

The results of the pupil-teachers' examination were in most respects a marked improvement on those gained in the previous year. The following table shows the percentages of attainable marks gained by the several classes :—

Class.	Subject.									
	English.	Gram-mar.	Dicta-tion.	Geo-graphy.	History.	Arith-metic.	Latin.	French.	Mathe-matics.	Teach-ing.
Fourth ...	56·1	65·2	89·5	50·8	58·4	63·3	81·8	83·7	...	66·6
Third ...	74·0	78·6	75·3	51·7	67·9	73·4	74·0	72·0	78·4	69·4
Second ...	70·0	58·5	71·6	48·2	...	78·1	81·9	67·3	59·6	67·3
First ...	71·5	69·5	75·9	45·9	...	80·0	76·1	68·3	65·8	74·2

In conclusion, we must say that our school-work is good, the defects we have mentioned notwithstanding ; the teachers as a body give themselves to their work and are fairly progressive ; and the discipline of the schools is of a wholesome character.

The Chairman, Education Board, Otago.

P. GOYEN,  
W. S. FITZGERALD,  
C. R. RICHARDSON,  
C. R. BOSSENCE, } Inspectors.

### SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Invercargill, 1st March, 1897.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the state of education in the primary schools of this district for the year ended the 31st December, 1896.

We are glad to be able to say that, so far as the general management of the schools is concerned, the average level of efficiency has been more than maintained. In familiarising their pupils with the various objects of study the teachers as a whole have set themselves a high standard, and cases in which anything in the nature of a serious lapse came under our notice were few and far between. The prevailing moral tone, too, has been such as might well satisfy us, and the Board will be pleased to know that certain objectionable features complained of in last year's report have to a great extent disappeared. There is one matter, however, that still calls for the utmost vigilance. We refer to dishonest practices carried on by a number of pupils at the annual examinations, and, by inference, in the ordinary class-work of the schools concerned. There appears to be in some quarters a tendency to regard such practices as mere venial diversions, and consequently the measures taken to repress them are by no means so strong as the heinousness of the offence warrants. Regarding attempts to copy at examinations, we cordially indorse the statement made by a Dunedin professor, who, at the breaking-up of the Girls' High School in that town, said "he would rather a daughter of his were the dunce of the school than that she should rise to the highest place through a single dishonest act." Passing to other phases of school-life, we are pleased to note that those auxiliary agencies of successful schools, such as games, attractiveness of class-rooms, well-kept grounds, suitable specimens and apparatus, and school libraries are surely, if slowly, gaining in favour. The influence of these things on the entire nature of a child is very great, and whatever tends to their extension cannot be too much encouraged. The attendance problem, of course, is always with us, but in a number of schools it is being quietly solved by the teachers themselves. In these schools certificates are periodically issued to each pupil, wherein are registered his degree of proficiency in each subject, his position in class, and his conduct as to neatness of work, punctuality, and attendance. The interest of the parents in the progress of the pupils is thus secured, and, as they sign the certificates every time these are issued, they are not likely to overlook the virtue of regular attendance for want of an object-lesson thereon. Teachers that have tried this plan tell us that the attendance problem has practically disappeared from their schedule of difficulties.

We proceed to offer some general remarks on the subjects of instruction.

**PASS-SUBJECTS.—Reading.**—In the subject of reading the teachers are uniformly successful in raising their pupils to the level of a standard pass ; and even that, the circumstances of many schools being taken into consideration, is no mean achievement. But of all our school subjects reading is, in proportion to its potentialities, perhaps the least fruitful. There are several reasons for this. A large amount of time must be spent in the mere mechanism of the subject ; and, when that has been fairly mastered, the range of matter read is excessively narrow. The mechanical part of the subject is, on the whole, well taught : in some schools very successfully by the phonic method ; in others, with a like measure of success, by methods more or less composite. This, the initial stage, entails the greatest amount of labour on the part of the teacher and the greatest amount of perplexity on the part of the pupils. It is remarked by Locke that reading is a subject that a child must never be driven to ; "cheat him into it if you can, but make it not a business for him." But in our primary schools the teaching of reading necessarily becomes a business, and the part of those engaged in the work of teaching is to see that the business is carried out on the pleasantest possible lines. If, at the close of the ordinary reading-lesson, teachers of infant classes were frequently to read, with true expression and the necessary amount of dramatic effect, some charming little tale, a love of reading would enter into little hearts and the purpose of much uninteresting drudgery would dawn on young minds. As to the range of reading in our public schools, it is on all sides