

the less experienced assistants that is so necessary for maintaining and raising the efficiency of their schools. Some improvement is evidently needed in dealing with applications for leave of absence. I believe that in no other part of the colony does the absence of teachers cause half the friction and inconvenience that we experience here. It would be worth while to inquire how this question is dealt with elsewhere.

In October the Board lost the services of one of the best school inspectors in the colony through the sudden removal of the late Mr. Airey. He did a great deal to advance the interests of education in this district, and discharged his duties with conspicuous care and conscientiousness. On many matters I have benefited by his counsel, and could always depend on getting from him an independent and valuable opinion. The position rendered vacant by his death has not yet been permanently filled. Mr. James Grierson has carried on the work of the district as Acting-Inspector in a way that has given me every satisfaction. To my colleagues I am much indebted for the diligence and ability with which they have discharged their important duties. The increase in the size as well as in the number of the schools has made the year abundant in labour, and it has only been by using the utmost economy of time that the work has been so completely overtaken.

The great majority of the teachers have, I believe, honestly endeavoured to remedy defects and improve the efficiency of their work during the year. Suggestions offered by the Inspectors have been received and considered in a friendly spirit, and have in many instances yielded evident good results. Deliberate neglect of duty, though not absolutely unknown, is of very rare occurrence. Not a few of the reports sent in by teachers on taking charge of a small school suggests that their predecessors have relaxed their efforts for some time before vacating their positions. In the larger schools the head teachers take care that this does not happen. I regret that so few of the representatives of the School Committees have been present at the examinations. A better knowledge of how the work of the Inspectors is done, and of the aims they set before themselves and the teachers, would do much good.

I have, &c.,

D. PETRIE, M.A., Chief Inspector.

The Secretary, Auckland Board of Education.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 10th March, 1897.

I have the honour to lay before you my second annual report on the public schools in the Taranaki District for the year ending 31st December, 1896.

The Schools of the District.—At the close of 1895 fifty-four schools were in active operation. During 1896 schools were opened at Mangaere, Denbigh Road, and Purangi, and others at Huiroa, Tongaporutu, and Kaiauaui will be opened shortly, so that in a month or two we shall have sixty schools, an increase of twenty since the beginning of 1891. In 1895 only eleven schools showed a surplus of income over expenditure, and by these the smaller schools of the district had to a great extent to be supported. On the evils attendant upon such a state of affairs I wrote at some length last year. The only aided school in the district worked very satisfactorily.

During the past year the Board made strenuous efforts to improve the interiors of the schools and to render the surroundings of the pupils pleasing and attractive. Schools formerly dingy and depressing are now bright and cheerful, so far as the Board can render them. It lies with the teachers and the Committees to complete the work thus begun. I am pleased to report that wanton defacing of desks and other apparatus is no longer common, though still to be found in schools where the discipline is weak. Copy-books, exercise-books, and drawing-books are taken better care of, and the more expensive books are covered and kept freer from disfigurement. Most of the damage done to the schools and appointments occurs where the rooms are used for meetings and dances. In the case of the latter the desks have to be shifted—often they are placed outside—and even with the greatest care, which I am afraid is not always exercised, some depreciation is inevitable.

The hall of the Central School at New Plymouth has been furnished with shelves, on which are laid copies of the chief illustrated papers. This is an excellent idea, and at my visits to the school I have seen the keen interest the pupils take in the pictures. Could not the teachers of other schools provide similar privileges for their pupils? Some illustrated papers have been placed at my disposal and sent to country schools, where the pupils would otherwise never see anything of the kind.

As a rule the smaller schools present the most pleasing interiors, Okato, Tikorangi, Tariki, and Frankley Road deserving special commendation. The suggestions of last year *re* aids to teaching, though adopted in some schools, have not met with general acceptance. Modern apparatus is being gradually supplied, and I hope this year to be able to equip the larger schools with the apparatus much needed for object-lessons.

In a few cases the school-grounds are well kept, but in many indifferently. In the bush districts the logs would soon be cleared away if the teachers could enlist the interest and co-operation of the elder boys. "Working-bees"—such as have helped to make the New Plymouth Recreation-grounds so attractive—would soon remove defects, and provide ample space for the pupils. At few schools are flower-pots to be seen. At the larger schools the supervision of the pupils in the playground is satisfactory, but at the smaller schools is often neglected, the teachers being engaged with work in the schoolroom or away at lunch.

Pupil-teachers.—With a view to the better training of pupil-teachers, in the new regulations considerable importance has been attached to school management. In addition to the book-work prescribed, progress in the practical work of teaching must be shown. Full notes of lessons have