

In my inspection visits to the schools a good deal of time has been taken up with the work of the pupil-teachers. The new regulations relating to them give much greater prominence than formerly to their technical training. Criticism-lessons are being given in the larger schools, at which the assistant-teachers are required to be present. This is having an excellent effect upon the younger teachers, and I regret that the plan cannot be applied in the case of the smaller schools. Possibly the Board might be able to devise a plan whereby the pupil-teachers in the smaller schools could be transferred to the larger schools for a year's special training on the completion of their term of service. Such a plan need cost no more than the present arrangements, but it would prove of much benefit to the teachers, who often see no other school than their own during the course of their training.

The results of the standard examinations supply evidence of fair average progress in most of the schools. As may be expected where teachers carry on their work under so many varied conditions, the methods employed and the results achieved differ a good deal. The plan of supplying tests in arithmetic by the department widens the means of judging as to the efficiency and soundness of the instruction, as it enables pupils to be tested more thoroughly than was possible under the old conditions. In several schools the blackboard has been used for tests, and in others the questions have been dictated; these plans have generally been used as alternatives to the cards. A mental paper is always set as part of the arithmetic test in the upper standards, and I usually find that those pupils who are strongest in mental arithmetic send in the best papers in the ordinary test. Dexterity in the use of figures by frequent and varied oral teaching is one of the best means I know of paving the way to the proper solution of more difficult problems, and this can always be attained by proper and systematic instruction in the lower classes. The failures in the higher standards in this important subject are somewhat numerous. Questions of a mechanical character were usually attempted with fair success, but when problems requiring a little thought had to be done the weakness of the teaching often became apparent. The style of the paper work, including the shape of the figures, does not satisfy me, and there is need of improvement in this direction. The disuse of slates in the upper standards is a step in the right direction, and I look forward to the time when slates for purposes of instruction will be things of the past in this district. Reading still continues to be taught with little apparent intelligence. It is true that in most schools two and even three books are taken for each standard above the second, but they are used as means of information rather than as helps to intelligent reading. I believe that most of the defects in reading which are met with in the upper standards arise solely from the fact that young and untrained teachers are placed in charge of the preparatory classes. Proper pronunciation, correct emphasis, and intelligent reading have their origin in the lower classes, and if those who are placed in charge to lay a foundation in language are inexperienced and ignorant as to the course to be followed, it can hardly be expected that intelligent reading will be heard in the higher standards. The use of the school and class library is extending among the schools, and I shall rejoice when a school library is deemed to be as necessary as a map or diagram in helping on the training and intelligence of the children. In the neighbouring education district grants are made to foster the encouragement of school libraries, and were a similar plan adopted here much good would ensue, as the Committees would be thereby encouraged to assist in promoting so laudable a work. Writing is beginning to receive more attention than was given to it a few years ago. No subject is easier to teach successfully by adopting proper methods, and yet one seldom sees traces of systematic instruction in the schools. Good writing, like good reading, has its origin in the lower classes, and this fact is coming to be recognised in most of the schools. In the Napier and Port Ahuriri infant schools slates are not used by the children when learning to write, it being found that the use of the pen induces care and attention among the children, and that writing and spelling are vastly improved thereby. The styles of writing most in favour are the Jackson "Upright" and the Vere Foster "Bold," but any other style may be used as long as it is in accordance with the regulations. In Standards V. and VI. formal handwriting from copies should give place to rapid transcription of poetry, copying commercial papers, letter-writing, and all such matters as require legibility and induce freedom. Drawing is, on the whole, in a very satisfactory state, more especially the freehand, which is well and carefully taught throughout the schools. Geometrical, including plane, in Standards IV. and V., and solid in Standard VI., is not so well done, except in the larger schools, where much of the work is of excellent quality. Most of the schools have availed themselves of the regulation by which exemption may be claimed for girls in geometrical drawing, and as a consequence scale-drawing showed signs of weakness among the girls in all cases where exemption was claimed. Composition is one of the best-taught subjects of the syllabus at the present time. Original compositions, reproduction of a story, and paraphrasing are all given as tests above Standard IV., whilst in the latter standard and in the one below it two tests are set, one being based on the work taken by the teacher during the year, and the other being the reproduction of a simple story read over twice to the children, either by the teacher in charge or by myself, as the case may be. In some of the schools very simple exercises in composition are given even to First Standard pupils. The work is based on the object-lessons, and the results are very encouraging. I have read many of the compositions done by the children in one of the largest infant schools, and they show much promise and intelligence. When based on simple objects with which children are personally acquainted, such tests are sure to be productive of good, as they tend to lead children to express themselves in simple and intelligent language. I have again to express general approval at the way geography is prepared in the majority of schools. Defects are met with here and there, and several very bad cases came before me during the year of neglect and careless preparation, but fortunately such cases are of rare occurrence. In Standards III. and IV. my tests were oral and individual, and a full knowledge of the maps mentioned in the regulation requirements was demanded from each. Generally the answering of the children was clear and intelligent, and showed careful preparation by the