

TABLE OF RESULTS FOR EACH CLASS.

Classes.						Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	...	...	8	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	...	...	14	14	14
" V.	...	...	...	...	...	25	25	15
" IV.	...	...	...	...	...	26	26	23
" III.	...	...	...	...	...	33	32	28
" II.	...	...	...	...	...	29	29	26
" I.	...	...	...	...	...	27	27	24
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	162	153	130

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM L. F. FETCH, Inspector.
The Chairman and Members, Education Board, Grey.

WESTLAND.

SIR,—
I have the honour to present the following report on the schools of the district for the year 1896 :—

The examination of the schools of South Westland took place in February, and that of the schools in the northern part of the district during the last four months of the year. Apart from the smaller aided schools, inspection visits were duly made early in the year. No reference is here found to the results of the examinations of pupil-teachers, the scholarship candidates, the secondary classes of the Hokitika and Kumara District High Schools, or the Catholic schools at Kumara, Hokitika, Kanieri, and Ross, as in each case a separate report has been presented.

Appended are the usual tabulated statements. According to the first, of the pupils present in the six standards at the examination, 12·6 per cent. failed. This is an improvement of 2·2 per cent. on the results of the previous year. The table further shows that the average age at which the pupils passed corresponds very closely with the average for the colony. The number presented for examination was distributed as follows: Class above Standard VI., 2·2; Standard VI., 6·9; Standard V., 10·8; Standard IV., 12·9; Standard III., 13·2; Standard II., 10·6; Standard I., 12·6; preparatory, 30·8. During the year there has been a slight decrease in the number in the preparatory class, and an increase in the upper standards. The pupils over eight years of age in the preparatory class number 17·9 per cent. of the class and 5·5 per cent. of the total roll.

To the statement of the results of the individual schools has been added a column stating the average attendance for the year as a percentage of the average roll-number. In Westland the regularity of the attendance should allow no cause for complaint, as, with few exceptions, the pupils live within two miles of a school, and the occupations of the parents are not such as to require the assistance of the children. In fact, for 1896 the average attendance is 86·5 per cent. of the average roll-number, and this is higher than that of any education district in 1895. The percentage of four schools, however, falls below the average percentage of the colony (81·4 in 1895)—namely, Lower Kokatahi, Kumara, Jackson, and Bruce Bay—while that of Arahura Road just reaches the general average. The attendance of the first-named school is as low as 74·8 per cent. The weak attendance at Kumara, which has one of the two largest schools of the district, has apparently no excuse, and produces an injurious effect that is not confined to the one school, but, by reducing the funds at the disposal of the Board, renders more difficult the management of the schools of the whole district.

The number of passes obtained in the various pass-subjects, compared with the results of the previous year, is slightly lower in all except geography. The percentages are: Reading, 92; spelling, 79; writing, 90; drawing, 90; arithmetic, 65; composition, 91; geography, 85. Arithmetic, spelling, and geography continue to cause the greater number of failures. The percentage of passes in arithmetic for the three years during which the tests have been prepared by the Department are :—

	Standard VI. Per Cent.	Standard V. Per Cent.	Standard IV. Per Cent.	Standard III. Per Cent.
1894 ...	68	71	82	70
1895 ...	75	49	74	77
1896 ..	66	48	69	86

Only in Standard III. has an improvement in this subject been experienced; in the three higher standards the failures are more numerous than in the two previous years. In individual schools arithmetic has been very successfully taught, and in every case this success is due to the avoidance of cumbersome methods of working and to strict attention to oral practice. The weakness in the written arithmetic appears also in the answering of the mental tests. As will be seen later, in only twelve schools were the results in mental arithmetic satisfactory. In spelling the test is confined to one reading-book in each standard, and, with regular preparation and a strict use of dictation and transcription exercises, a greater number of pupils should succeed. In reading I have to record an improved mastery of the subject since the introduction of a second set of readers. In a few schools the pupils failed to complete the course of two books in each class, but in future this difficulty will be more easily overcome owing to the increased practice already secured