to be drawn up, and for skill in giving a lesson to a class there are assigned marks which count towards a pass. For the methods adopted the head teachers were responsible, and I regret to say that, with a few exceptions, they were not satisfactory, and in many cases the notes would have been valueless if handed in at a certificate examination. Where, however, efficient instruction had been given, the benefits were very apparent, not only in the special lessons, but also in the general work in school.

In some educational districts the pupil-teachers have every opportunity for receiving the training necessary to qualify them for taking responsible positions in the profession. After four years' apprenticeship they are admitted free of charge for two years to a training-college, where, relieved from the responsibilities of class-teaching, they can devote their whole attention to the training in methods of teaching and to the acquisition of the general knowledge necessary to secure their certificates. Moreover, university colleges and large well-conducted schools are open to them. In other districts—of which this is one—where there are no such facilities pupil-teachers are labouring under great disadvantages, for, however desirous of fitting themselves for their profession, their experience is limited to the methods practised in their own schools—probably small ones—and in a great measure they are debarred from intercourse with their fellow pupil-teachers, and healthy emulation is entirely lacking. Moreover, they have as a rule to study after having been occupied in school during the day. It seems to me that under such varying conditions uniformity of examinations—of which we have heard much of late—is not desirable, and that each district must frame regulations to suit its own needs.

The examinations in practical teaching have been conducted on the lines followed in training-schools. Wherever it was possible several pupil-teachers were brought together, and while one gave a lesson the others filled in criticism-forms. Then followed a brief discussion on the merits and defects of the lesson. By such means I hope to give our pupil-teachers an approximation to the training they would receive at a training-college, and, though disappointed with many of the first attempts, I foresee that the system will be productive of beneficial results.

Attendance.—It must be gratifying to the Board to find that there is a further rise in the percentage of pupils that attend regularly. In 1895 the percentage was 75·8 (the highest then reached), and in 1896 it rose to 77·5. I still find that in many of the country districts the compulsory clauses are not enforced, and, I believe, will be enforced only where independent truant officers are appointed. Since the passing of the School Attendance Act teachers have complained that some pupils attend less regularly than formerly, the legal minimum attendance (six per week) being regarded by the parents as the standard of attendance. I do not think that this evil exists to any great extent. Many children, however, who did not attend well formerly now attend the exact number of times necessary for compliance with the Act. Such cannot be termed good attendance, but where parents are neglectful legislation can only diminish the evil, not remove it. Bad attendance—the excuse of the poor teacher and the bane of the good teacher—is often given as a reason for inferior work. In order to determine how far it may be responsible, I require teachers to show the attendances of all pupils during the three quarters preceding that in which the examination is held; in fact, I do not see how one can arrive at a just estimate of a teacher's work unless one has such information, and in the examination schedules I should like to see a column set apart for it. Varying attendance alone makes the percentage of passes a most fallacious test of teaching; and, in addition, there are other powerful agencies militating against or favouring a teacher's success. Indeed, so varied are the conditions under which work is carried on that a numerical estimate of skill and success in teaching is altogether impossible.

Inspection.—Apart from the examination-days, eighty-three visits were paid to the schools. Reports on the statutory visits of inspection were laid before the Board, but many other visits were paid on which no reports were written. Great importance is attached to inspection, for then can be seen the actual work of instruction, the quality of the education, and the methods adopted.

Want of preparation of the work by the teacher was very noticeable. After pupils entered school time which should have been devoted to instruction would be occupied with work that should have been ready when the admission-bell was rung. For even the easiest lessons preparation is desirable, and for the successful organization of two or more standards it is absolutely essential.

With regard to the choice of methods teachers have considerable latitude. There may often be more than one good method of dealing with a subject, and different teachers using different methods may obtain equally good results. Of far greater importance is the skill with which the methods are handled, and here I have found considerable room for improvement.

Extra blackboards have been supplied to many schools, and some of the teachers use them skilfully. Coloured chalks—now in almost general use—are found invaluable in teaching from the blackboard. In collective lessons some teachers fail to take full advantage of the blackboard notes in recapitulation.

A serious defect in organization is the want of a definite plan for the work of the year. In the larger schools the daily work could be arranged a week or two ahead, and then lessons of revision and recapitulation could be systematically taken. Too often the earlier months of the year are lost in desultory teaching, and as the examination approaches there is a rush of cram, and the pupils, notwithstanding this overstraining, and because of it, are unfit for examination.

Examination of Schools.—Of the fifty-seven schools open at the end of the year fifty-three were examined. Tarata was visited for examination, but the pupils were not present. The newly-opened schools—Mangaere, Purangi, and Denbigh Road—were not examined. On the days appointed for the examinations 3,778 pupils were on the rolls; of these, 2,394 were presented in Standards I. to VI., ten were presented in the class above Standard VI., and 1,374 were in the preparatory classes. The number of pupils in the preparatory classes was exactly the same as in the previous year. The number of pupils presented in standards showed an increase of sixty-six. Though the number presented was greater than in the previous year, the number absent from