102	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	382	13	15	36	318	14 2
" V. ...	742	15	30	161	536	13 4
" IV. ...	1,073	32	79	258	704	12 5
" III. ...	1,335	47	79	267	942	11 5
" II. ...	1,147	32	24	63	1,028	10 3
" I. ...	1,292	25	32	42	1,193	9 2
Preparatory ...	2,980	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	9,053	164	259	827	4,721	11 9·5*

* Mean of average age.

On the information contained in the above table we do not deem it necessary to comment at length. It is worthy of note, however, that, whereas the total roll-number as compared with that

of last year has increased from 8,605 to 9,053, the number of children in the preparatory class is less by 46 than in 1891. The ranks of Standard IV. and upper classes have been swelled by the addition of 277 pupils, while Standard I. shows an increase of 223. A small part at least of the latter increase is due to a misinterpretation on the part of not a few teachers of Regulation 5, concerning the inspection of schools. This regulation, which provides that a head teacher shall furnish the Inspector with a written explanation of the reason for not presenting children more than eight years old in Standard I., has been construed to imply a compulsory presentation of such children for standard examination.

Summarising the reasons given for the retention of children above eight years of age in the preparatory class, we find—(1) That some pupils had been enrolled only a very short time before the examination; (2) that others, whose school life had been longer, had attended very indifferently; and (3) that the rest were intellectually weak. The number of children thus kept back does not appear to be unduly large, while the reasons assigned could in almost every case be accepted as satisfactory.

Of the work done in the educational field in this district during the past year we think there is reason to speak hopefully. The teachers have for the most part been loyal to the Board, to their pupils, and to the cause of education; and though in some places the following notes appear to cast censure on the minority, we wish to suggest what ought to be rather than pourtray what is.

Were we asked to name the class in which the best work is done by individual pupils we should say Standard VI. The reasons are not far to seek: many of the pupils look forward to appointments of various kinds; they are expected by their parents to bring credit to their family by passing the highest examination in the primary school curriculum; with added years they begin to have dawnings of independence and responsibility; and, above all, they now enjoy, in fullest measure, the teacher's confidence and sympathy. There is, withal, even in this standard, a residue of pupils who, not without ambition, but without the effort that should attend it, would gladly pass with somewhat less than the minimum of necessary attainments, and who are sometimes interceded for by the teacher on the plea that, be the result what it may, their school career is ended. Now a glance at the syllabus will show that pupils who pass Standard VI. are expected by the Education Department to do honour to the national system, in whatever positions it may be their lot to be placed. Being thus a kind of passport to the initial steps of an upward business career, a pass in Standard VI. should be granted to those alone who clearly establish a legitimate claim to it.

The practice of privately examining young people desirous of passing Standard VI. we must, through stress of work, discontinue. In any case it is manifestly unfair that those who are barely proficient in the pass subjects merely should, with respect to Civil Service and other appointments, be placed on the same level as, or even on a higher level than, pupils who have fully met the requirements of the syllabus. Young people who, having left school without passing Standard VI., subsequently find that a pass in that standard would be advantageous, should present themselves for examination in one of the public schools and submit to the standard and other tests in the ordinary way.

These notes on the status of Standard VI. pupils suggest a brief review of the general and special ends of primary education, with reference, more or less direct, to the manner in which they are secured in this district, and with a further reference to the extent to which our pupils are furnished with the mental and moral arms necessary for sucessfully facing the realities of life. It is an old truth, but a truth becoming every day clearer to thinking people, that the root principle in education is development—mental, moral, and physical. Not only are pupils to be developed in these three directions; they are themselves also, by having their minds stored with energising power, to acquire facility in, and be enriched with a bent towards, self-development. As was said in a recent speech by a well-known public man in England, "The end of all culture is to elevate the moral, to nerve, enrich, and discipline the mental, nature; it should fertilise and liberalise as well as enlighten." In a rising community such as ours, however, the practical and more immediately utilitarian phases of education necessarily and rightly bulk largely in the minds of the public. There are certain things which, for the common duties of citizenship, our pupils should be able to know, and to know unerringly, if not even unreflectively. But, as has been well said, reading and writing by themselves are no more education than the lane that leads into the field is the field itself; and teachers might just as well try to feed a flock of sheep on the flints of the lane as to educate children by giving them mere reading and writing. Viewing primary education from the double standpoint of practical and developmental value we venture the following remarks on the various subjects as taught in our schools.

Though the results in arithmetic sometimes appear to be indifferent it is really well taught—from the point of view of mental development, perhaps the best taught of our common school subjects. On the practical side also it is for the most part treated in an efficient manner, though, in this connection, mental arithmetic might be more largely employed in familiarising pupils with dealings incident to every-day life; and, in the same connection, each of the schools in the district might with great advantage to the pupils be provided with sets of the weights and measures actually in use.

The earnest seekers after effective methods in the teaching of reading are comparatively few, and the general standard of proficiency in this subject is correspondingly low. On its practical side the subject suffers throughout the whole school course from a rooted aversion that many teachers have to the use of the blackboard in helping their pupils to encounter difficulties. Children are but little enlightened by off-hand statements; their minds should, if possible, be riveted to the matter in hand by means of an appeal to the senses. In teaching infants to read, pupil-teachers should always select their own materials for lessons, and, with the sympathy of their pupils, work them up on the blackboard. They would thus form a habit of prime importance in the teaching of reading. Regarded as a means of mental development, reading, we fear, occupies a very humble place in many of our schools. Seldom do teachers pause to vivify by apt illustration,

example, or allusion what must loom in the minds of uninformed youth as little more than mere forms of words; more seldom still do they pause to point out the beauty, force, and depth of thoughts or the loveliness of the form in which they are expressed. There is, in country schools, but little time to devote to this aspect of the reading-lesson; but if only one selected paragraph in each lesson were exhaustively treated the pupils would derive great and lasting advantages.

Spelling, as far as children are concerned, is almost entirely a matter of practice, the chief mental power evoked being memory. In this, as in other subjects, teachers sometimes forget to point out to their pupils the readiest path to mastery, thereby depriving the exercise of whatever educative value it possesses. At the same time spelling may be regarded as a subject in which method is at a minimum, thoroughness at a maximum; and when at examination teachers stand aghast at the number of errors their pupils make, the inference is that both method and thoroughness have been at a minimum.

The practical side of grammar is held in high estimation by our teachers, who are ever ready to impress on the minds of their pupils the importance of acquiring the habit of speaking correctly. As a factor in mental development this subject is in a number of schools not altogether generously treated. In Standard IV. especially, too much time is spent by pupils in unenlightened essays at spelling out the parts of speech, and too little by the teacher in unfolding the principles that underlie classification. The more intelligent teachers, proceeding on the lines of the syllabus when it describes grammar as "school logic," have made the subject a means of sound mental discipline.

There is large scope for giving the composition lessons a practical turn, and much good has been done in this direction during the year. With respect, however, to the quality of the methods used there is reasonable ground for apprehension. Many of our teachers are not sufficiently progressive to think out and drive home by easy and interesting ways the principles of elementary composition. This being so, it is vain to expect the composition lessons to take their legitimate place as a factor of mental development. Yet in this respect the lessons surely ought to rank high. From the very first they should be made, and in some of our schools they are made, a powerful means of strengthening the powers of observation, of memory, and, to some extent, of judgment also.

In many schools geography is poorly taught; very rarely indeed does it take its place among the rousing lessons of the day. The rule of proceeding from the known to the unknown, from a thorough knowledge of the pupil's own district to a knowledge of other and unknown lands, from an experimental knowledge of the phenomena of nature at home to a knowledge, through imagination, of such phenomena abroad, is all but forgotten. The geography lesson accordingly is often an aimless endeavour to drive lists of barren names and facts into unwilling heads, with no semblance of discrimination, no co-ordination, no enlivening ray of human interest. Teachers are not expected to give a geography lesson to each class daily, but they should give at least one model lesson to each class every week, leaving the pupils, with atlas and textbook in hand, to study, on the teacher's plan, other districts and other lands.

Writing, to the pupils almost a matter of practice, is always creditable in schools where lessons are given on a definite plan. Success in this subject depends much more on the skill of the teacher than on the kind of copy-book; but even with the Board's instructions in their hands teachers sometimes forget the very essentials of a writing-lesson.

Drawing, now a pass subject in all standards, is by some teachers regarded as the *bête noir*, by others as the peculiar excellence, of the syllabus. Its usefulness in securing manual dexterity in the mechanical and decorative arts everyone who has given the matter the slightest thought allows; but, until its utility becomes better known to the people generally, it will be hard to create enthusiasm for an art so little loved by many teachers as well as parents.

In history, facts, dates, the doings and times of great historical personages, are better known than in previous years, the reason, no doubt, being that with the narrowing of its scope has come an increased intensity in the study of the parts selected. It were to be wished that more of the teachers had time and inclination to enlarge their pupils' minds by unfolding in orderly array the series of causes of which notable men are the spiritual product; and to give the subject a practical turn by making a few of the first or last lessons of each year's course bear directly on the elementary principles of our constitution, and on the rights, duties, and responsibilities of citizenship.

The educative and practical value of elementary science and object-lessons is not yet adequately understood by a number of our teachers. The object-lesson at all events is regarded by pupil teachers—and by some certificated teachers, too—as a repulsive imposition, and, when the time for giving it comes round, they appear before their pupils leaning on that contemptible substitute for brains, the object-lesson book. One's spirit quails when it is intimated that an object-lesson on a book-built elephant is to be given to a class of little children, and at such times one inwardly expresses the pious wish that the whole race of object-lesson books were honoured with a bonfire. There is really nothing very formidable in a quiet chat with a number of children about some common thing. Let pupil teachers try some such scheme as the following:—

Stage I. Infants and Standard I.: Field of selection—The home or classroom; power to be developed—observation. The pupils will, with the teacher's aid, find out the form, colour, exact size, number of parts, use of whole, use of each part, materials, and the mode of construction or combination of parts of the thing selected.

Stage II. Standard II. or Standards I. and II.: Field of selection—Common things well within the experience of pupils; powers to be developed—observation and comparison. The pupils will traverse the same ground as in Stage I., with a view to comparing on each point different objects of the same class.

Stage III. Standard III. or Standards II. and III.: Field of selection—Objects within the pupils' experience, or of which there are good wall-pictures; powers to be developed—observation, comparison, classification, judgment, and imagination.

The pupils will here study materials, texture, whence derived, why from particular places, relative values, tools and machines used in manufacturing, mode of manufacture of principal materials or of whole object, why made thus and not otherwise. The treatment will vary according to the thing selected, whether animal, plant, or inanimate object, the best scheme ever being the teacher's own, and the great aim of the lesson ever to develop a love of nature by developing mind.

As a relief to the severer school studies, vocal music is highly esteemed, doing for the ear what studies in form and colour do for the eye. This subject gains ground in the district as regards both the number of schools taking it up and the heartiness that characterizes it in schools in which it has always held a place.

Physical education cannot be said to occupy a prominent place in our schools, but the bone and muscle of our young people are so well developed by nature and by the avidity with which they enter into outdoor sports that we need not be too solicitous on that score. The disciplinary exercises and drill subserve the purposes of deportment rather than of physical development, and they are further valuable for their indirect influence on school discipline; indeed, having seen pupils at drill in the playground, one could, with a near approach to certainty, surmise their conduct in the class. The girls, having nothing to correspond to football and outdoor sports engaged in by the boys, need special attention even in the matter of deportment. This difficulty has been recognised and is being met in several of our schools by a new and happy departure in the way of Indian-club excercises—a departure well worthy of imitation.

Though for the most part indirect, moral training in our schools counts for more than some people care to believe. The pupils work in an atmosphere of self-restraint; they are brought face to face with the operation of the law of consequences; and they are taught, when occasion arises, to love the good and true, and despise the bad and false. Thus teachers lead their pupils to a knowledge of personal responsibility; and the moral tone of those schools is ever highest in which teachers, with some breach of good conduct as their text, bring the majority into sympathy with the right by contrasting it with the wrong. Moreover, from selections of poetry, general literature, speeches, and biography in their reading books, pupils learn lessons of high moral excellence, though the books have yet to be compiled from which they could drink in from wells of pure Saxon the great principles of right that have permanently enlarged and enriched the minds of the Anglo-Saxon race.

The branch of education vaguely known as technical is supposed by some to be entitled to a place in the common school course. But it is hard to see how any substantial gain can result from loading the already overburdened teacher with a subject extraneous to his proper function. The purpose of the primary school is to train pupils on general principles so that when the time of leaving comes they may be able to take an intelligent interest in the trade which circumstances or natural aptitudes may have induced them to adopt. If by technical education we mean the training of the powers of observation and the acquirement of handiness, then there is an important place for it in the primary school. A large part of the time of young pupils should be given to the training of the senses and to the acquisition of manual dexterity. These exercises cultivate accurate observation and correct expression; they quicken the powers of perception and combination, and so form a broad and stable basis which may be successfully built on. Could the Board see its way to provide all its schools with the apparatus necessary for such training, the money would be well spent. As to technical education properly so called, that might be carried on as in Dunedin by a Technical Classes Association, or, as in England, by continuation schools. From every point of view it is desirable that such a school should be established in Invercargill as in other industrial and commercial centres. Such schools would in all probability tend to produce skilled artisans, to perfect business aptitudes, and to raise the moral tone as well as increase the mental power of our youth.

We suggest a few reasons for the fact that failure in the work of education so constantly dogs success. Among others we may mention the following: teachers are prone to subordinate the methods of securing progress to the examination as a test of progress, forgetting that each of the means is in itself an end. Some teachers are undoubtedly apathetic in working out and adopting new methods; such teachers work, year by year, according to a stereotyped programme, sinking easily down into what Matthew Arnold calls a drowsy and impotent routine: others, again, do not sufficiently sift the mass of details by which pupils are confronted in some subjects, and are thus unable to select and present clearly broad principles under which details may be successfully grouped; by attempting everything they succeed in next to nothing. Once more, there are adverse circumstances which the teacher is powerless to control, such as flagrant unpunctuality, indifferent attendance, and the want of moral support on the part of parents. Finally, nature prescribes certain limits to the efficacy of the teacher: he can develop, but not create; he can strengthen and upbuild what nature gives, but he cannot give what she withholds; and though the methods of instruction suited for both mature and immature minds are essentially the same, they should be applied in widely different ways, the only successful way in the case of children being a rigorous adherence to the facts of their experience, childish though these may sometimes be.

With respect to the training of infants, we may say that there is a distinct improvement all along the line. Should country teachers wish to look a little more minutely into this branch of their work, they could not do better than spend a few hours in the infant departments of the South and Middle schools; in the former they will see excellent Kindergarten work done, and in the latter they will learn how much can be done in the way of music and exercises.

As a supplement to these comments we would respectfully submit to the Board the following suggestions, which embody some of the main impressions produced on our minds by a general review of the educational influences at work in this district:—

1. That the scholarship and pupil-teacher regulations be amended so as to bring them into conformity with the revised syllabus, and, if need be, in other directions also.
2. That, in view of the evils consequent on percentage-worship, the Board cease the publication of the examination-results of each school.
3. That the Board should favourably view and actively support a Technical Classes Association if such were established in Invercargill.
4. That, with a view of securing solidarity of interest in educational matters, there should be held in Invercargill a quinquennial conference, to which would be invited members of Education Boards, members of School Committees, the teaching profession, and all persons interested in education; and that, at the time of the conference, there should be held exhibitions of work in operation, of completed work, of school apparatus and furnishings, and further that there should be competitions in recitation, vocal music, and drill.

We are, &c.,

JAMES HENDRY,
GEO. D. BRAIK.

The Secretary of the Education Board, Invercargill.

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