SESS. II.—1897.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:

REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.-1B, 1896.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Auckland, 4th March, 1897.

I have the honour to submit the usual report for the year 1896.

At the close of the year there were 348 schools in the Auckland District, being sixteen more than at the end of last year. Of these, 346 were examined. The remaining two were opened too late in the year for their examination to be undertaken in the ordinary course. Three hundred and sixteen schools were inspected in the course of the year, a number that includes forty-two half-time schools, in which only one of the pair of grouped schools was visited for inspection. Besides these, four were visited and found closed, four were opened after the inspection of the neighbouring schools had been completed, two were closed a short time after they had been opened, and three small schools were not inspected. The number of schools has increased by forty-two during the last three years, and their inspection and examination demand, on the part of the Inspectors, increasingly heavy and continuous work.

The following table shows in summary the chief examination results for the year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	221	...	...	...
Standard VI.	1,249	1,213	934	14 3
" V.	2,285	2,184	1,536	13 4
" IV.	3,536	3,391	2,328	12 4
" III.	3,747	3,596	2,921	11 3
" II.	3,623	3,502	3,157	10 3
" I.	3,230	3,132	3,013	9 1
Preparatory	8,883	...	...	...
Totals	26,774	17,018	13,889	11 9*

These figures show for the year an increase of 890 in the number of pupils presented, and a decrease of 295 in the number of pupils that passed in one or other of the standards. Last year there was the great advance of 1,464 in the number of pupils who passed in standards, and it is hardly matter for surprise that this large and sudden increase has not been fully maintained. In 1894 about 79 per cent. of the pupils examined in standards passed, in 1895 86 per cent. passed, and this year 82 per cent. have passed. The percentage of passes thus lies midway between the results for the last two years. In Standards I. and II., head teachers have passed 96 and 90 per cent. respectively of the pupils examined. In Standards III., IV., V., and VI. the percentages of passes are lower, and in most cases considerably lower, than they were last year. The frequency of failures in Standards IV. to VI. is still due to weakness in dictation, composition, and geography, and has this year been accentuated by a marked increase in the difficulty of the arithmetic tests for

* Mean of average age.

Standards V. and VI. supplied by the Education Department. On the whole, I am of opinion that the teaching of the pass-subjects has in no way fallen below the level of last year's work, the lower percentage of passes being due to a somewhat stricter examination of composition in Standards IV. to VI., and the unquestionable advance in the difficulty of the arithmetic tests in Standards V. and VI.

The results in class-subjects are classed as "good" in 40 schools, "satisfactory" in 155, "fair" in 115, "moderate" in 31, and "inferior" in 4. In the additional subjects, some of which are not taken up in a number of the smallest schools, the results were "good" in 89 schools, "satisfactory" in 189, "fair" in 60, and "moderate" in 7. These numbers afford evidence of a very general improvement in the teaching both of the class and of the additional subjects of the school course.

The ages at which the standards have been passed are this year somewhat lower than those for last year in all the classes above Standard II. The number of pupils over eight years of age who were not presented for Standard I. is 2,136, as against 1,960 for last year. The preparatory classes, it should be remembered, have now a more comprehensive course of instruction in reading and arithmetic, and enter the Standard I. class with better prospects of getting easily through the lower standards. In Standards I., II., and III. fewer pupils have been presented than was the case last year, while a considerably larger number has been presented in each of the higher standards.

The improvement noted last year in the management and teaching of the preparatory classes has been fully maintained, and in quite half the schools very satisfactory work is being done in this department. Mr. Dickinson points out that in the infant classes in the schools of the southern district "numeration and notation are not well taught," but this experience seems to be exceptional. Ignorance of the addition professed by these classes is much more common than ignorance of numeration and notation, and is, indeed, much more excusable, as addition is much harder to teach well. The teaching of reading has improved much more generally than that of tables and counting. The words of the sentence, and not merely the sentences learned by rote, are now for the most part readily known, and the reading is distinguished by considerable expression. In numerous cases the classification of infant pupils has been found unsatisfactory, children who have attended school for more than a year being taught in the same class with others who have been in attendance only for a month or two. This abuse should be evident to any teacher who truly desires to do the best he can for the younger pupils. The lower primer classes, moreover, do not appear to receive as much attention as the higher ones. Infant classes are still occasionally too large, but the faulty arrangement and the crowded condition of the lower departments often make it hard to avoid this evil as completely as could be desired. The teaching of addition usually receives due attention, but there is more haste than good speed in the way it is worked up in a large number of schools. A thorough mastery of each step before it is left for a higher one is here indispensable, and rapid progress is less desirable than sure progress.

It is in the preparatory classes that the foundation of good order, lively attention, and an earnest working spirit should be laid. The design and treatment of the lessons should aim at developing and confirming these desirable habits, in the fostering of which there is, and will no doubt long be, ample scope for improvement. It is because of their influence in this direction that frequent but short and varied lessons are so important here, and that the massing of crowds of pupils into single classes is so full of risk.

Standard Classes.—"Reading," Mr. Dickinson reports, "is decidedly improving, not only as regards the mere mechanical difficulties, but also in the intelligence and expression with which many of the children read." Mr. Goodwin also says, "Reading has improved in fluency and expression." Mr. Crowe offers no general estimate, but remarks that "this subject would be much more successfully taught if teachers did not attempt too much." I suppose teachers try to overtake what is demanded of them, and the mistake made is rather that their pupils have been advanced into higher reading-books prematurely. As the passing of pupils in Standards I. and II. is in the hands of head teachers, this mistake is not unusual in the smaller schools, and it is not easy for the Inspectors to check it. Many of the examination reports show that it has been pointed out. I think it is a mistake that is becoming more uncommon, though it is likely to be with us for some time to come. While able to bear out the testimony of my colleagues as to the improvement in the teaching of reading, I must add that in a number of the schools I have examined, some of them large and important schools, reading has not been as good as I should expect it to be, and I have had occasion to fail a good many pupils in this subject in the course of the year. Ready, accurate, and distinct reading at each stage of progress should almost be regarded as indispensable for advancement, as it stands in the closest relation to the intelligence that has been developed by the teaching and to its general efficiency. While most rhetorical qualities of reading are of less importance in the elementary school than fluency, accuracy, and clearness of enunciation, a reasonable degree of natural expression is quite as important as any of these cardinal good qualities. There are teachers, not a few, who fail to train their pupils to read with satisfactory expression, owing to weakness of control and failure to get the scholars to put forth their best efforts to satisfy the teacher's aims and his just demands on their attention. In such cases there is no great hope of improvement, as governing power is of the nature of a personal equation, and is but little open to influence by advice or direction from others. There is but one cure for this weakness, and that is the gradual weeding-out of such teachers as show it to a hurtful degree.

There are now very few schools in which two books are not read each year in each of the standard classes. In some districts parents have shown the greatest reluctance to provide their children with a second Reader. One cannot but feel surprise at their short-sighted conduct in this matter, for sufficient breadth and variety of reading are as indispensable to any serviceable knowledge of the art as three meals a day are to the health and vigour of ordinary children. In Great Britain the reading of three books a year is held to be necessary for a satisfactory training in this subject, and it would be an odd effect of our superior climate if the reading of one of these same

books were found sufficient here. In requiring all the standard classes to read two books yearly, the Board is undoubtedly furthering and not hindering the education of the young of the district, and all parents would do well to heartily co-operate with the Board in securing a worthy training in this branch of instruction.

In dealing with new and difficult words I have often noticed that pupils have no idea of putting them into syllables, and then trying to sound the syllables in combination. New words of regular sound should be dealt with in this way from the primer classes upwards. To tell the pronunciation as a matter of course, without attempting to lead the pupils to make it out for themselves, is not an educative process; it is *cram* in one of its least disguised forms. This fault is far too prevalent.

Some progress can be noted in the handling of explanation of the language of the reading-lessons and in the comprehension of their matter. In the majority of the schools better work could and should be done in these directions. In the "Suggestions," circulated among teachers by order of the Board, I have dealt pretty fully with this subject, and I feel convinced that if teachers would weigh these suggestions, and embody their spirit in the daily treatment of the English lessons, the education given in our schools would be signally improved. The development of a spirit of intelligent study—surely one of the chief aims of all education—depends more on the way this subject is treated than on any other section of the school work. I fear that many teachers do not themselves study and prepare the reading-lessons so as to turn them to the best account for the mental discipline and growth of their pupils, and the habits of careful and thoughtful preparatory study are but little fostered among the scholars. On this subject Mr. Dickinson's opinion is quite in accord with mine. "All pupils in the higher classes," he says, "should have a dictionary, and be trained to study the reading-lessons. I have been surprised to find how little of this has been done in the higher classes." Mr. Goodwin speaks somewhat more favourably of this part of the work of the schools.

Recitation is satisfactory in the great majority of the schools, and good in a large number. The tasteful reading of the poems to be learned should in all cases be taught before the pupils are set to commit them to memory, and the meaning should be carefully considered. I am sorry to say that there is still occasion for repeating these cautions.

"Spelling," says Mr. Dickinson, "in the dictation test and in the written exercises is improving;" and Mr. Goodwin remarks, "I have not had to record many failures in spelling. The test is too easy. I am afraid spelling is a weak subject." Mr. Crowe considers that "this subject is not taught with the success which its importance deserves," and he thinks "too much dependence is placed on oral spelling." Our pupils, I believe, can spell easy passages very fairly indeed, and mistakes in the spelling of simple words in composition and other written exercises are becoming less frequent; but a previously unseen test of quite ordinary difficulty would show how restricted their knowledge of spelling is. The results of the recent junior scholarship examination in this subject fully bear out this view. It should be more usual for teachers to keep lists of misspelt words, and to use them from time to time for revisal.

The "Bold-writing Copy-books" are now used in nearly all the schools. I have seldom had to fail a pupil in any standard for writing, and I consider this subject is satisfactorily taught. Mr. Dickinson remarks about it, "Writing is not receiving the attention it formerly received in this district"; and Mr. Goodwin shares this opinion. It is certainly true, as Mr. Crowe points out, that very little care is taken to train pupils to sit in a good position, and to hold pens and pencils properly. Without doubt this neglect tends to make the teaching inefficient, and it argues a serious want of care and attention on the part of teachers, as well as obvious failure to train their pupils to carry out their directions. Of criticism and demonstration of faults at the blackboard there is no lack; what is more often lacking is the force and earnestness needed to effectually impress the teaching. In the schools of Germany the greatest importance is attached to the way in which the pen is held and moved, and long and elaborate practice in these matters is given before a pupil is allowed to touch paper with an inked pen. The indifference of the great majority of our teachers to these confessedly important aids to good writing is most discreditable. It is a commonplace to say that the writing in exercise-books is seldom as good as that in copy-books, and is sometimes markedly inferior. Written home exercises are still a fruitful cause of careless writing, especially when they are too long, as they still sometimes are. In large classes their correction is a laborious, and often, I fear, an unfruitful task, and close attention to other details is apt to withdraw attention from the quality of the penmanship. Their correction, moreover, is too often intrusted to pupil-teachers, so that the teacher really responsible for the training of the class has only a superficial knowledge of what is doing in this direction. I should like to see written home exercises made very short indeed in all the classes below Standard V., and if they are not well looked after it would be a gain to discontinue them altogether. To make up for this reduction of written work two or three exercises a week should be neatly written out in school in exercise-books kept expressly for that purpose. Mr. Dickinson points out that work of this kind is unknown in many of the schools of his district. As it would be done under the teacher's eye, the writing should be as good as the pupils can make it, and great importance should be attached to neatness and care.

Freehand and geometrical drawing are generally satisfactory; model drawing is not so good. In the lower classes drawing is taught with most success where blank drawing-books only are used. Some of the series of drawing-books authorised by the Minister provide a very indifferent course for the lower standards. Teachers might well show better judgment in selecting the books to be used in these classes. The use of rulers and measures where their use is forbidden may still be frequently noticed.

"Good work has been shown in arithmetic in Standards I., II., III., and IV.," Mr. Dickinson reports, "but there was a disastrous failure in Standards V. and VI." "It is not easy," he adds, "to account for the weakness in the upper standards. The tests this year were much more difficult than the tests of preceding years, and I am afraid that in too many instances the teachers have merely aimed at reaching the standard of attainments thus set up." The experience of the other

Inspectors has been much the same as Mr. Dickinson's, and disastrous failure in the arithmetic of Standards V. and VI. has been as pronounced in other districts as in his. The cause of this failure is clearly the increased difficulty of the questions. Teachers seem to me to be fully justified in expecting reasonable uniformity in the standards of attainments required in this subject year by year. If the standard is suddenly raised without warning of any kind we cannot blame them for not at once rising to its demands. In my judgment many of the examination-tests in the arithmetic of Standards V. and VI. were unreasonably difficult, and the failure to answer them satisfactorily does not of itself prove any decline in the efficiency of the teaching. There is, however, one class of sum set for the Standard V. class which I think our scholars should have answered better than they did. I refer to questions relating to bankrupt estates, and requiring for their solution a knowledge only of the compound rules and simple proportion, together with a small dose of mental acuteness. Questions of this kind abound in the school text-books, and all the somewhat technical terms used in this connection should have been understood. Many examples of this type were given during the year: "A bankrupt's estate pays 12s. 6d. in the £1; what does a creditor lose on a debt of £350?" This I consider a perfectly fair, indeed, an easy question for Standard V. pupils; but it proved a mere trap for the great majority of our scholars, who took the 12s. 6d. to be the sum lost on each pound of the whole debt. The common failure to do questions of this kind clearly indicates very mechanical teaching. In many schools, as is seen at inspection visits, there is a notable want of smartness in arithmetical work, four or five easy examples being all that is overtaken in an hour. In good schools twice as much as this is often done in the same time. More practice in doing sums at the blackboard is now given, the pupils stating the working in detail and giving all explanations; but there are too many cases in which it is still more or less neglected. Readiness in changing small sums of money from one denomination to another is a very common desideratum in Standards III. and IV. This defect can be supplied only by a sufficient amount of rapid oral questioning. Correction of answers frequently encroaches seriously on the time for teaching, and in the eyes of some it almost exhausts the teacher's duty in connection with arithmetic. These faults are most noticeable in the classes below Standard IV., and especially in the larger schools. From Standard IV. upwards blackboard teaching is more practiced, and the instruction is more intelligent. I believe, however, that the teaching is seldom sufficiently impressed by clear and varied questioning on the examples when the working has been completed. In dealing with problems one or two very simple cases involving the same principle are very generally considered first. This is as it should be, if simple illustration is really needed. But care is seldom taken to make sure that the principle as a principle is really understood, and can be clearly and concisely stated by average pupils before consideration of the simple examples is left. Our main object in resorting to easy illustrations is to lay bare a principle in its greatest simplicity; but the lesson is most incomplete unless the principle is generalised—*i.e.*, can be stated by most of the pupils in terms that admit of its easy application to similar cases. Neglect of this is, I fear, a common and a grave defect in our handling of arithmetic. I am ashamed to report that finger-counting is still far from unknown in the Third and Fourth Standards, and even in the Fifth. Means of curing this evil can be easily found if teachers would only take the trouble to apply them. Mental arithmetic varies greatly from school to school, and is on the whole but moderately done. The upper classes frequently do better than the lower; in the former I have not rarely met with good work.

There has been satisfactory improvement in the teaching of grammar, more especially in the lower classes. Mr. Goodwin writes, "The teaching of grammar has certainly improved, but a good deal remains to be done." And Mr. Dickinson says, "Grammar is being better taught, more attention being given to sentence-structure than to minutiæ of parsing." A sound understanding of this subject is most necessary even for the most elementary teaching of it, and prevalent defects of treatment are in great measure due to the limited acquaintance with its principles that many teachers have gained. In several of the larger schools the subject has been well taught in the higher classes. I hope that most teachers will make acquaintance with Mr. West's "Elements of English Grammar," the book recommended for study to pupil-teachers. A careful study of this lucid and logical work should do much to improve the teaching of this subject.

Little improvement is to be noticed this year in the teaching of composition. In order to secure greater uniformity in estimating the value of exercises in this subject I thought it advisable to issue pretty definite instructions to the Inspectors, and, as a result, the standard applied in one or two of the districts has been slightly raised. The purport of these instructions I hope to be able to communicate to teachers at an early date. It is worth noticing that many of the failures recorded in this subject were due to pupils being unable to divide the matter of their exercises properly into sentences. To teach this it would be helpful to write on the blackboard a paragraph containing several sentences with the stops and capital letters omitted, and to train the pupils to divide it into sentences and insert the capitals. Pupils' exercises showing this fault in a marked degree might with advantage be treated in the same way.

Much of the weakness in teaching composition is traceable to bad methods and to want of method—faults that are largely due to the omission of this topic from current text-books on school method. Mr. Gladman, for example, has not a word to say on the subject. Teachers will find many useful suggestions in a little book entitled "English Composition and how to teach it," by R. S. Wood (MacDougal's Education Company, Limited, London), and in Messrs. Nelson's composition books for all the standards, published last year.

Except in the Second and Third Standards the knowledge of geography has hardly improved during the year. It is a heavy subject, not easy to invest with interest, and in some respects too vaguely defined. It would be a great gain if the Minister would issue a complete syllabus, as is done in Victoria, and sell it for the cost of printing. The teaching, I think, might easily be made more thorough and intelligent than it is in most schools. In some cases a good deal is taught that clearly lies outside the syllabus. The "Southern Cross" geographies, now favoured by a number

of teachers, greatly encourage this. The "Zealandia" geography books avoid this fault, and are much more suitable for ordinary use. At Te Aroha and one or two other schools, where a full and intelligent knowledge of the subject was shown, no text-book had been used. Many pupils answer badly from mere want of training to answer in writing. The quality of much of the instruction may be not unfairly judged from the answer to the following question set in the work of Standard IV.: "Tell what you know of the country and the people of Arabia?" The answer for the most part consisted of these words—"Arabia, capital Mecca near the Red Sea." I should be glad to think that the inferior answers given to such a question as this were due to the incomprehensibility of the question rather than to the scanty knowledge of the pupils.

On the head of history I give Mr. Dickinson's remarks in full. "History is one of the least satisfactory subjects in our school course. The knowledge of the pupils is very meagre. I am afraid this is due to the want (*a*) of ample and accurate knowledge on the part of our teachers, and (*b*) of the power of describing and narrating orally."

My own views on the teaching of history in elementary schools should be well known, as I have publicly advocated them for years. I think it should not be a subject of examination at all, and that the reading, in each of the classes from Standards III. to VI., of a suitable historical reader or text-book, as part of the course of instruction in reading and English, would be sufficient to give our pupils an acquaintance in outline with the great features in the story of our fatherland. This arrangement would, I believe, foster an interest in biographical and historical reading, and avoid the danger, by no means imaginary, of creating a dislike of what might in later years be an interesting and instructive study. To have to prepare for an examination in such a subject as history, which the young can only imperfectly understand, and understand all the worse for the necessarily concise treatment it must receive in a school-book, is not the best way of investing it with interest. No change in the school course seems to me so desirable as this, or better calculated to relieve teachers and pupils of some part of the too heavy burden now imposed on them.

Of object-lessons Mr. Dickinson writes: "This subject is being treated more intelligently. The topics chosen deal more frequently than formerly with the ordinary phenomena of common life, and with objects familiar to the children. Thus the scholar is now being led to acquire knowledge by observation and experiment." And he adds, "The science-lessons are not quite so satisfactory in too many of the small schools. The teaching is not sufficiently accurate or sufficiently grounded on observation and experiment. Expensive apparatus is not needed." The improved treatment of object-lessons here noted is, I think, fairly general. A wider knowledge of the methods and aims of the lessons in recent books on this subject would help to make the improvement more general. As to science, little time can be spared for lessons in it. No great result either in training or in knowledge can be looked for unless more than one hour a week can be given to the subject. In a few large schools this allowance of time has been somewhat exceeded, but in most schools it is less, and is frequently only half an hour. In a fair number of cases creditable work has notwithstanding been done, and several head teachers could be named who have taken the subject up with enthusiasm and success, and treated it on truly experimental lines. In laws of health, simple physiology, and agricultural science the teaching is of necessity largely "book science," but an appreciable deposit of permanent knowledge is frequently secured even on these terms. Except in agricultural science and simple chemistry we have no easy text-books that fit into the programme of science teaching, and this is one of the chief causes of the somewhat unsatisfactory condition of the instruction. The programme itself is in need of revision, while the agricultural science course is so comprehensive that it has been prescribed verbatim for the teacher's certificate examination. The inaccuracy of the instruction, to which Mr. Dickinson refers, is a very real defect that can be removed only by teachers informing themselves better on the subjects taught. If we could get rid of history as an examination subject science could be much more worthily treated than it now is.

Oral answers are being more generally stated in the form of complete sentences, and this should be aimed at everywhere. But they too often want the fullness and definiteness that constitute the chief merit of a good oral answer. Many pupils seem to say not as much as they can, but as little as they can, on the subject of the question. This is largely owing to the undue prevalence of narrow questions that deal with a single isolated point. Object-lessons, science-lessons, history-lessons, and examinations on the matter of English lessons afford scope for a wide and comprehensive style of questioning, and furnish ample material for a good training in oral composition. Indeed, there is hardly a subject in the school course that might not be turned to good account for this purpose.

Only in a very few schools is the order of the pupils other than satisfactory, and it is usually good. My colleagues for the most part speak favourably of the attention also, but in a good many of the larger classes that have come under my notice I do not think the attention satisfactory, except in the higher standards. Many of our teachers have a very humble idea of what good attention should mean, and are satisfied if their classes show a quiet and decorous mental torpor. If it is reasonable to expect evidence that an earnest and willing spirit of work pervades a class; that every pupil is carefully and closely noticing all that is being done; that the eyes of all are following word by word the reading of one; that the ears of all are open to the teacher's instruction and to their class-fellows' answers—if it is reasonable to expect all this, the number of well-managed classes in the larger schools is much lower than I could wish it to be. In the smaller schools the attention is usually much better.

Low answering has been about as prevalent as in previous years. This evil involves great loss of efficiency in many schools.

Changes of teachers and absence on leave have been perhaps less frequent than heretofore, but they still form one of the greatest obstacles to progress. It is most important that assistants of good physique should be appointed in the larger schools, as the skilled head masters of these establishments have now to act as relieving teachers during a considerable part of the year, and are thus hindered in the systematic supervision of the teaching and management of the pupil-teachers and

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 Kaiauai 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

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

examination was less, falling from 130 to 115, and if Tarata (above referred to) be excluded from the calculation the absentees number only 100. The following table shows the summary of results for the district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	
				1896. Yrs. mos.	1895. Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	10	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	85	82	46	14 2	14 4
" V.	200	188	91	13 7	13 10
" IV.	443	420	229	12 9	12 11
" III.	565	545	335	11 11	11 10
" II.	545	518	393	10 7	10 9
" I.	556	526	405	9 5	9 5
Preparatory	1,374	...	...	...	...
Totals	3,778	2,279	1,499	...	...

From the above table it will be seen that in Standards II., IV., V., VI. the average ages have fallen, and that in Standard III. there is a slight increase, since 1895.

Preparatory Classes.—Of the 3,778 pupils on the rolls at examination, 1,374, or 36 per cent., were in the preparatory classes. Though the number of pupils in the preparatory classes was exactly the same as in the previous year, the number over eight years of age showed a decrease, falling from 475, or 34 per cent., to 391, or 28 per cent. This shows that the tendency to keep back pupils in the infant classes did not exist to the same extent as in the previous year. This was my impression before the compilation of the above return, for in comparatively few cases were the reasons for non-presentation in Standard I. unsatisfactory.

The Examination of Standards I. and II.—During the past year I carried out the course adopted during the previous year, as explained in my last report. On the whole, the system of examination by the teacher has not worked satisfactorily, and again pupils who were unqualified were promoted. In one case where the teacher adhered to his results he afterwards admitted that he had been too lenient, for the work of the higher standard was found to be too heavy. Last year I cited a case where a teacher (not now in the service) passed every pupil in Standard II.; examined in Standard III. they failed utterly. For twelve months they had been struggling with work altogether beyond their powers, and after all their disheartening efforts had to remain in the same class, having a good knowledge of the work of neither standard. I should not like to see the system abolished altogether, for I believe that a good teacher's knowledge of the pupils' work during the year should be recognised in the granting of passes, but it would work more satisfactorily and would conduce to a higher standard of efficiency if an Inspector had the power to revise the passes. In arithmetic there frequently was great disparity between the teachers' results and mine, though the tests were of about equal difficulty.

Reading.—An improvement was noticeable during the year, though much still remains to be done. To Standards V. and VI. the "New Zealand Reader" was issued, and, though for examination the easier lessons were chosen, the results were disappointing, and pupils stumbled over words they could quite easily have read in the ordinary books. When throughout the year only one book is used the pupils remember the matter of the lessons and reading becomes to a certain extent prose recitation, and the introduction of the extra reading-book will conduce to better reading. I do not mean that the school reader will be better read, but the pupils will be able to read a book of equal difficulty but not so well known with more intelligence and fluency. I am afraid that some of our children never read any books other than those used in school, and, though they may know these sufficiently well to pass, there is no guarantee that they are good readers. The course of reading during school-hours cannot be widened to any great extent, for the syllabus is already sufficiently heavy, but much could be done by the establishment of libraries containing books of interest to boys and girls of school age. At some of the larger schools such are to be found, but in the country districts, where the need is most felt, so far as I know, there are none.

Spelling.—I cannot report favourably on this subject. Apart from the special tests, easy words in the general work were frequently misspelled. The inferiority is due chiefly to the two causes pointed out last year—want of thoroughness in correction and bad methods of instruction, the ear, not the eye, being appealed to.

Writing.—The lack of organization shown in using two or more sets of copy-books in the same class at the same time is not so common as formerly, and consequently better class-instruction is possible. I find, however, that in the lower classes of some schools systematic instruction in the principles of good writing is still neglected, and that pupils are allowed to "go on writing" instead of being shown *how* to write. The writing on the examination-papers was generally satisfactory, and the number of papers I could look upon as good samples of neatness and arrangement was considerably greater than in the previous year. I attach as much—I was going to say more—importance to this, the practical application of writing, as to the work done in the copy-books. The latter shows in some measure how the subject is taught, the former how far the teaching is successful. What I have said has a bearing on a still more practical side—the neatness, legibility, fluency, and symmetry of the writing of the children when they leave school; and I consider the majority of our ex-pupils should show at least very fair proficiency.

Drawing.—In this subject also I found an improvement in the organization. In Standards I., II., and III. the subject was, as a rule, well taught. In Standard IV. the geometrical drawing was weaker than I expected. Standard V. work was often good, and the pupils showed an intelligent comprehension of the principles of elementary scale-drawing. The work in Standard VI. was below the promise of the lower classes. This was due to some extent to the lack of suitable models for model-drawing, and for illustrating solid geometry. I should like to see some of our pupils sent up for the examinations held under the auspices of the Wellington School of Art.

Arithmetic.—In Standard I. the work was fairly satisfactory; in Standard II., unsatisfactory; in Standard III., fair. In Standards IV., V., and VI. the quality varied very much, in V. and VI. being often very disappointing. The teachers were shown the cards, and were asked to point out anything they considered should be explained to the pupils. I was often told that the tests were fair and on the lines of the instruction, and yet the questions were not well done. Allowing in such cases that the instruction had been satisfactory, it seems to me that the examinations conducted by the master must have been in fault, and this, I am convinced, was sometimes the case. Only one set of cards would be used where at least three or four were required if pupils were to work independently. In the ordinary school-work also pupils sitting side by side were assigned the same work. If for the larger schools cyclostyles were provided different sets of papers could be readily struck off, and the teachers could then gauge with more certainty the efficiency and progress of the pupils. The mechanical questions were fairly correct, but questions dealing with principles taught, but varying slightly in form, were poorly worked.

The instruction often degenerates into working on the blackboard long mechanical examples. These take up more time in working than is commensurate with any results that can possibly be obtained. In working them also teachers do the whole of the work, while the pupils may or may not be attending, and are certainly not learning. Another defect is very common. The teacher deals too much with abstract quantities, the concrete illustrations—met with by the pupils in actual life and the basis of the whole rule—being omitted altogether. Let me give an example taken from the work of Standard III. Question: £19 14s. 8d.÷8. *Teacher's directions:* Divide the pounds by 8 = 2 and 3 over; multiply the 3 by 20 = 60, and *plus* 14 = 74; divide by 8 = 9 and 2 over; multiply the 2 by 12 = 24, and *plus* 8 = 32; divide 32 by 8 = 4. Answer: £2 9s. 4d. A much better plan would be to treat the question as though an actual sum of money were being divided among eight boys. With the card-board coins now sent out to schools the exact sum could be shown to the pupils, who should be required to perform the operation. *Method:* The pounds are distributed equally among the eight boys as far as they will go. Each has £2 and T. has £3 14s. 8d. left. How is this to be divided? The pounds must be exchanged for shillings. Where? At bank, store, &c. For £3 T. gets 60s., and these with 14s. = 74s. T. can now distribute some shillings. The boys get 9s. each, and each now has £2 9s., and T. has 2s. 8d. left, and so on to the end. Step by step as the money is divided the process is shown on the blackboard, and pupils can understand the *reason* for every step.

If, in the upper classes, cheap scribbling-books were used for arithmetic, and possibly other subjects, the time of both teacher and taught would be saved. The pupils could work with lead-pencil, copying out would not be necessary, the work could be corrected at a convenient opportunity, more practice could be obtained in a given time, and a permanent record of the work could be kept.

Composition.—In Standard III. there was a marked improvement in both the punctuation and the language used. This I attribute in a great measure to the teachers requiring the pupils to answer fully in oral work as I recommended last year. As pupils trained in this way reach the standards in which composition is a pass-subject I expect to find a still further improvement. In Standards IV., V., and VI. composition leaves much to be desired. Here special lessons on the structure of sentences are needed, and, with a few exceptions, such as I saw were disappointing. In the past the teachers have looked upon grammar as all-important, and lessons in composition tend to become lessons in grammar, the minutiæ of subdivision and classification instead of the uses of words, phrases, and clauses in combination being dealt with.

In no other subject is faulty correction more noticeable than in composition. Grave errors are passed over and the corrections are often poor. The corrections are generally written in by the teachers, the books handed back to the pupils, closed, and put away, and very seldom is the exercise rewritten correctly. Better training would be given if the pupils themselves were required to make the corrections. The teacher might use simple well-understood signs to indicate different classes of errors, and the pupils could then think out the errors and rewrite the exercise if necessary. Some such signs are shown in Longmans' Composition (p. 302), and others just as suitable could be found.

The schools in which the pupils can begin and end letters properly increase in number. At the examinations note-paper and envelopes were given out, and the pupils were required to write letters as if they were going to post them. The letters, on the whole, were fair, but the addressing of the envelopes was weak.

Geography.—In Standard III. more use had been made of the maps, and in consequence the work showed an improvement. As the knowledge required from this class is comparatively light, more advanced works in New Zealand geography might be undertaken, and the heavier work of Standard IV. thereby lightened. In Standards IV., V., and VI. there were many failures. There can be little doubt that the instruction is too mechanical. The pupils are required to commit to memory certain parts of the text-books, and but little effort is made to arouse interest in the lesson. As oral examination by the Inspector before a map is not so easy as in Standard III., the maps are often neglected. Until blank maps such as I use in examining come into more general use I do not expect to find much improvement in the geography of Standard IV. A glance at the exercise-books sometimes showed that teachers were satisfied with very meagre answers, and in such cases the fault became apparent at examination. Want of accuracy in defining the positions of places

was very common, and Standard V. pupils considered it sufficient to state that Calcutta is in Asia, and so on. The answering in physical geography still remained unsatisfactory, and the answers often indicated inferior methods of instruction and the consequent confusion of ideas.

During the year I frequently required teachers to give lessons on subjects of interest in New Zealand, and even where they had carefully prepared the lessons they were at a great disadvantage, and often conveyed quite erroneous ideas, as they had not visited the places or scenes referred to. As a just conception of our own country is of the greatest importance to those engaged in teaching, could not the department assist teachers who wish to visit the different parts of the colony during their holidays? The Union Company makes a concession, but insufficient to induce travelling by sea. In many parts of the North Island coach-fares have been cut down by competition, and if the Railway Department could be prevailed upon to issue tickets at, say, half or quarter rates to teachers travelling over new country many would, I believe, avail themselves of the privilege. The plan suggested is merely an extension of the principle underlying the cheap school excursions, of which the advantages are generally recognised. The educational results are obvious; more accurate knowledge would be imparted to the children, lessons could be made more pictorial and descriptive, and that horror "cram" would be pushed further into the background.

Class and Additional Subjects.—My remarks in the last report still apply, except that in history in Standard III. there was an improvement.

A review of the work of the year shows that education in the district has progressed steadily, if slowly. A great obstacle is the frequent changing of teachers. A new teacher comes to a school, and if the examination results are unsatisfactory the past and present teachers repudiate any responsibility, and the apportioning thereof is often very difficult. Better results are hoped for in the future, but in a year or so the new teacher seeks and may obtain removal, and disappointing work is again found.

The order and discipline were generally very satisfactory. In only a few schools were the pupils not self-reliant and honest in their work.

I have, &c.,
W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc.,
Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Education Board Office, Wanganui, 28th February, 1897.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending the 31st December, 1896.

Number of Schools.—At the close of the school-year 123 schools were in active operation, as against 116 at the close of 1895.

Enrolment.—For the last quarter of the year the average weekly roll-numbers were: Males, 5,190; females, 4,887: total, 10,077. For the four quarters of the year the mean average weekly roll-number was 10,121·5. This shows an increase for the year of 374, which appears low, considering that six new schools were established, and that many buildings were enlarged. All the new schools, however, were opened during the last quarter of the year, and the total number enrolled at them is only 117. The increase, therefore, on the rolls of the remaining 117 schools of the district is 257. Taking the larger schools, and comparing the average weekly roll-numbers of the last quarters of the past two years, we find that the four schools in Wanganui Borough show an increase of thirty-nine, Feilding School an increase of thirty-three, and Hawera School an increase of forty-eight; while the three schools in Palmerston Borough show a decrease of sixty, Marton School a decrease of twenty-three, and Foxton School a decrease of eleven. This clearly shows that the district is indebted not so much to the large towns for any increase in the number of pupils enrolled as to the progress of settlement. It must, however, be remembered that many of the children enrolled in the new schools in the back-country previously attended some other schools in the district. How settlement has advanced on this west coast during the past ten years is shown in a remarkable manner by the following figures: From 1886 to 1896 the average weekly roll-number of all the schools has risen from 6,221 to 10,077, or an increase of 62 per cent.; and the number of schools open from 75 to 123, or an increase of 64 per cent. This is the first year the average weekly roll-number has reached 10,000.

Average Attendance.—For the last quarter of the year the strict average daily attendances were: Males, 4,083; females, 3,859: total, 7,942. The working average for the same period was 8,051, or 109 higher than the strict average. In calculating the working average the number of half-days on which the attendance is under half the number on the roll, and the attendances on such half-days, are thrown out of the calculation. For the four quarters of the year the strict average daily attendance was 8,050·5, and the working average 8,145·5, or 95 higher than the strict average. For the year the increase in the strict average is 657·3, although the increase in the roll-number is only 374; and the strict average attendance expressed as a percentage of the weekly roll-number is 79·5. These calculations point to increased regularity of attendance, and we are pleased to note that the percentage is 2·5 above the highest yet reached in the district—viz., 77 per cent. in 1894. Still, this 79·5 is below the percentages of nine of the thirteen districts in 1895, in which year Otago was at the top with 85·9. But, other things being equal, the district with the best attendance should show the best teaching results; and, if this be granted, how can Wanganui compare favourably with Otago when in the former district one pupil in five is absent daily, as against one pupil in seven in the latter? There would be little to complain of if pupils attended as well throughout the year as they do on examination-days. On those days 95 per cent. of the pupils presented in standards, and 91 per cent. of all the pupils on the rolls (including those in the preparatory classes), attended.

In your Inspectors' report for 1890 it was pointed out that it was by no means the small schools and bush schools that showed low average attendances, but that some of the large schools were very bad offenders in this respect. It is pleasing to find from the following table that a marked improvement has taken place during the past six years :—

School.	Attendance for Year expressed as a Percentage of the Roll-number. 1890.	1896.	Difference.
Waverley	69·7	88·0	18·3 increase.
Wanganui Boys'	88·1	85·6	2·5 decrease.
Feilding	65·8	85·1	19·3 increase.
Wanganui Girls'	80·0	84·2	4·2 "
Terrace End, Palmerston ...	69·7	83·1	13·4 "
Marton	75·0	80·4	5·4 "
Hawera	79·4	79·6	0·2 "
College Street, Palmerston ...	...	79·5	Not open in 1890.
Campbell Street, Palmerston ...	...	79·2	
Foxton	69·6	94·9	5·3 increase.
Central School, Palmerston* ...	72·9	...	...

From the foregoing it will be seen that, of the eight schools where it is possible to make a comparison between the attendances for the two years, seven show an improvement; and Feilding, Waverley, and Terrace End do so in a most marked degree. Wanganui Boys' School alone shows a marked decrease, but the attendance there during the last quarter of 1890 was abnormally high, reaching 97 per cent. of the roll-number. Notwithstanding the improvements made, however, five out of the ten schools do not reach 81·4 per cent.—the average for the colony last year; and Waverley is the only one of the ten to reach the percentage of Otago, though in a comparison between a single school on the one hand, and a district with 214 schools and nearly twenty thousand pupils on the other, the result should be in favour of the single school.

For writing at such length under this heading the importance of the subject must be our excuse. Irregularity of attendance is the greatest bane of the enthusiastic, skilful teacher (often a valuable friend to the incompetent one), and even he will find a difficulty in producing good work when hampered by it. He may obtain a fair number of passes *of a certain quality*, but he cannot educate his pupils. Fortunately it is generally a teacher of a different stamp that finds a difficulty in securing regular attendance. With the majority of teachers irregularity of attendance must lead to "cram," superficial treatment, and neglect of some subjects—generally class-subjects. That much of the irregularity is often due to sheer carelessness on the part of parents there is no doubt. But in far too many cases it is the teachers themselves who are responsible for this carelessness; for parents, not to speak of children, are quick to gauge the educational barometer of a school, and the attendance varies according to the height of such barometer. To secure good attendance, therefore, it is of the greatest importance that teachers should carry out their work faithfully and well from day to day; while (to quote from a previous report) "they should make their schools as attractive as possible, by establishing in their pupils' minds happy associations with the duties and employments of every day (a valuable factor in the training for after life), and by fostering among their pupils a feeling of loyalty and pride in everything connected with the schools which they attend."

Roman Catholic Schools.—The Roman Catholic schools were duly inspected and examined, including the Marist Brothers' Boys' School and the Girls' School in Wanganui, the school in Palmerston North, and the school in Hawera. The following are the examination results :—

School.	Number on Roll.	Presented in Standards.	Present in Standards.	Failed in Standards.	Passed in Standards.
Marist Brothers', Wanganui	63	63	62	16	46
Wanganui Girls'	92	45	45	8	37
Palmerston North ...	82	49	48	9	39
Hawera...	78	46	46	25	21
Totals	315	203	201	58	143

The schools at Wanganui and Palmerston showed marked improvement since the previous examination. At Hawera all the pupils in Standards V. and VI. failed badly in arithmetic; and spelling, composition, and geography were very poor subjects in Standards IV. to VI.

Inspection.—In all, 114 schools were visited and fully reported upon. It is to be regretted that more time cannot be found for inspection visits, especially in the case of those schools where the teachers are inexperienced, but are anxious to learn. We are glad to be able to say that the help we were privileged to give at these visits often bore good fruit at the subsequent examination visits. One thing we should like to refer to that often struck us during our inspections—the amount of time that is lost during the week through pupils not being brought in punctually. Pupils should be assembled sufficiently early to allow of lessons being started at time-table time. Then all teachers should be in their places from ten minutes to fifteen minutes before the time for commencing work,

* Superseded by Campbell Street.

blackboards should be ready (with work set down where necessary), slates should be clean, pens and pencils should be given out, &c.

Examination of Schools.—The following table summarises the examination results for each standard, and for all standards in the district. Another table, which gives every information with regard to individual schools, has not been printed on account of its great size, but it may be seen at the Board's office.

Number of Schools examined in each Class.	Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
40	Above Standard VI.	80	...	...	...	...
80	Standard VI. ...	358	347	125	222	14 5
89	" V. ...	699	671	241	430	13 7
108	" IV. ...	1,175	1,104	390	714	12 10
108	" III. ...	1,528	1,449	360	1,089	11 8
110	" II. ...	1,402	1,339	140	1,199	10 6
112	" I. ..	1,388	1,329	110	1,219	9 3
112	Preparatory ...	3,156	...	...	...	...
	Totals ...	9,786	6,239	1,366	4,873	Mean—12 years.

All the schools open for the full twelve months—viz., 114, or eight more than in 1895—were duly examined in standards, with the exception of Parapara, which can be taken only in the beginning of the year, and so will be examined next March. Kapuni was closed for a considerable time on account of an epidemic just as the examination was due; and Mangahoe also was closed through the road being washed away, and, furthermore, it had been open for only some eight months when the schools in its neighbourhood were being examined. We hope to examine Kapuni in May, and Mangahoe next March.

On the days appointed for the examination in standards there were 9,786 pupils (5,050 boys and 4,736 girls) on the school-rolls. Of these, 6,550 were presented in the six standards, 3,156 were in the preparatory classes, and 80 had already passed Standard VI.—that is, were in the class above Standard VI., or what is generally known as Standard VII. In passing, we may say here that teachers are given to stating that their pupils have passed Standard VII., whereas there is not even a syllabus for that class. We find this year increases of 283 on the number on the rolls, and 169 on the number presented in standards. These increases are much below those of late years. The number of pupils presented in standards (omitting those in the class above Standard VI.) expressed as a percentage on the number on the rolls is 66·9, and this is 0·2 lower than in 1895. We confess that we should like to see this percentage increase rather than diminish, for, under existing circumstances, it hardly seems creditable that nearly one-third of the pupils enrolled should not be deemed fit for presentation in a standard. Of the 3,156 children in the preparatory classes, 659 were over eight years of age. Of these 659, 441 had been under two years at school, 54 were Maoris, and "Irregular attendance" and "Dulness" accounted for the balance on the excuse-sheet. We would again point out that parents make a great mistake when they consider that it is of no consequence whether or not they send the "infants" regularly to school. Standard classes cannot well be good unless a sound foundation is laid in the primer classes. In the standard classes Standards VI., V., IV., and III. show increases in the numbers presented, and Standards II. and I. decreases of 93 and 27 respectively.

Of the 6,550 pupils presented in the six standards, 6,239, or 95·2 per cent., attended and were examined; 311 were absent; 1,366 failed; and 4,873 passed the requirements and were promoted. In several school districts on this coast the population is constantly shifting, so that many of the absentees were accounted for by the fact that they had already passed a standard during the year at some other school. Some of the failures are accounted for in the same way. Castlecliff is a good example of this shifting population.

Although percentages of passes are not now calculated for individual schools, it will be interesting to see how in this respect the district as a whole comes out, and how the various standards compare with one another. Of the 6,239 pupils examined in the six standards, 78·1 per cent. succeeded in passing. The percentages in the various standards are as follows: Standard I., 91·7; Standard II., 89·5; Standard III., 76·5; Standard IV., 64·6; Standard V., 64·0; Standard VI., 63·9. It will be noticed that there is a gradual decrease from Standard I. to Standard VI. Comparing these results with those for 1895, we find that Standards IV. and VI. show decreases of 6·3 per cent. and 4 per cent. respectively, while all the other standards show improvement.

Instruction.—Little new can be written under this heading with regard to the treatment of the various subjects. We think that fair average progress is being made at the majority of schools where circumstances are favourable, and we are glad to be able to state that many of the small schools are producing quite as good work as those with several teachers. The young teachers who have recently completed their pupil-teacher course and obtained their Government certificates, and who are now in sole charge of schools, are doing particularly well; and this, besides being especially gratifying from any point of view, speaks well for our pupil-teacher system.

There is no doubt that reading has considerably improved during the past few years, and that the percentage of passes on the number examined is fairly high. But, under present circumstances, what does a pass in reading mean? It means merely this: that pupils can read with fair accuracy

and expression one book in each standard, varying from about a hundred pages in Standard I. to two hundred pages in Standard VI. Certainly at a few schools two sets of books are used, but we think it very doubtful whether the power acquired in reading at the majority of schools would enable many pupils to read unseen books fairly well, even though such books were only of similar difficulty to those in use. In the lower classes, at all events, so frequently are the same lessons read and re-read, the same words repeated in the same sequence, that on the examination-day the Inspector is listening rather to recitation than to reading. We therefore think that the preparation of two books during the year in each class should be compulsory, and that the Inspector should be at liberty to test reading from both books, but spelling from only one. Then, a wider range of reading should be encouraged by means of school libraries. An excellent step would be for the Board to supply extra sets of Readers to the schools. These would be kept in the schools, and with proper care should last for five or six years. With regard to the faults found in reading at the examinations, indistinct enunciation, showing omission of letters and even syllables, and inaccuracy in small words were the commonest. Then, such faults as dropping and tacking on the aspirate, substituting the intransitive verb "lie" for the transitive verb "lay," and *vice versâ*, and reading the past tense for the past participle are gaining a firmer hold year by year. On the other hand, phrasing is gradually improving.

In the comprehension of the subject-matter we are glad to note an improvement. More teachers now endeavour, by suitable illustrations when necessary, to get the pupils to grasp the meanings of phrases and sentences, rather than to simply substitute one word for another.

No subject appears to vary so widely in quality at different schools as dictation and spelling. Considering that both the words for spelling and the passages for dictation are taken from the reading-books in use throughout the year, we think that better results than at present might well be obtained. In Standards I. and II. the subject continues to be good. In Standards III. and IV. carelessness is responsible for a number of errors; and at many schools these classes seldom escape without several members misusing "to," "too," and "two," "there" and "their," "where" and "were," and such-like. Another common error is omitting a syllable, as "pliceman" for "policeman." The habit of making compound words of simple words, as "themselves," "black-board," "play-ground," is very prevalent, and such errors frequently are not corrected by the teachers. While Standards V. and VI. papers were not always free from the careless errors just mentioned, the passages, on the whole, were fairly well written. The isolated words, however, taken from the Readers too often were badly spelled. The errors in these words were not counted against the pupils, as the regulation provides only for the dictation of a passage, so the words were given merely for our own information. As this regulation has now been rescinded, we purpose in future to take the words as well as the passage into consideration when assigning marks, but, as a set-off against this, more errors will be allowed.

To effect an improvement in spelling we would make the following suggestions: There might be less *learning* of spelling, and more actual *teaching* by means of systematic exercises in word-building; clear enunciation of syllables always should be insisted upon, and the word enunciated *before* being spelled (in paper work as well as in oral work) not *after;* transcription should be recognised as an exercise in spelling as well as in writing; correction of all written work should be thorough; and when words are misspelled they should at some future lesson be written correctly, embodied in different sentences of the pupils' own making. With regard to correction of written work, we may say that at our inspection visits we frequently found in the exercise-books glaring errors in spelling passed over. Another matter that needs attention is the training of pupils in reading over carefully what they have written, for not infrequently the passages, though they had been repeated by the teacher four times, did not read sense. The wider reading already recommended would, it is needless to say, tend to improve the spelling.

Writing and drawing are, on the whole, satisfactory subjects. The former naturally is not as good as it used to be, for most of the extra time now required for drawing is taken from it. Drawing, on the other hand, improves year by year, especially Standard IV. geometry and Standard V. scale. In freehand in Standards III. and IV. we frequently had to refuse passes because pupils deliberately measured and ruled their copies. In Standard VI. pupils generally found a difficulty in enlarging, or reducing, in proportion the various parts of the freehand figures. It was very noticeable that pupils who failed badly in drawing often passed excellently in writing, and *vice versâ*.

In arithmetic, Standards I. and II. were generally satisfactory classes. Standards III. and IV. varied very much at different schools, while in Standards V. and VI. there were more failures in this subject than in any other. The examination-cards for Standards III. to VI. were, as in the previous two years, issued by the Education Department, and we desire to make a few remarks concerning them. The sets received during different months varied very much in difficulty. Standard III. cards throughout all the sets appeared to us to be on the simple side, more especially as it has been the custom of late years to cover so much ground in the cards for Standard IV. On the other hand, we think that in Standard V. many of the questions in interest and fractions were too difficult; while in Standard VI. those in the commercial rules were, in our opinion, frequently outside "simple cases," as required by the syllabus. The fact of the break-down in these standards being so universal evidently points to something wrong. Apart, however, from any difficulty in the cards for the higher standards, the questions might well be more in touch with practical life, and, while giving more scope for showing various methods of working, they need not involve so much figuring and large fractional remainders.

The methods of teaching arithmetic, as observed by us on inspection visits, are improving. Still, not enough attention is paid to introducing new rules by many simple illustrative oral examples. The examples in the class-books in use are very well in their way; but they are meant only as examples of procedure for the teacher, who consequently should enlarge upon them considerably. Then, again, examples should be as concrete as possible, so that the pupils may gain correct

impressions of relative values, weights, and magnitudes. Furthermore, the intellectual value of the study of arithmetic should not be lost sight of through attaching too much importance to the subject from a purely utilitarian or practical point of view: the solution of a problem, therefore, should be arrived at by logical steps. And we would make a strong point of this: that as soon as the purely mechanical steps in a rule are known the sums should always be stated in words without any reference to the rules required to work them. "So long as a pupil finds any difficulty whatever in recognising an exercise in a given rule under any guise, however unfamiliar, be sure he does not understand that rule, and ought not to quit it for a higher." It would be found useful to encourage pupils to invent for themselves new questions on each rule before proceeding to the next.

Geography showed a slight improvement this year. It has not, however, yet reached anything like a satisfactory state, and more failures still continue to occur in this subject than in any other, except arithmetic. The following are points where weaknesses were more especially shown: Places were very often most inaccurately located on the maps. This points to bad training, bringing to light, as it does, carelessness on the part both of pupil and teacher. In Standard IV. "ocean routes" were poorly known, even such ignorance of the map of the world with regard to the relative positions of oceans and continents as would be discreditable to Standard II. being often disclosed. Conspicuous geographical features—Pamirs, Gobi, African lakes, Cape Horn, and such-like—were not known. The reason for places being of interest to tourists was almost invariably given as "scenery," no attempt being made to give the particular features of the scenery. Little attention appears to be given to the geographical advantages of ports and capitals. In Standard V. we have again to notice, as last year, a want of intelligent grasp shown in giving mountain-systems and river-systems, very often merely a list of names being written without any arrangement or connection. The pupils in this standard also still show very hazy ideas of the requirements in the mathematical geography of the globe, their answers giving evidence of rote work, and often having no bearing on the particular question. In Standard VI. political and commercial geography were very fair, but mathematical and physical geography showed the same faults as Standard V. It is high time that every school had a globe.

We think it a huge error of judgment grouping, as some teachers do, Standard IV. pupils with Standard VI. pupils in the work of the latter standard. No doubt the syllabus allows of it, but how pupils just out of Standard III. can be expected to understand the syllabus for Standard VI. surpasses our comprehension.

Composition was seldom good, and was often very poor. As subjects for letters and essays, we invariably gave some of those treated by the teachers during the year, and frequently the compositions sent in were almost word for word the same. This points to pure cramming, and no doubt is due to too mechanical treatment in teaching the construction of sentences, and to slavish adherence to text-books. But in composition intelligent thought should be the object aimed at; and, while an exercise devoid of grammatical errors may be valueless, one with many word mistakes, but which shows thought and attention to teaching, may be very promising. As Mr. Thring points out, original composition means the rousing observation, the giving the seeing eye, and training the mind to make a harmonious picture of what it sees, so that others may know it. Original composition demands that such striking points shall be seized as mark out the thing written about in a peculiar and special way. The use of books in composition is noxious. Each teacher ought to cook the exercise according to the disposition of his class, and not serve out regulation rations of salt beef to invalids. With regard to the subjects chosen for treatment by the teachers, different teachers took very different views. Thus, while in the highest standards at some schools the most advanced subject was such a one as a description of the surrounding district, at others the pupils sent in very fair essays on matters of Imperial importance. We should say here that, whatever subject is chosen, first of all care should be taken that the pupils know all about it; and, secondly, the subject should be made as attractive as possible. Abstract questions and subjects on morals, therefore, are unsuitable. Also, we think the reproduction of a story read by the teacher is a valueless kind of exercise. The style of correction of the composition is often, to our minds, very faulty. A teacher never should interlard the lines of an exercise with his own corrections. He should simply underline errors, and place in the margin of the book some understood symbol for the class of correction he desires. Then, exercises should be read by the pupils assembled in class, and criticism should be invited. In letter-writing we have to complain at school after school of complimentary endings being unsuitable, and of beginnings and endings showing abbreviations, being sloped improperly, and being devoid of punctuation. Paraphrasing has somewhat improved, but it is still very weak. The pupils will not endeavour to get a thorough grasp of the meaning of the verses. In a verse on the "Well of St. Keyne," in which the line "He laid on the water a spell" occurs, over half a class of twenty-four pupils took the word "spell" to mean a "rest," and we were confronted with such an explanation as "He laid (*sic*) on the water for a rest."

Grammar showed improvement during the year, but in Standards V. and VI. it was still inferior to what it used to be when a pass-subject. Many teachers now use better methods in teaching Standards III. and IV., and as a consequence, instead of offhand guessing, it is more usual to find pupils observing the functions and relation of the words before them, and reasoning correctly therefrom. We should like to see grammar a pass-subject and geography a class-subject.

History, we think, has deteriorated since freedom in the choice of subjects of study was accorded by the syllabus. The so-called events are often merely incidents; they are not always well chosen; and they are not understood because some previous event with which they are connected has not been treated. Thus, the execution of Charles I. is taken instead of the Great Rebellion; the South Sea Bubble is preferred to the Habeas Corpus Act; and the War of American Independence, or the Indian Mutiny, finds a place, but not the colonisation of America

or the conquest of India. The practice of some teachers treating history in Standard III. merely by preparing a few disconnected stories is, to our minds, a poor one.

With regard to elementary science and object-lessons, our experience is so precisely similar to that of the Otago Inspectors that we have no hesitation in copying verbatim their remarks on these subjects in a back report: "The treatment of elementary science and object-lessons is, in a large number of schools, not in accordance with the *methods* of science. There is little exercise of eye, and less of hand; there is little learning about things from a study of things themselves; things are viewed, not from the standpoint of an observer, but from the standpoint of another's knowledge; object-lesson *books* take the place of *objects*, and the children are the passive recipients of the information extracted by their teachers from the books. It is true a good deal of useful information is imparted to the children during the course of every year, but we cannot affirm too emphatically that the value of science teaching lies, not in information, but in the habits of mind that are induced by the discipline of patient and accurate observation." We commend these remarks to our teachers. In object-lessons it is not sufficient that pupils should not be told what they can find out for themselves; they must be taught *how* to find out—how to test for certain properties. The object must be seen and handled, and compared with other objects; hence there always should be a supply of objects in the school. We are glad to note that several of the schools now have sets of scientific apparatus.

Upon the methods adopted by the teachers we were, as a rule, able to report in favourable terms at our inspection visits. Also, the majority of the teachers showed during these visits much eagerness in obtaining any hints and information that they thought might be of service to them in their work. Our habit of carrying round examination-papers worked at some of the schools, and showing good methods and fine arrangement, often proved of good service to inexperienced teachers, and was much appreciated by all desirous of picking up a hint.

The method of questioning a class has still to be found fault with at some schools. Teachers weak in this respect we cannot do better than refer to the very full remarks on the subject in the Inspectors' annual reports for 1889 and 1890, to Lecture VI. of Dr. J. G. Fitch's "Lectures on Teaching," and to Gladman's "School Work." One thing was often forcibly impressed upon us—that teachers are too ready to accept a correct answer and pass on without insuring that the information desired to be imparted is "driven home," by further questioning and other means, into the minds of all members of the class. No one but an experienced teacher would ever believe how many different questions have often to be put to a class before there can be any certainty that all the members have grasped the truth aimed at. And here we may say that frequent reiteration is seldom the way of reaching the desired point: far better is it to change the form of the question, still keeping the main object in view.

Before closing this report we desire to refer to the indifference displayed by some teachers as to the manner in which the pupils go through their daily class motions. With regard to this matter we cannot do better than quote Dr. Fitch, Her Majesty's Inspector of Training-colleges: "There are right and beautiful ways and there are clumsy and confused ways of sitting at a desk, of moving from one place to another, of handling and opening books, of cleaning slates, of giving out pens and paper, of entering and leaving school. Petty as each of these acts is separately, they are important collectively, and the best teachers habitually reduce all these movements to drill, and require them to be done simultaneously, and with finish and mechanical exactness. Much of this drill is conducted in some good schools by signs only, not merely because it is easy so to economise noise and voice-power, but also because it makes the habit of mechanical obedience easier. And children once accustomed to such a *régime* always like it—nay, even delight in it. I have seen many schools, both small and large, in which all the little movements from class to class were conducted with military precision—in which even so little a thing as the passing of books from hand to hand, the gathering-up of pens, or the taking of places at the dinner-table, of hats or bonnets from their numbered places in the hall was done with a rythmical beauty, sometimes to musical accompaniment, which not only added to the picturesqueness of the school-life and to the enjoyment of the scholars, but also contributed much to their moral training and to their sense of the beauty of obedience. And I have no doubt that it is a wise thing for a teacher to devise a short code of rules for the exact and simultaneous performance of all the minor acts and movements of school-life, and to drill his scholars into habitual attention to them." In this district Feilding School closely approaches Dr. Fitch's ideas. Another writer says, "It is most disastrous in anything belonging to discipline to overlook beginnings. No leak ever broke up a dyke more certainly than trifles passed over break up the order of a class." We hope we will not be misunderstood in this matter. We have no desire to turn children into machines—in some matters. But to quote Dr. Fitch again: "There is a sphere of our life in which it is desirable to cultivate independence and freedom, and there is another in which it is essential to part with that independence for the sake of attaining some end which is desirable for others as well as for ourselves. In the development of individual character and intelligence the more room we can leave for spontaneous action the better; but when we are members of a community the healthy corporate life of that community requires of us an abnegation of self. . . . A pupil is in an artificial community which has a life and needs of its own, and, in so far as he contributes to make up this school-life, he may be well content to suppress himself, and to become a machine. There are times in life for asserting our individuality, and there are times for effacing it. And a good school should provide means whereby it may be seen when and how we may do both."

In close connection with the foregoing is the "attitude" of the pupils. Considering, as we do, that lazy attitudes border on insolence, we confess that we are surprised at the number of schools in which they are prevalent. There cannot be solid work and lazy attitudes at the same time. Mr. Thring says, "Attitude makes false work, as well as betrays false work. A competent judge shall tell in a moment, by simply looking through the window where a class is at work, whether good work can be going on there. The attitude of the boys will show. For, though there can be true

outward observance in some degree without inward truth, the converse is not possible. There cannot be inward reality without producing an outside corresponding to it. It is a law of nature that the mind acts on the body, and makes it follow any real emotion." Before leaving the subject we may say that some teachers ought to be more particular about their own attitudes. And this puts us in mind that some very earnest, hard-working teachers are not as successful as they deserve to be on account of their bearing when teaching a class orally. They stand before the class in a stiff manner, and propound questions in such a way as if it was quite immaterial whether they received answers or not. As a consequence, they fail to imbue their class with the interest which they really feel, but do not show.

Another matter we would refer to is that pupils should be trained to feel a proper reverence for the place in which the work is done. Therefore no playing in the buildings should be allowed out of school-hours; things should be put away when finished with, not left about; and no roughness should be tolerated in the treatment of the rooms and their furniture. "There is no law more absolutely certain than that mean treatment produces mean ideas; and whatever men honour they give honour to outwardly. It is a grievous wrong not to show honour to lessons, and the place where lessons are given."

With regard to the general behaviour and manners of the pupils attending the schools we can again speak in high terms.

In conclusion, we gladly bear testimony to the zeal and energy of the teachers as a body in the service of the Board. We have, &c.,

W. H. VEREKER-BINDON, M.A., Chief Inspector.
JAMES MILNE, M.A., Assistant Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,— Wellington, 26th February, 1897.

We have the honour to report as follows on the work and condition of the primary State schools of the Wellington Education District for the year 1896.

The total number of schools in operation was 106, all previously-existing schools being maintained and six new schools having been opened.

There is still an increased demand for schools in the newly-settled country around Pahiatua and on towards the East Coast. The Te Aro, Mount Cook, and Clyde Quay City Schools are fairly full in many classes, and the Newtown and Rintoul Street Schools soon will be; so that some provision will have to be made at an early date for affording increased accommodation in the Te Aro part of the city. It is more than probable that the newly-appointed Truant Officer will bring an influx of backward children into the schools; and, if this is proved to be the case, some of our existing schools cannot find available space for them. We think the plan now in vogue in London, Auckland, and elsewhere of having separate schools for backward children, who, to some extent, need special treatment, has much to commend it. In such a school the work should not go beyond the Fourth Standard, and, with very many children, not beyond the Third, as the other schools would always be open to them. Admissions to such a school, the classification of pupils, and promotions from it should be made by the master twice a year, subject to the approval of an Inspector. Other details of management need not be referred to in this report. Such a school is, of course, a very different thing from a truant school, although many backward children will probably be found in the class of truant children. A school for backward children, as here suggested, would include many of, if not all, the children (of whom there is a clas of twenty or thirty in each of several of our large city schools) who are over nine years of age and not able to pass the First Standard. At present such children remain a year or two, attend very badly, and pass out of the schools without reaching the higher standards. If grouped in large better-graded classes, with special instruction almost confined to reading, writing, and arithmetic, much more could be done with them during the time they are in the special school, and afterwards when they enter the higher standards in an ordinary school. The locality which would command the largest city area for the establishment of a school for backward children is the neighbourhood of the Mount Cook Girls' School, and that building itself is suitable, on account of its many and varied sized class-rooms, for a school needing special and varied classification. Now, it so happens that this school is the oldest in the city, it has been many times added to, and, for its present uses, should now be replaced by one of more modern construction. The erection, therefore, of a new girls' school on another section of land, should the demand for a large space for backward children arise, would meet all requirements as to the extension of city accommodation, as to a more suitable building for the girls' school, and as to the establishment of a suitable school for backward children. In the meantime, some temporary premises would be needed for a trial of the plan.

From the summary of the examination reports of the several schools, which forms the appendix* to this report, it will be seen that there are now 13,688 children whose names are on the books of the schools—an increase of 402 for the year; 8,977 children were actually examined in standards, exclusive of 349 who had previously passed Standard VI.; and of these 7,559, or 84 per cent., actually passed the examination. The average age at which standards were passed, and the

* Not reprinted. The schools are classified as follows: Class A, twelve schools, each presenting over three hundred children; Class B, fifteen schools, each presenting from a hundred to three hundred children; Class C, thirty-two schools, each with less than a hundred children, taught by more than one teacher; Class D, thirty-nine schools, each with only one teacher; Class E, five aided schools; Class F, three infant schools.

total percentage of passes made, remain about the same as in the previous year, with an increase of 385 presented and 374 passed. The whole numerical result shows that the working condition of the schools remains steady. The following table shows an upward movement (except in Standard VI.) in the classification of the children passed in the several standards:—

	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
1895 ...	1,463	1,552	1,470	1,220	873	607
1896 ...	1,597	1,581	1,533	1,338	942	568

The large schools in Class A have increased from ten to twelve in number, and now include Rintoul Street, with 378, and Pahiatua, with 300. These twelve contain more than the total attendance of the remaining ninety-four, and the inefficiency of one of them materially affects the results of the whole district. We find that ten of them, with here and there a weak class, are in a very sound condition; in one a change in the headship was made at the end of the year, and another is composed of newly-organized material. In the two latter we are hopeful of improved results next year. In most of the city schools we had occasion to commend exceptionally good classes, in which model systematic work was done, whole classes of fifty children being trained to read, write composition, draw, or work arithmetic of a uniformly excellent quality. It is in such classes that teachers possessing natural aptitude, experience, tact, energy, skill, and patience show possibilities in their art, and set an excellent example for others to emulate. They deserve our warmest praise.

Of the fifteen schools in Class B, each with from a hundred to three hundred children, the three largest—Lower Hutt, Greytown, and Mangatainoka—are doing very good work; and so are Vogeltown and Eketahuna. Eight of the remaining ten are satisfactory, but in the other two better work will be looked for in the upper classes.

In Class C we have thirty-two schools, each with less than a hundred children, taught by more than one teacher. Many of these have given great satisfaction, particularly Fernridge, Clareville, Park Vale, Mauriceville E., Hastwell, Hamua, Makakahi, and Porirua. Twenty of the others have done good work, more or less; but in at least three of them, for reasons not always reflecting on the present teachers, considerable improvement is desirable.

There are also thirty-nine small schools, each under one teacher only. These vary considerably in efficiency. The most satisfactory are the Opaki, Waingawa, Rangitumau, Te Horo, Mangaone, and Judgeford Schools. With the exception of four, the others are satisfactory. We were very pleased with the promising management of several which have not been long in operation, such as Ngaturi, Makuri, Makairo, and Nikau; and marked improvement was shown at Cross Creek, Waihakehe, Paikakariki, Mangamahoe, Koro Koro, Stoke's Valley, and Horokiwi.

The five aided schools are all satisfactory. The pupils get so much individual attention in these schools that, under fairly competent teachers, fast progress is generally made.

We are much pleased with the present condition of the infant schools, and especially with the Kindergarten work in them and in the infant departments of all our large schools. By the Mount Cook Infant School and the Thorndon infant department an excellent lead is given to the others, and year by year new occupations, songs, illustrations, reading-matter, drill, and methods of working are introduced, so that we have now fully-equipped classes working on most up-to-date lines. The two infant schools proper at Masterton and Te Aro have this year more nearly approached the work of the others. In the following schools also the Kindergarten work is commended: Pahiatua, Newtown, Opaki, Greytown, Johnsonville, Lower Hutt, Mauriceville W., Clyde Quay, Terrace, Mangatainoka, Park Vale, Petone, and Clareville.

Here and there the style and steady fluency of the reading taught seem to approach our ideal of perfect work. In many of the country schools there is much hesitancy or higgling; the voice also is often raised and the expression unnatural. We are more and more persuaded of the necessity of greater variety of class-books. Where only one Reader is in use the matter becomes stale and unprofitable by too frequent repetition, and parts being known by heart are therefore read in a perfunctory manner. We have recommended the use of two sets (of three primers) for classes below Standard I., and for standard classes of three sets chosen from literary, geographical, historical, science, or domestic economy readers; all these are now excellent new books by the best publishers, beautifully illustrated, strongly bound, full of useful matter, and serving as great aids to teachers. Parents who are really wishful of their children's progress should be only too anxious to purchase these books for them. We commend this matter also heartily to the notice of School Committees, and recommend them to purchase an additional set for school use. The expense of doing so would be small, as the purchase of a set for one class every five years would meet the case. We further recommend the Education Board to make a grant of one-half the cost of one set, provided the pupils themselves have purchased at least two sets. After the present year, in cases where only one set of books is in use, we purpose hearing all classes read from unseen passages which we shall carry with us. In the Thorndon infant department a great exception to rule prevails, which we think worthy of imitation. Not one or two only, but half a dozen sets of excellent "Picture-books for Children" have been provided out of funds raised by school concerts; and not only are these books read in class, but others are lent to be read at home. They afford great interest and amusement to the little ones, and are very helpful to the teacher's work.

The remarks made on the arithmetic syllabus in our last report still hold good. The processes admit of more simplification. Compound interest is still worked by old methods; and, on one occasion, at an inspection visit, seven aliquot parts were used by a teacher in a practice sum for 16s. 8¼d. We hope to find the arithmetic tests set by the Education Department more adapted to requirements than they have hitherto been. We are pleased with much improvement in methods in many schools, and with a general improvement in mental arithmetic since a definite syllabus has been worked up to. Mr. Lee's five leaflets on "Arithmetic for Schools simplified," which have been printed by the Board and distributed to the teachers, will, we hope, be helpful to many and useful to all.

Writing and drawing are, with few exceptions, well taught. The pass results of first-grade examinations in drawing for this year as compared with last are here shown:—

	Freehand.	Geometry.	Scale.	Model.
1895	777	1,263	689	387
1896	819	1,063	1,006	418

Eighty-three schools presented candidates. The marked feature of the year is the improvement in the character of the model-drawing. Owing to the progress made in our science instruction, especially in chemistry, and to the publishing of better text-books, the time has arrived when modification in the syllabus will be advantageous; and we purpose in our "Suggestions to Teachers" making some changes which now appear necessary, but still retaining a choice of subjects, including domestic economy with physiology for girls' classes. During the past year the magic-lantern has been adopted in several schools, to which the Board is able to lend a selection from about four hundred slides, illustrating travel, biology, and astronomy.

The teaching of singing and drill is satisfactory. The former improves year by year in all our large schools, and in smaller schools where it can be taught. The efficiency of the drill is well maintained by the military instructors, and fairly well by the head teachers for other classes and in small schools. Of the large schools, the best drilled, on the whole, is Te Aro, to which Clyde Quay and Newtown come very closely.

In history and geography, including the physical geography programme and the making of prescribed maps, much good work is done, and we are generally satisfied with it. In future years physical geography examination will be taken *vivâ voce*.

We have nothing much to add to our remarks last year on the grammar and composition. In schools where this work has been begun in Standard II. we notice the best results.

The general order, discipline, control, and management of our schools have much improved during late years. Most of the head teachers in charge of these schools have held their appointments unchanged for many years, and they have proved themselves men of large practical experience and increased usefulness. Changes in the teaching power are not now made anywhere so often as formerly, and this is all in favour of better work being done. We are pleased to notice that commands in class are often given by a sign from the teacher; the children are being taught to speak more distinctly, so that questions need not be repeated, and to give their answers in a connected form; that the uses of porches for class-rooms is being discontinued; that children answer more readily when spoken to; and that in many schools they are more respectful in behaviour. But the old-time drawback of irregular attendance still faces every teacher, although experience shows that the highest average attendances are maintained in the best schools, and in classes taught by the most popular teachers. Still the evils of irregular attendance cannot be apparent to the average parent. On examination we often find that the results come out in order of merit almost in the same order as the attendances made. This speaks well for the teaching, but badly for the neglectful parent. To show how far this irregular attendance is the great hindrance to progress in a system of free education, we will quote a few extracts from this year's special reports which have been sent to the several School Committees: "It was very disappointing to find only eighty children present out of 113 on as fine a day as any one could wish for." "The teachers are hardworking, but are considerably hindered by irregular attendance of many pupils." "Out of 116 candidates there were only six failures, all of whom were either weak or irregular pupils." "The teachers work hard, but they have to contend with such difficulties as a shifting population and great irregularity of attendance." "Roll, 99; the average attendance for first three weeks of the quarter was below 65." "The average attendance is considerably lower than it ought to be." "The irregular attendance of many of the children militates against the work of the head master. The average attendance since the winter holidays has been only 71 per cent. Such a low percentage materially affects the work of the school." "The day of my visit was fine, but the attendance was very poor, being only 59 per cent. of the roll." "On books, 72; present, 49." "On books, 49; present, 29. Weather fine."

Touching the question of attendance, we would call the Board's attention to the low physical condition in which many children daily present themselves. They arrive at the school practically with their physical, and we might also say mental, energies exhausted; and the time in school is a time for resting their limbs and recouping their energies. Here is a case in a small country school in the Wairarapa. The boy gets up at daylight, milks four cows, walks three miles to school and home again, and then has to set to work again when he gets home. On making full inquiries into the cases in a large school, in which we had reason in part to excuse the head teacher for some deficiencies in the work of older boys, we obtained a return of thirteen boys in Standard VI. who each milked from two to ten cows (average over four), or did equivalent farm-work, every morning, getting up sometimes before, and generally soon after, daybreak, working from two hours to four hours and a half before leaving for school, and travelling generally from one mile to four miles and a half to school. They afterwards travelled the same distance home in the evening, and worked from an hour and a half to three hours before going to bed. Is it reasonable, we ask, for parents to exact so much manual labour from young lads? Or is it reasonable to look for educational results from boys whose physical energies are so continually exhausted?

"The Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act, 1892," has not operated largely in this district. Two small schools at Paraparaumu and Cross Creek are teaching a little manual instruction; cookery is taught at the Clyde Quay School, Wellington, and classes are about to be opened in Masterton, but not in connection with the public schools there. In England the teaching of manual instruction to boys, which means the handling of tools, the making of simple articles in wood, metal, &c., is making great progress. Instruction in cookery for girls is also becoming very popular in large centres. We are quite in sympathy with efforts made in the right direction to give such instruction. It should not, we think, be a part of the ordinary teacher's work, and it should

be taught in continuation classes for children who are on the point of leaving school. Such instruction is an essential part of everybody's education, and it will only be well given to large numbers under public systematic management.

We have, &c.,
ROBERT LEE,
T. R. FLEMING,
Inspectors.

The Chairman, Wellington Education Board.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	349	...	...	...
Standard VI.	819	807	568	13 10
" V.	1,294	1,266	942	12 11
" IV.	1,730	1,675	1,338	12 0
" III.	1,918	1,856	1,533	11 0
" II.	1,748	1,717	1,581	9 11
" I.	1,694	1,656	1,597	8 9
Preparatory	4,086	...	...	...
Totals	13,638	8,977	7,559	11 4*

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,— Education Office, Napier, 31st January, 1897.

I have the honour to submit my annual general report on the schools subject to inspection in this district for the year ending the 31st December, 1896.

Sixty-two schools were in active operation at the close of the year, and all of them, with a single exception, were duly visited and examined. In addition to these, and with the sanction of the Board, which was given on the application of the parties concerned, I examined the Meanee and Gisborne Catholic Schools. These schools are conducted as parish schools in the places named, and they are staffed by nuns who reside in buildings attached to the schools.

The number of schools which are under the direct control of the Board has increased by five during the year, a school at Motu (sixty miles north-west of Gisborne), one at Mangatu (thirty miles in the same direction), one at Puketitiri (forty miles west of Napier), one at Umutaoroa (a few miles north-west of Dannevirke), and one at Portland Island (south of the Mahia Peninsula) having been opened to provide for the growing requirements of the district. I was unable to reach Portland Island from the mainland, although I spent three days in the attempt; and it appears to me that, unless better arrangements can be made for getting there, it will be useless making the attempt again by means of the frail Maori canoe, which is only used fortnightly by a Native who carries the mail to and from the island. There are boats on the island, and there are three lighthouse-keepers, but some rule of the Marine Department prohibits the use of a boat to the mainland, and so communication is nigh to impossible, unless some concession can be made by the proper authorities.

Attendance.—The returns of school attendance give a percentage of 83·3 of regularity, compared with 81·5 for the previous year. I notice that several of the education districts show a better result than this, but it is difficult to compare one district with another, and even one school with another, in the matter of regularity at school, for the reason that the same general plan is not adopted in the case of absentees. Sometimes children are away from school for weeks suffering from sickness, or they are temporarily employed at work of some kind, and their names are continued on the roll, with the result that a low average regularity may exist for the school, although the children who are actually going to school may have attended well. Thus two schools, each with a roll of a hundred pupils, may have a widely different average, although the regularity of those actually attending school for the same weekly period may show similar attendances. Percentages are only valuable when the same basis for an estimate is possible, and for this reason I should very much like to see a change made in keeping the school-roll, so that no doubt could exist as to the regularity of children in every district irrespective of weekly absentees. During the year I have kept a separate record showing the percentage of regularity for every school in the district. The facts were taken from the summary register in each school, and the wide differences shown in the separate districts convince me that much depends on the interpretation which teachers put upon the word "left."

Inspection.—The leave of absence which the Board so kindly granted me to visit Australia caused me to be somewhat late in beginning my work of inspection in the first half of the school-year, but the unusually fine weather assisted me to overtake the work in time for the preparation of papers for the pupil-teachers' examination in July. The visits of inspection I always look upon as of great value. A quiet visit to observe methods of instruction, and to note the working machinery of the school in its every-day dress, provides one with all that is needful to estimate what

* Mean of average age.

is likely to be the outcome of the teaching. One cannot be certain as to the actual products which are likely to be sent from a school as in the case of a manufactory of ordinary products, but no school is so organized that it is not possible to estimate the likely effects of tone, discipline, honour, and manliness such as they are embodied in the master or principal teacher and reflected in the work of his school. Every subject of instruction taught in the schools has its full effect upon character and mind, and I am satisfied that the schools, if they are to become more than mere grinderies of knowledge, must have high moral ideals in the preparation of every subject that must be taught under the departmental regulations. Take, for example, that peculiar habit of inattention and indifference which one sees so much in evidence among New-Zealand-born children. Inattention is the outcome of bad disciplinary training and teaching, and I fear that this is the great defect in most of our schools. Without intending to do so, teachers fall into many curious habits in the performance of their duties, and one of them is the bad habit of repeating again and again an order or a command. In a dictation exercise, even a phrase of not more than half a dozen words is sometimes repeated four, five, and even six times in a way which betrays at once the character of the teacher. To an observer the effects of such training upon a class of children cannot be doubted. Few will be found to gainsay the statement that the training of the children at school has much to do with the habits of thought and attention to duty such as one finds among people in their ordinary daily transactions; and a lesson in dictation or other subject carried on in the way described can only end in destroying character and defeating the very purpose for which schools are established. I fully recognise that many of the defects one finds in the schools may be set down to the "standard system," which is general in its operation, but the defects in this direction are certainly not so great as many teachers imagine, and are such as must always exist in some degree under any Government scheme. Under present regulations a wide freedom is allowed to the principal teachers in the control of the work of their schools, and one must look to them to strengthen and inculcate those methods of instruction which, whilst they insure mental growth, also train children to a right sense of attention to duty both in school and in the workshop.

Condition of Buildings, &c.—In most of the districts the school buildings, grounds, and fences are in good repair, and the school provision which has been made in some of the larger centres has facilitated the work of the teachers, especially in the junior departments of schools like Gisborne, Port Ahuriri, Hastings, and Dannevirke, where overcrowding had existed for some time. I have little to say with respect to the apparatus and appliances in the schools further than to remark that it would be a great convenience both to myself and the teachers were an official list issued giving the maps, diagrams, and other things which the Board furnish to the various schools. At the present time a wide difference prevails among them. Some of the schools possess diagrams in natural history, physiology, and physical science, whilst others have none whatever beyond eight or nine sheets of Oliver and Boyd's object-lesson cards. Good diagrams are always of high value to teachers, and, although science can be taught and object-lessons given on subjects of local and general interest without the aid of diagrams or other apparatus, it is still necessary to be supplied with such if children are to become acquainted with the world outside their own immediate environment.

The general result of my inspection visits to the schools was encouraging. As a rule the rooms were clean and tidy, and the teachers were working with diligence and energy, but not always with method. It is to me pleasing to watch the work of the younger men and women who are appointed to the charge of a school for the first time. There is a strong tendency among them to work too hard themselves, and I have found it necessary to spend a good deal of time in showing them how to simplify their work by the amalgamation of classes for certain subjects, as wisely recommended in the standard regulations.

School Attendance.—I do not think that the Act providing for the employment of truant officers by Committees is likely to improve matters in this direction. Members of Committees are so bound up with their several districts that they do not like the unpleasant task of enforcing the attendance of children at school, and many good men refrain from offering themselves as candidates for election on account of their dislike to enter on the work of compulsion. A public officer is able to undertake a duty of this sort without incurring odium or ill-feeling in a district, and, if the School Attendance Act is to be of any real use, I fear the policeman will have to carry it out as a part of his ordinary duties. But I have much more faith myself in the growing efficiency of the schools for the improvement of attendance than in any expedient which the law may devise. Let children once appreciate the pleasure of school-life and irregularity will disappear, except in the case of the few parents who will always be found to care more for themselves than the future of their offspring.

Examinations.—Examination for passes is carried on throughout the year in the same way as inspection. In the northern portion of the district the smaller schools are examined in the first half of the school-year, whilst all the schools in the southern or bush district are examined at this time. The pupil-teachers' examination in July forms the break between the two periods, whilst the December month is taken up with the examination for scholarships and the work of the Gisborne District High School.

The large number of children over eight years of age in the preparatory classes does not show any tendency to decrease, but rather the reverse. In 1894 there were 550 children returned as belonging to the preparatory classes who were over eight years old. In 1895 the number was 520; whilst this year the number reached 683—namely, 375 males and 308 females. It is difficult to account for the large proportion of children of an advanced age in the lower classes of some schools when neighbouring schools have very few of such children. In Napier 120 of the children were returned as belonging to the preparatory classes though they were over eight years of age. This is equal to more than 10 per cent. of the whole number at the school. Gisborne and Hastings have less than 8 per cent. of such children in the preparatory classes, and Port Ahuriri has 6·5 per cent. only. In Dannevirke the percentage reaches 13, and in Woodville it exceeds 17. For the whole

district the children in the preparatory classes who are over the age of eight years is 9·4 per cent. of the whole number attending school.

The numbers returned as belonging to the schools at the close of each quarter are naturally different from the totals as shown in the examination schedules. The average roll-number for the whole year, as represented by the quarterly returns of school attendance, was 7,505·75, and the average attendance was 6,256, or 83·3 per cent. of the average roll. For examination purposes the children as entered on the examination schedules by the teachers numbered 7,221, of whom 4,561 were presented in standards, and 2,660 in the preparatory classes. These numbers do not include the 172 children belonging to the Catholic schools in Meanee and Gisborne, who were examined in similar tests to those given in the public schools. The number actually examined in standards in the Board schools, excluding twenty-nine pupils who had already passed Standard VI., was 4,449, or 113 more than in the previous year; and the actual passes were 3,628, or 81·5 per cent. of the whole number examined. These results bear favourable comparison with those of previous years, and they show that steady progress continues to be made in the average work throughout the district. And it is but common justice to the staff of teachers who carry on the work at the Meanee Catholic School to say that progress and improvement are as perceptible in that school as in the other schools of the district.

The following table shows in summarised form the complete results for the year, and for the purpose of comparison the totals for 1895 are also added :—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined.	Failed.	Absent.	Passed.	Percentage of passes to examined.	Average Age of those that passed.	Improved or otherwise, in Proportion of Passes.
							Yrs. mos.	
Above Standard VI.	29	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	257	256	80	1	176	68·7	14 0	Fallen.
" V. ...	561	549	145	12	404	73·5	13 2	Improved.
" IV. ...	774	759	158	15	601	79·2	12 5	Improved.
" III. ...	962	941	227	21	714	75·8	11 2	Fallen.
" II. ...	999	983	118	16	865	88·0	10 0	Fallen.
" I. ...	979	961	93	18	868	90·3	8 11	Improved.
Preparatory ...	2,660	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals for 1896	7,221	4,449	821	83	3,628	81·5	11 7*	Improved 1·8 per cent.
Totals for 1895	7,086	4,336	880	97	3,456	79·7	11 6	...

It is interesting to notice the fewness of pupils absent from examination. In outlying districts especially one is sometimes surprised to find even on wet days all the pupils present at examination and in time. Thirty schools had no pupils absent on examination-day, thirteen others had only a single absentee, and the largest number absent from any school was nine. Napier, with a roll of 1,000 pupils, had six absent; Gisborne, with 617 pupils, had three away; and Hastings, with 537, had only one absent. A good deal perhaps may be set down to the fine weather that generally prevailed, but I cannot help feeling that much must be placed to the credit of the teachers and to the desire on the part of the children to pass the examination for promotion to a higher class.

The numbers presented in Standards I., II., and III. approximate each other very closely, but the passes show a wider contrast. Compared with last year the passes in Standards II. and III. have fallen about 2 per cent., but Standard I. shows an improvement of nearly 4 per cent. The results in Standards I. and II. are those of the teachers themselves, for, as pointed out by me last year, Regulation 6 of the Standards of Instruction gives absolute control for pass purposes of these standards to the head-teacher of a school, and the Inspector has no alternative in the matter, so long as pupils meet the Inspector in class on examination-day. The presentations in the three higher standards when read along with those of 1895 show how many young children leave school before they succeed in passing either the Fourth, Fifth, or Sixth Standard. Thus, in Standard III. 704 pupils passed the requirements in 1895, and 200 failed to pass Standard IV. at the same time. These together give 904 pupils as actually belonging to Standard IV, at the beginning of the year, but, as shown in the above table, only 774 were presented for examination: in other words, 130 children belonging to this standard are not accounted for. In the Fifth Standard there were 561 presentations, but 739 pupils belonged to this standard according to the results of the previous year. Here 178 pupils are missing. In Standard VI. there ought to have been 363 pupils, whilst the presentations were 257, or 106 short. It thus appears that during the year 23 per cent. of the pupils in the Fourth Standard throughout the district, 24 per cent. in the Fifth Standard, and 30 per cent. in the Sixth Standard left school after obtaining either a Third, a Fourth, or a Fifth Standard certificate. Appended to this report are tabulations giving the separate results for each school. These need some explanation as it is possible that some of the figures make schools to appear better than they really are. A high percentage of passes is not necessarily the criterion of a good school, although it is usually a characteristic. Some schools have a fairly high percentage of passes, but they have few children in the higher standards, the passes belonging mainly to Standards I., II., and III. A really strong school is one well balanced throughout, and it is curious to find that this characteristic is more common to the

* Mean of average age.

small than to the large schools. I have no wish to make comparisons between the various schools, but the high proportion of upper-standard children at Manga-atua, Maharahara West, Kumeroa, Makotuku, Kaikora, and Tiniroto presents food for thought and suggests the possibility of raising the condition of the schools to a much higher average standard of efficiency than most of them have at present reached.

In the examinations which an Inspector has to carry on so frequently it can readily be understood that many aspects of school-teaching and government are presented to him which appear weak and mendable. Many such have been pointed out by me in previous reports, but it is well sometimes to give a review of one's work, and to put down reflections which may have forced themselves into notice during the progress of examinations. Eighteen years have gone by since the schools began their work under the present scheme of education, and although great changes have taken place in the character and number of the school-buildings, the government and control of the schools, and the influences operating on the work of education, as a whole one can hardly feel satisfied with the sum total of effects produced. I do not pretend to be able to point out the actual cause. No doubt there are many causes tending to diminish the effective work in education, but I cannot help thinking that much must be set down to the tendency among us to imitate others rather than to foster that form of knowledge which is adapted and needful to our special environment. For eighteen years I have hammered at this thought in the hope that something might be done so as to make our education more adaptive to the future needs of the children, rather than continuing the attempt to learn things for which the memory alone is wanted, whilst the mind may be a blank in action and duty. The schools are called upon to learn, in addition to the three Rs, geography, drawing, grammar, composition, history, and a number of other subjects, yet no effort is made to foster that form of training without which our country must fail in competition with other countries in the matter of production and commerce. Arithmetic and science are both taught in the schools, but of a sort from which the worst, rather than the best, results may be expected. In the higher classes the question of the early adoption of the metric system is of importance to the country. Under the Standard regulations the Sixth Standard pupils are supposed to know something of this system, and I remember well that the Inspectors, when in conference three years ago, made a strong recommendation in its favour. Since then, however, I do not think that a single test in arithmetic has been set bearing on the metric system, although, if we as a community desire to expand our trade and widen our commercial intercourse with nations other than England and our immediate neighbours in Australia, the metric system must be the channel through which the change must come. Europe and America have a metric system, and the Eastern countries are following them; and our children should be fully acquainted with the system in anticipation of the inevitable change. There is much talk just now of England's trade troubles as against Germany; but, as pointed out by many British Consuls in their reports, Germany studies the wants of her customers, and a common basis of calculation facilitates her trade with foreigners. People naturally deal with those who have the same basis for calculations, and our plan of following the Mother-country with respect to our calculations in arithmetic are certainly behind the scientific demands of to-day.

As to science instruction for the children in the schools, I am convinced that when the question is fully understood there will be no hesitation as to the course to be followed. Science is training in observation and in the application of observed facts to the necessities of life. All true science has for its great aim the art of living well, and all subjects of instruction should aim to bring this about. Very little is being done in the schools having this end in view. Science is attempted in most if not all of them, but effort is thrown away in too many cases. The senior girls in the Gisborne school are trained by the head-mistress in the special art of nursing and ambulance-work, the infants' department providing an abundance of useful patients; and excellent work is being done in this way. Sewing occupies a prominent place in the work of the schools, so far as the girls are concerned; and I am glad to find the Napier Committee alive to the value of "cutting-out" and machine-work for the senior girls. But all this is small, considering the possible benefits to be derived from a well-directed scheme of instruction in science. What is wanted just now, in the country schools especially, is the utilisation of the cheese- and butter-factories for the benefit of the children in technical training. Such factories are to be found in many townships, and one hears of the coming of the Dairy Inspector and of the special lecturer, but it is curious that, in a matter of so much importance to the country, the services of such officers are not used for the training of boys and girls in the art of butter-making and cheese-making, so as to anticipate the years that are to come. The Danes have introduced instruction-schools of this type, and surely, even with a moderate organization, the same plan could be adopted here. All we require is reorganization and a simplification of our present plans, for no increase of expenditure is wanted to bring about what will soon become indispensable, if the children are to grow up capable of competing in productive intelligence with those of other countries.

The Act which was passed in 1895 for the "promotion of elementary technical instruction" has led to the opening of special classes in Gisborne and Napier. When last in Gisborne, and at the special request of the authorities, I visited the classes on two evenings during my stay in the town. In one room a ladies' committee had control of a large class of young women, who were occupied in scientific dressmaking. In several other rooms mixed classes were being carried on in mechanical drawing or some other subject of a technical character. The classes in Napier were equally successful, and about seventy youths and young men went through a course of scientific study under competent instructors. No efforts appear to have been made in Napier to establish evening technical classes for young women. I do not know whether the technical training introduced by the Napier Committee will entitle the school to a special grant under section 4 of the Act, but should this be the case no doubt other schools will soon follow the example set, as there are teachers available who are well qualified to carry out the work.

As to the tone and discipline of the schools, it is pleasing to report that almost without exception attention is paid to these important aspects of school work, and it is seldom that it is necessary to report acts of negligence or carelessness in the keeping of records or in training the children in manners and right conduct.

I have, &c.,
H. Hill,
Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

MARLBOROUGH.

Sir,— Blenheim, 8th January, 1897.

I have the honour to present my sixth annual report on the schools under the control of the Marlborough Education Board.

At the end of the year 1895 there were 63 schools in the district. Four of these have since been closed and one has been opened, thus reducing the number to sixty. Several fresh applications for aid to small schools have recently been received, and the required assistance has been granted, so that there is no prospect of any decrease in the number of those small and (relatively) expensive schools.

The total number of scholars on the rolls at the date of examination was 2,185, a small increase upon last year's number.

There is again an increase in the scholars above Standard VI. and a decrease in the preparatory classes, the latter being now rather under 26 per cent. of the roll-number.

A statement of the number of scholars in the several standards, expressed as a percentage of the roll-number, is given below, and compared with the classification of the whole colony as given in the Minister's last annual report:—

	Above Standard VI.	Standard VI.	Standard V.	Standard IV.	Standard III.	Standard II.	Standard I.	Preparatory.
Marlborough, 1896 ...	3·3	5·6	8·8	14·7	14·8	14·5	12·6	25·7
New Zealand, 1895 ...	3·3	6·2	10·3	13·9	14·8	13·4	13·0	24·9

Of the preparatory classes, 87, or 15½ per cent., were over eight years of age; and the reasons assigned for their non-presentation in Standard I. were—late entrance, 37; irregular attendance, 18; delicate, 13; dull or weak intellect, 13; "unfit" or no reason, 6. I believe these excuses were in the majority of cases valid, though it is possible that "late entrance" in many cases means late entrance at that school without regard to the time previously spent at another. It is, however, satisfactory to notice the steady decrease of these laggards, who numbered 197 in 1894 and 92 in 1895.

The number of scholars in Standards III. to VI. inclusive is 914, or forty-four more than were examined in those standards last year. The number who passed is 651, or 71·2 per cent., and is eighty less than the number that passed in 1895. Taking these four standards separately we find that 80 per cent. passed in Standard VI.; 60 per cent. in Standard V.; 76 per cent. in Standard IV.; and 70 per cent. in Standard III. The corresponding percentages for the same standards in the whole colony, as gathered from the Minister's nineteenth annual report, are 84 per cent. in Standard VI.; 76 per cent. in Standard V.; 76 per cent. in Standard IV.; and 80 per cent. in Standard III. Taking all six standards, the number examined was 1,497, and 1,209, or 81 per cent., passed. This is about 3 per cent. lower than the average of the whole colony in 1895.

For the first time since my connection with this district I have to report a decided falling-off in the results of the examination. I say advisedly "the results of the examination," as I am certain, from my intimate acquaintance with the management of most of our schools, that the scholastic dividend declared in the tables attached to this report, in the majority of cases, by no means represents the real educational profits on the year's transactions. Apart from the well-known fact that many valuable assets exist which cannot be appraised at a single examination, coupled with that other fact so well known to all who have had much to do with teaching, that collectively the children under the examination never come within 20 or 30 per cent. of their ordinary performance, several circumstances have interfered this year with the normal progress of the scholars at some of our largest schools. Moreover, it is impossible, in view of the facts recorded in Table IV. of this report, to doubt that many of the failures recorded this year (particularly in Standard V.) have been caused by the nature of the arithmetic tests employed. These questions are, as you know, prepared and issued by the department. In the preparation of so many sets of questions it is impossible to preserve, and it would be unreasonable to expect, absolute equality as regards difficulty; and there is no doubt that a few instances of great inequality in the same standards could be pointed out. This inequality would not make much difference in a district as a whole, since the schools that were fortunate enough to receive an easy paper would make up for the unfortunate ones. I have heard so many complaints about the difficulty of some of this year's arithmetic papers that I cannot altogether ignore them, though I doubt if a single question can be pointed out that could be condemned as being beyond the legitimate requirements of the Government syllabus. Doubtless it would be quite possible to frame a set of questions for Standards V. or VI. to which no exception could be taken on that score, but which would cause nine out of ten scholars to fail in the subject.

I am no advocate for a too-lenient interpretation of the Government syllabus. On the contrary, I have always held, and frequently expressed, the opinion that such a course is a mistake, and tends to perpetuate its chief defect—viz., the demanding indifferently from all schools the accomplishment of more than is possible in any but the largest and most fully equipped. As regards arithmetic, I should prefer a system of examination which, without lessening in the slightest degree the difficulties of the several stages of the subject, would yet give the intelligent scholar a fairer chance of showing the extent of his knowledge of the subject. This I think could be accomplished by setting a larger number of questions (say, seven) in each standard, out of which the

scholar should be allowed to select any (say) five, the correct working of which should entitle him to "full marks." In Standard IV. a "bill" should be compulsory. Each card could then be made to cover more ground, and scholars would have some slight choice, the exercise of which throughout the district would afford some indication of the thoroughness of the teaching, or of the direction in which weakness might be found.

Taking the fifteen Board's schools having the four upper standards examined, the following table shows the difference between this year's results and those of last year:—

Schools.	1895.		1896.	
	Examined.	Passed.	Examined.	Passed.
Blenheim Boys	118	101	123	88
Blenheim Girls	130	123	138	89
Canvastown	21	15	29	21
Deep Creek	16	16	12	12
Fairhall	23	16	20	7
Grovetown	67	53	67	47
Havelock	50	44	51	43
Havelock Suburban	20	19	18	15
Okaramio	33	20	26	21
Onamalutu	17	17	15	15
Picton	74	64	84	50
Renwick	31	26	32	28
Springlands	37	34	39	19
Tuamarina	32	24	34	33
Waitohi	32	27	29	27

From the above table it will be seen that the larger schools show an apparent falling-off in the results of these standards, which varies from 4 to as much as 43 per cent. The maximum was reached at the Springlands school, but the protracted illness of the head-teacher, who was unable to attend to her duties for several months, may be taken as a sufficient explanation of the falling-off in this case. Fairhall, which next to Springlands shows the greatest proportion of failures, also, no doubt, lost ground through the severe bereavement suffered by the teacher in the death of his wife after a long illness. The case of the Blenheim schools is not so readily to be accounted for. They certainly laboured under some disadvantage owing to their being closed for several weeks on account of the prevalence of diphtheria, and this, too, in the case of the girls' school very shortly before the examination. The ill-advised action of the School Committee in closing the girls' school, together with the circumstances preceding and following that action, no doubt exercised an undesirable influence upon the discipline and progress of the school. With regard to the Picton school again, it is quite impossible to believe that a school which has hitherto been so admirably taught in the upper standards can have deteriorated to anything like the extent which would be represented by a comparison of this year's results with those of previous years under the same management. Apart from any unusual difficulty which may have appeared in any of the examination papers, other circumstances occurred which no doubt interfered considerably with the success of the scholars. On the morning of the examination I was met at the door of the school-room by the head-teacher carrying out a scholar in some kind of fit, and almost at the same time two other scholars fainted in the presence of their astonished schoolmates. These events no doubt caused an unusual state of nervous excitement to prevail throughout the school, and possibly many of the scholars were sufficiently disturbed as to be unable to approach the consideration of a somewhat difficult arithmetic paper in the cool and collected mental attitude so necessary to success in this subject.

After making every allowance for the various extenuating circumstances referred to, it must still be admitted that the results of this year's examinations are not what might have been expected; and other causes must be sought for to explain the falling-off which is so plainly apparent in some of our generally most successful schools. I have reason to believe that in a few cases much valuable time is wasted in the early part of the school year. The very poor attendance of scholars for some weeks after the opening of a school is sometimes made the pretext for delaying the vigorous prosecution of the year's work until the attendance has reached its normal condition. This is a grave mistake, and tends to perpetuate and increase this serious hindrance to progress. Where such a practice prevails great injury is done to those scholars who do return punctually after the holidays, and naturally leads even these to regard a regular attendance during the early part of the first quarter as a matter of very little importance. As the time for the examination approaches, almost frantic efforts are made, and the school machinery is worked at the highest possible pressure, in the vain endeavour to recover the ground lost at the beginning of the year. It is about this time that the air is full of the complaints of indignant parents with regard to "keeping in," "home-lessons," &c., nor is it surprising that some of the more delicate constitutions occasionally give way under the strain. The requirements of the syllabus are admittedly full enough to demand the employment of every hour of the school year to the greatest possible advantage, and if the bogey "cram" finds entrance to any of our schools it is to such as are misconducted in the manner described.

The fact that the failures in the larger schools are, as a rule, relatively more numerous in Standards III. and IV. than in the two higher standards points to an entirely different cause. In my opinion, head-teachers of large schools are apt to devote an undue share of their time and attention to the scholars in the two upper standards (who are after all only a small minority) and leave the teaching of the lower standards almost entirely to their assistants, who, however willing and hardworking, are presumably less qualified and experienced than the head-teacher. The holding of periodical examinations of the lower standards is no doubt practised in

most of these schools, but this can do no more than reveal the existence of weaknesses which might have been avoided had the head-teacher devoted a reasonable portion of his own time to the teaching of these classes. It is absurd to suppose that a head-teacher's time should be devoted solely (or even nearly so) to the services of a comparatively small number of the children under his charge, or that the greatest possible success in their case can compensate for failure in the lower classes, or exonerate him from his share of responsibility for those failures. Moreover, the devotion of some considerable part of his time to the teaching of the lower classes would ultimately render the head-teacher's work in the higher standards easier, when they come to be recruited by promotion of well-prepared scholars from below. I am confirmed in this opinion by observing the excellent results obtained in some schools having only one assistant, as well as in some with only one teacher, who is necessarily compelled to devote most of his time to the lower standards. Yet these schools are generally successful in passing the scholars in the higher.

There is another practice about which I scarcely like to speak in a report of this kind, as I have no positive grounds for supposing it to be prevalent in this district. Vague rumours are however afloat about teachers endeavouring to find out the nature and scope of questions set at schools examined before their own, and proceeding to "coach" up their scholars on the lines thus ascertained. This pernicious system must stamp all who adopt it, or who assist it in any way, as eminently unfitted for the important duties intrusted to them. But setting aside for the moment the meanness and dishonesty of such a practice, it is more than likely that such underhand methods would bring about a greater collapse than could possibly have occurred if the teacher had worked on steadily and honestly throughout the year without any undue regard to the examination. If, as I venture to hope, the rumours referred to have no solid foundation in fact, then what I have said can give offence to no one; but, if otherwise, "let the galled jade wince."

Table 4 shows the number of scholars in the four upper standards who passed in each of the "pass" subjects, and it will be observed that, as in former years, arithmetic and geography are the least successfully taught, judging from the results obtained at the examination. This is by no means peculiar to Marlborough. Several of the Inspectors, in their reports for 1895, notice the same weakness.

Though the outcome of the examination is in some respects very unsatisfactory, especially as regards results obtained in some of the largest, and generally most successful, of our schools, there is still some cause for congratulation if we notice the very excellent work done by some of our oldest and of our youngest teachers under the same circumstances. The future educational prospects of the district cannot be considered gloomy when we see the success of the young teachers who have been taught and trained within its borders.

The examination of the two lower standards is now left in the hands of the teachers, and on the circular notifying the dates of the examination I requested them to furnish me with copies of the tests employed by them in these examinations. In most instances this was done, and, judging as far as possible from the questions only, there appears to be no risk of premature passes in these standards. In some cases the tests employed were more severe than I was accustomed to give for the same standards, especially in spelling and arithmetic. It is so manifestly to the interest of the teachers of the larger schools to guard against premature admission to the higher standards that I do not share in the misgivings expressed by some Inspectors as to the sufficiency of the teachers' examinations. At the smaller aided and "family" schools the case is different, and the teachers are certainly more liable to be influenced by parents unwisely anxious to have their children promoted to the higher standards before they are sufficiently prepared. Teachers of such schools are, however, strongly advised to resist firmly any pressure in this direction, as it can only result in greater disappointment to all concerned in following years.

Class Subjects.—The treatment of the class subjects has evidently received more attention this year. The following table will give a fair idea of the improvement that has been effected in all of them; and though still far from satisfactory (taken in connection with the results in pass subjects) there is evidence that they are on the "upward grade." In grammar there is certainly a marked improvement, which may perhaps be regarded as the consequence of the strictures passed on that subject in my last report, and may be accepted as an earnest of still further improvement in the future. Additional subjects also show a slight improvement on the whole.

Comparison of Results in Class and Additional Subjects expressed as a Percentage of the Number of Schools examined.

——	Number of Schools examined.		Poor.		Poor to Fair.		Fair to Good.		Good to Very Good.		Very Good to Excellent.	
Class subjects—	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.
Grammar ...	52	57	23·0	1·9	39·6	34·6	29·1	46·1	8·3	9·7	...	7·7
History ...	52	57	24·5	8·9	31·1	44·5	31·1	24·4	13·3	20·0	...	2·2
E. science and O.L.	52	57	29·5	28·0	43·2	34·0	27·3	30·0	...	8·0	...	...
Mental arithmetic	52	57	47·5	16 3	45·0	60·4	7·5	21·0	...	2·3	...	...
Additional subjects—												
Recitation ...	52	57	11·5	14·0	36·6	33·3	46·2	42·1	5·7	10·5	...	...
Drill	10	8	20·0	12·5	20·0	25·0	40·0	37·5	20·0	25·0	...	...
Singing... ...	7	9	...	...	57·1	22·2	...	44·4	42·9	33·3	...	...
Needlework ...	33	37	...	...	15·1	18·9	63·7	46·0	21·2	32·4	...	2·7
Comprehension ...	52	57	15·4	8·8	26·9	35·1	46·2	33·3	11·5	22·8	...	...

General Remarks.—Most of the schools in the district, including those situated in Pelorus and Queen Charlotte Sounds, were visited at some time during the year for inspection, and the inspection reports were duly laid before your Board. Through the courtesy of the Marine Department, in giving me a passage by the "Hinemoa," I was enabled to visit and examine the school at Stephen's Island, which I could not otherwise have done.

The greater part of the kindergarten material obtained from England was distributed amongst ten of the smaller Board schools, and with undoubted benefit to the preparatory classes. It is not claimed that anything approaching the full benefits of the kindergarten system is enjoyed by the children of these schools. The absence of appropriate furniture, want of space, and of course, at present, the inexperience of the teachers, all combine to limit the advantages derivable from its employment; but the intelligence of the little ones has been aroused and quickened, the dreary monotony of the country school infant classes has been relieved, and a large portion of the school hours, formerly passed in listless but unavoidable inactivity, is now occupied in instructive and interesting occupations. As soon as the Board can see its way to incur the expense, I hope that the Blenheim Infant School will be completed, and the new wing furnished and fitted up expressly for kindergarten work. One (if not more) of the present staff of teachers is, I believe, sufficiently well acquainted with its methods and requirements to conduct the teaching of the new department; and a small outlay would supply all the apparatus required to commence with.

Additional Reading-books.—The three lower standard classes, and the preparatory classes of the Board's schools, have been supplied with Longmans' Ship Literary Readers. Unfortunately, through the neglect of the bookseller to send Home my order for Geographical Readers, with which it was intended to supply the three upper standards, these are still without a second reading-book. I hope, however, to be able to supply this want before long, and I trust that their use will have the effect of improving the results in geography at future examinations. The examination in reading will hereafter be taken from one or both of the two reading-books, but the spelling will, at present, be limited to the Royal Star Series.

A late Order in Council having withdrawn the limitation of the spelling test introduced a few years ago, I intend to revert to my former practice of giving a large number of words in each standard for that purpose.

Writing.—The upright style of writing has not been extensively adopted in this district, though Whitcombe and Tombs's "erect" series has been placed on the Board's list of books. I cannot say that I regret the fact, as in the few schools that have taken it up there are many examples of the well known tendency of this style of writing to assume a backward slope, which is far from desirable. If the proper manner of holding the pen were more generally insisted upon, and class teaching with plenty of blackboard illustrations of merits and defects practised at all as it is at some of our schools, there would be no need to depart from the style which has been so long in use, and has in certain schools produced such admirable writers. As a rule, the copybooks throughout the district are remarkably clean and free from blots, and in most schools show signs of careful supervision and correction.

Technical Education.—There are indications of a reaction setting in with regard to this matter in the Old Country, but that is probably due to causes which are not likely to affect us here, and the introduction of some kind of technical education into the district is a matter that should receive consideration. Although any elaborate scheme for general adoption throughout Marlborough is not possible, nor perhaps desirable, there is no reason why the boys at the larger centres should not have some kind of instruction suited to their probable future requirements, and at least equal to that already (in the shape of needlework) enjoyed by the girls. In almost every walk of life, but particularly in rural occupations, the ability to use carpenter's tools with skill, and to keep them in good order is a most useful acquirement, and in places such as Blenheim, Picton, Havelock, &c., it should not be difficult to organize a system of instruction in wood-working without any great expense to the Board. A successful effort in this direction has been lately made at Greymouth through the enthusiasm and public spirit of a local builder, who placed a workshop and his own assistance at the service of the Board. I do not know the precise terms upon which these services are rendered, but I shall shortly be in possession of full particulars, when, if similar arrangements can be made in any of our larger centres, the Board may be able to judge as to the possibility of taking some steps in the same direction. One fact must, however, be borne in mind—viz., that as long as the requirements of the Government syllabus remain as they are no time can be spared within the ordinary school-hours (except perhaps in the case of boys who have passed Standard VI.), and any classes established for the purpose must meet for instruction before or after those hours.

Although shorthand writing can scarcely be said to come within the scope of technical education as generally understood, yet its rapidly-increasing importance in almost all kinds of business might justify the inclusion of this useful art in any place where competent instructors can be found; and it might be as well to ascertain whether the grant available under "The Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act, 1895," can be utilised for this purpose, and, if so, no time should be lost in taking advantage of that Act in the district.

The Education System.—At the end of the present year the Education Act will have completed the second decade of its existence, and it seems to be a suitable time for its revisal. The education system as a whole has certainly gained the favour of the community, and there need now be no fear that any well-considered reforms would in any way loosen the hold upon public estimation which it has so unmistakeably and deservedly acquired, or endanger in any way its existence. That, with all its undoubted merits, there are many points in which it might be greatly improved is generally admitted; and it seems to me that the present time is a peculiarly suitable one for such reforms. Many of the original promoters of the system, including Mr. Bowen, the father of the original Education Bill, and the Inspector-General of Schools, are happily still with us, as well as a few of the inspectorate, and of the prominent teachers who have continued all along to assist in its administration. On almost all our Education Boards, again, there are

gentlemen who have been continuously engaged in the same work, and if a conference of these, and other friends of education generally, could be called, to take the subject into consideration, much good would result, and many defects, which a trial of twenty years has revealed, might be remedied. As a preliminary step I would suggest that expressions of opinion might be invited from Education Boards, and from eminent educational authorities, as to the desirableness of holding such a conference; and if the opinions so expressed should, on the whole, be favourable to such a course, the Government might be requested (by a memorial signed by the consenting parties) to convene such a conference at some convenient time, say, early in 1898. I beg, therefore, to submit the above suggestion to your consideration.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Marlborough. JOHN SMITH, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	72	...	...	...
Standard VI.	123	118	94	13 8
" V.	191	179	107	13 3
" IV.	323	314	238	12 6
" III.	322	303	212	11 9
" II.	318	312	298	10 0
" I.	275	271	260	8 1
Preparatory	561	..	...	...
Totals	2,185	1,497	1,209	11 6*

NELSON.

SIR,— 26th January, 1897.

We have the honour to lay before you our annual report on the Nelson public schools.

One hundred and fourteen schools, including two that have been recently established, have been at work during the year, and all, with the exception of these two, have been examined, the most important of the five additions to last year's list being Central Takaka and Bedstead Gully. The establishment of four others also has been sanctioned by the Board. A review of former reports shows that the increase of small and necessarily expensive schools has of late years been very rapid. The report for the year 1892 exhibits a total of ninety-four schools in the district, so that, allowing for one amalgamation, twenty-one more have been added to the list within the last four years. Several of these have been household schools—that is, schools established in the houses of isolated families, and subsidised by the Board to the amount of £4 per head of average attendance. These, almost without exception, have been well managed, and have produced most satisfactory results, thereby repaying the Board for its liberality and consideration. The small roll-number, the regular attendance, and, above all, the complete control which the teacher has been able to exercise have in many cases enabled her to rival, and even to excel, the success achieved in larger schools under more favourable surroundings. The number of children on the rolls at our examinations was 6,051, the corresponding number for 1892 being 5,830, so that the increase—less than 4 per cent.—is by no means proportional to the increase in the number of schools. Whilst thus the establishment of additional schools has undoubtedly proved a great benefit to outlying settlers by bringing educational advantages within the reach of their children, it year by year taxes more and more the finances of the Board and increases the labours of the Inspectors.

The number present on examination-day was 5,697, the absentees thus amounting to 354. Many of these were children in the preparatory class, or were those who have passed the Sixth Standard examination. In some cases many, especially of the infants, were detained by exceedingly wet weather; but we do not think that such an excuse applies to Burnett's Face, Westport Preparatory, Motueka, Pangatotara, or Wai-iti, in each of which there were about 10 per cent. of absentees. The absence of the class above Standard VI. is, we consider, a reflection upon the moral tone of the school in which it occurs, as it says little for the respect or esteem in which the teacher is held if the choicest fruits of his skill—those who are capable of doing him most credit—are not in their places on examination-day. Every child was present in no less than twenty-four schools, the largest of which were—Little Grey, 53; Central Takaka, 48; Hope, 41; and Neudorf, 35.

The average attendance for the first three quarters of the current year was 4,917, the number on the rolls at the end of the December quarter being 6,005. In the matter of attendance this district, in spite of the nearness of schools, the good roads, and the exceptionally fine climate that prevails over a large part of it, compares badly with the other educational districts of the colony. In the last annual report of the Minister of Education we find in the column in which the average attendances of the thirteen different educational districts of the

* Mean of average age.

colony are compared as percentages of the average weekly number on the roll that Nelson, with an average of 79·4, still occupies one of the lowest places—the tenth—the highest being Otago, which has long held pride of place, with 85·9. That irregularity has much to do with shortcomings in this district was clearly shown at examination-time, when we were often presented with long lists of children who had made less than three hundred attendances since the previous examination. In some few cases these lists contained all the names on the school-rolls. It would be unfair to expect teachers to produce good results under such circumstances. But, while bad attendance is the good teacher's bane, it too often is the weak one's defence, as much of the irregularity is due to the teachers themselves, being either the result of weak discipline and absence of stimulus, or a reflex of their own unpunctual habits, in either case betraying contributory negligence on their part. A systematic and progressive course of lessons is a great incentive to regular attendance, keeping alive as it does from day to day the interest in the work. When the teaching is of this character the children quickly perceive that by absenting themselves even for a day they place themselves at a disadvantage when they return. When, on the other hand, the teaching is unsystematic and desultory, the absentee finds that he can resume his old place in school on apparently equal terms with his fellows. There is no cause for surprise if in such cases the importance of regularity is undervalued.

School Committees, by insisting upon regular attendance at school, may greatly benefit the cause of education, and the responsibility of enforcing the attendance of those children whose names are not on any school-roll rests wholly on their shoulders. Instances have recently been reported, one of which was brought directly under our notice, of young men, apparently not unintelligent, who have been brought up in our towns and are yet unable to read or write. Our many educational facilities should not allow of such a deplorable result even in a single instance. We hope that Committees, teachers, and parents will in future do their utmost to enforce regular attendance, and help to remove some of the reproach from this district.

The examination of certain schools which are not under the control of the Education Board has been undertaken for the last three years. This time the list comprises seven schools—St. Mary's Orphanages at Stoke and at Nelson, two Roman Catholic private schools at Reefton, one at Westport, and one at Nelson, and the Whakarewa Orphanage. Of these the total roll number was 588. We can fairly say that the examinations have done much to improve many of these schools, but we feel bound to point out that the improvement itself renders the private schools more formidable rivals to the public schools, whose efficiency we have to maintain, and whose interests we must of necessity guard.

The following table shows the number of teachers in the employ of the Board on the 31st December :—

	Certificated.	Uncertificated.	Total.
Head teachers	38	1	39
Assistants	24	9	33
Sole teachers	33	39	72
	95	49	144

Two of the uncertificated teachers hold licenses to teach, and five others have passed the examinations necessary to qualify for certificates. Of thirty-nine probationers, who are not included in the above list, four are fully certificated. Except in the case of one certificated head teacher, the list shows no improvement on that of last year. The Minister's report for 1895 shows that here again, with one exception, Nelson stands lowest on the list of educational districts, our proportion of certificated teachers being only 62 per cent. of the whole number, while Otago and Auckland average 97 and 95 per cent. respectively. This district is at a disadvantage in having such a large proportion of very small schools. No less than thirty-eight, nearly one-third of the whole number, have a daily average attendance of less than twenty, twelve of these averaging less than ten. It is not to be expected that highly-qualified teachers can be obtained for such small and consequently poorly-paid appointments; but on the other hand we cannot reasonably hope to raise the intellectual level of the district unless the status of our teachers is raised, and, in spite of many disadvantages, more might be done in this direction. Many of our uncertificated assistants and teachers of our larger aided schools make no attempts to qualify themselves for their positions, some of which have been held for several years past. The same remark applies to some probationers who have finished their term of service. Although the service of two or three excellent teachers would be temporarily lost, yet the general service would certainly profit if the Board would strictly interpret the clause in the Act referring to the employment of uncertificated teachers, and at regular intervals would, for the positions mentioned, advertise for properly-qualified successors. It is even questionable whether certificated teachers who are out of employment have not a right to demand that such a course be taken.

Visits of inspection have been paid to 104 schools. The object of these inspection, or, as they are commonly called, surprise visits is evidently misunderstood by some of our teachers, so that a word or two concerning them may not be altogether out of place. They are intended to afford the Inspector an opportunity of seeing the practical working of the school in its ordinary state, of judging the teacher's power of control and of imparting knowledge, of noting his methods of work, of estimating generally his ability to teach. The conclusion that the Inspector arrives at from these visits, modified or confirmed by the examination results, enables him to assign the marks for efficiency that are necessary for the grading of the certificate of each teacher. Seeing, then, their importance, it is surely excusable that some teachers show the Inspector their best front, putting forth their greatest efforts, and creating possibly a better impression of energy, method, and zeal than their ordinary behaviour would warrant. But what excuse can be offered in the many

different cases that come before our notice? One will simply play the nursery governess, and, with nothing more than a hint here or a reproof there, loiter about the room for half the day, while the children listlessly loll or wearily pick their way through a tangle of books, papers, slates, and rules. Another, more energetic, teaches as little collectively, but wears herself out in continual supervision, distractedly running from child to child, and never realising that a few minutes with the blackboard would instruct the whole class more effectively, with a great saving of time and energy. A third, instead of systematically carrying on the work professedly done according to the time-table, devotes most of the time to "shoppy" conversation with the Inspector, evidently being under the impression that he, poor innocent, is best beguiled by conversation, or has come to be entertained. The vagaries of the time-table are often too serious to be even amusing. In a few instances we still find no visible sign of its existence, and one tires of the oft-repeated excuses "not yet complete; a new one in process of formation," or the more original but already thrice-repeated "an accident happened to it just before the visit." In some cases also, but fortunately somewhat rare ones, a workable time-table, neatly drawn up, is posted on the wall, but no attempt whatever is made to follow it. Evidently it is meant for show rather than for use, unless its purpose is solely to interest the poor deluded Inspector, who finds trouble enough in its dark labyrinths, especially when unaided by the light of an intelligible summary. But the most common forms of eccentricity are to be found among the mental offspring even of teachers of some ability. The time-table, for example, clearly shows a certain lesson which, when its time comes, entirely disappears, either through others overlapping or another being substituted for it. The excuses given by the makers for so ignoring their own creations show that, in one direction at least, our teachers are not destitute of resource. In one case where a lesson had been thus omitted the teacher's explanation was charming in its simplicity: "Yes, that is my regular lesson, but I did not give it to-day because you are here!"

All the faults to which we refer may be roughly collated under one head—"want of method," a defect which is common enough in the majority of our schools, and from which many of the very best are not wholly free. The work is too often spasmodic, different subjects being taken by fits and starts, with a tremendous spurt at the close of the year, instead of the instruction in each subject being orderly, systematic, and continuous from year's end to year's end.

The following table, extracted from the annual return, gives a general summary of results for the whole district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	180	...	...	...
Standard VI.	365	354	226	13 11
„ V.	619	597	388	12 10
„ IV.	777	754	567	12 1
„ III.	913	885	696	10 8
„ II.	784	767	672	9 7
„ I.	783	760	707	8 4
Preparatory	1,630	...	...	...
Totals	6,051	4,117	3,256	11 3*

The mean of average age is exactly the same as last year—11 years 3 months—which was lower than that recorded by any other district in the colony. The decrease in the proportion that the preparatory class bears to the whole number and the corresponding increase in the class above Standard VI. are matters for congratulation. We are also pleased to find that the number of children—182—who were over eight years of age, and yet considered unfit for presentation in Standard I., has also considerably diminished, being now the smallest number recorded for the last five years. The reasons assigned for their non-presentation were—in sixty-three cases, irregularity of attendance; in fifty, shortness of school-life; and in sixty, exceptional dulness. For nine no reasons were given, and to guard against such omissions in the future we desire that, as in the case of standard children, the names and ages of all preparatory children be fully entered on the examination schedules, when the "reasons" may be indicated in the column for remarks.

In our recent examinations fifteen schools have proved unsatisfactory, but in six of these, owing to changes of staff and temporary suspension of work, the present teachers cannot reasonably be held responsible for the results.

A few notes are appended concerning those subjects which, in our opinion, call for special mention:—

Arithmetic.—For the last three years the Education Department has taken upon itself the task of setting the arithmetic tests for the higher standards. Although some few schools, and notably Waimangaroa, have found this year very little difficulty with the subject, yet generally it has been a veritable bugbear to the district. From a careful perusal of the Inspectors' reports of the last two years we should conclude that seven at least of the other educational districts have had a somewhat similar experience, though probably to a less extent, and have found the arithmetic more difficult of accomplishment than formerly. Some of our teachers, however, who have an idea that the work demanded from the children is hopelessly beyond their powers, will be surprised to read the following extracts from the South Canterbury report for the year 1895: "Presented, 5,223; present,

* Mean of average age.

3,439; passed, 2,959; average age, 11 years 5 months. More schools have done well in arithmetic than in any other of the pass-subjects, and in very few were the results unsatisfactory." In our own district this year the general pass results in arithmetic are no higher than those of 1895, though the Third and Fourth Standards have made a decided improvement each year; but the Sixth did as badly as ever. The uneven nature of the cards, which was especially noticeable in Standard VI., is a constant cause of complaint, although in the setting of so many examples this must be to some extent unavoidable. In our opinion, too, the problems in the more difficult sets were often too complicated in character. The tests for Standard III. were, in proportion, too simple and much easier than the corresponding cards set in 1894. A numerical statement is given below, showing the number of failures in arithmetic as a percentage of the number present in each standard:—

	Standard VI. Per Cent.	Standard V. Per Cent.	Standard IV. Per Cent.	Standard III. Per Cent.
1894	... 69	61	55	39
1895	... 51	57	40	29
1896	... 69	56	37	26

Our higher standard arithmetic is yet far from being in a satisfactory state, the total number of failures in this subject being still out of all proportion to those in other subjects.

Reading.—The practice of preparing for reading or spelling two reading-books in each standard, though general, has not yet become universal. In last year's report we gave notice of our intention to insist upon this course in the three lower standards, but, as many of the schools were more than half-way through their year's work before the publication of the report, these had some difficulty, owing to shortness of notice, in satisfying the increased demand. We take this opportunity of reminding teachers that no such excuse will avail next year. The spelling this year shows a large increase of failures, partly owing to the additional requirements, and, as we have frequently pointed out, to the neglect of wider preparation in the lower standards. The children in most of our schools read with fluency and expression from the books they have prepared, and for general excellence in this subject we can especially commend the Toi Toi Valley girls.

Writing is usually a very satisfactory subject, but many have disregarded the notes which we penned last year calling attention to the neglect of letter-junctions, the directions for which are to be found on the inside of the covers of Jackson's books.

The teaching of *drawing* is slowly improving, and a wider interest is being taken in the examinations conducted by the Wellington Technical School. Westport Boys' and Richmond Boys' Schools sent up candidates for the first-grade examination, and pupils from the Toi Toi Valley, Nelson Central, and Westport Boys' Schools obtained second-grade certificates for freehand drawing, several from the last-named school also passing in model drawing.

With regard to the remaining subjects of the syllabus, we have the pleasure to be able to note a substantial improvement in *geography* and *recitation*. *Grammar* is still a weak subject, although some improvement is observable this year. Analysis of sentences is very poorly done. We frequently have papers presented in which a highly-elaborate scheme of analysis is set out, the result evidently of laborious effort on the part of both teacher and scholar, and yet the various members of the sentence are distributed in a manner that shows an utter disregard for its obvious meaning. The requirements of the examinations would be met by the use of a much simpler form, showing clearly the subject, predicate, and object, each grouped with its enlargements and extensions, and the children should be led to test their own work and to be able to give a reason for every step of the process. The last remark applies in an equal degree to their parsing exercises.

We have still to complain of the meagreness in many instances of the programme of *object-lessons* presented, and propose to remedy this defect by the issue of a more comprehensive list to be prepared for the next examination, from which list will be taken the subjects of composition for the Third Standard class.

In many of our larger schools, especially those in Nelson City, Westport, Brightwater, and Reefton, the pupils go through an extended course of physical and military training. In the interests of the children we regret that the practice is not general. Some teachers, who have lately shown fresh interest in the matter, have complained of the difficulty of procuring suitable books. Copies of "Infantry Drill, 1896," are now to hand, and the first part of the new issue will be found especially suited to school use, as a much larger proportion than usual of the book is devoted to physical training.

Our remarks under the heads of "Order" and "Discipline and Manners" show that we are thoroughly satisfied with the way in which the majority of our schools are conducted. Our teachers, too, in spite of many disadvantages, are, as a rule, willing, earnest, and zealous, their faults, of which we have not been slow to complain, being due rather to the want of scholarship and training than to negligence. We believe the *personnel* of the service is improving, and that the district, as a whole, has made no retrogression this year, while improvements in certain directions, though slight, makes us more hopeful of the future.

We have, &c.,

G. A. Harkness, M.A.,
W. Ladley,
} Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

GREY.

Gentlemen,— 3rd February, 1897.

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

There were at the end of the year twenty-eight schools at work under the Board, being three in excess of the number for last year. The three new schools are placed at Nobles, Upper Moon-

light, and Te Kinga. The first two places are isolated districts, being five miles from the nearest school, and, with regard to the latter place, the only means of communication between it and the nearest school (Moana) is by the railway-line, at all times dangerous for children, and in this instance particularly so on account of the bridge, upon which there are only two planks to walk on. In each place the action of the Board in providing for the education of their children is highly appreciated by the parents. At the same time I must point out that the erection and maintenance of so many small schools in the district is a very serious item in the expenditure, and will, I am afraid, eventually cause considerable financial trouble.

During the year inspection visits were paid to all the schools, and reports furnished as usual; these reports were laid before you during August last, and included reports on buildings, necessary repairs to buildings, fences, &c., suggestions for future improvements, and list of necessary school requisites, &c. By direction of the Board I prepared new regulations. These were adopted by the Board, and are now in force. The registers throughout the district are now correctly and neatly kept.

Health of Teachers and the Taught.—The health of the teachers has again been very good. In no case was a school closed on account of sickness on the part of the teacher, and in only one instance was it found necessary to grant a teacher sick-leave, and this only for a very short term. My recommendation on this subject, contained in last year's report, was adopted by one teacher, and so beneficial did it prove that several others contemplate a similar step. With regard to the pupils, no serious epidemic visited the district during the year; their neat, clean, and healthy appearance at the time of examination was very gratifying.

School Attendance.—I am sorry I cannot record any great improvement under this heading. The Act dealing with this subject has, at least in this district, proved an utter failure. Surely parents do not realise, or, realising, do not appreciate, the enormous advantage to be derived from a sound education, of which they are depriving their children; let them pause a moment and consider a few of the effects of irregular attendance. First, as it affects themselves and their children. There is always a spirit of emulation amongst the pupils; the irregular attendant gets gradually but surely behind his fellows; the spirit of emulation as gradually but surely dies. He now no longer cares whether he goes to school or whether he stays away, and the end is failure and disappointment. Then the thoughtless parent casts round for some one on whom he may throw the blame, usually this descends on the teacher—in fact, so much so sometimes as to imperil his position—who has probably been caused more trouble and annoyance by this particular child than by the remaining portion of his class or school, as the case may be, and who has, no doubt, used all his influence with both child and parent to obtain more regular attendance. Next, as it affects the teacher. Parents are no doubt aware that the salary of the teacher mainly depends on the average attendance. It is their duty, therefore, if they are at all grateful for the time and trouble bestowed on the education of their children, to give the teacher their entire support with reference to regular attendance. Lastly, as it affects the Board. The Board's income for all educational purposes, with the exception of buildings and the maintenance of the same, is derived from Government, and depends directly on the average attendance. Parents will see from the above what an all-important question regular attendance is, and how they may assist the Board or otherwise in providing for the education of their little ones.

The Annual Examination.—All the schools under the Board were examined, and the results compared favourably with those obtained last year. The syllabus for pass-subjects, with the exception of model drawing, is now fully complied with throughout the district. The work, which was of a more uniform character, was usually neatly done and well arranged. The following table gives a summary of results for this year, and also for 1895:—

Year.	Presented for Examination.*	Presented in Standards.	Present.	Passed.
1895	1,684	1,066	1,007	829
1896	1,650	1,068	1,040	862

Comparing the above, it will be seen there is a falling-off of thirty-four pupils for the year. The percentage of passes is 82·8 for 1896, as against 82·3 for 1895. The total number of children in the class above Standard VI. is 35, and the total number of infants of over eight years of age not presented for Standard I. is 133. This is a considerable reduction for the year, and I hope to see it further reduced in the future.

The following table gives a summary of results for each class:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	35	...	...	...
Standard VI.	105	101	75	14 6
" V.	150	145	98	13 3
" IV.	189	185	131	12 6
" III.	214	205	171	11 3
" II.	202	198	189	10 1
" I.	208	206	198	9 1
Preparatory	547	...	...	...
Totals	1,650†	1,040	862	11 9⅓‡

* Including infants and class above Standard VI. † This does not include twenty-one District High School pupils. ‡ Mean of average age.

ATTENDANCE AT EXAMINATIONS.—The attendance this year was even better than that of last, there being but twenty-eight absentees in the standard classes out of a possible 1,068. This is all the more noteworthy as during the time the country schools were being examined we experienced unusually cold and wet weather.

TEACHERS' EXAMINATION OF STANDARDS I. AND II.—The teachers' examination of these classes was very satisfactory indeed. The following scheme for the examination of these classes was in most cases adopted by me this year, and proved a most satisfactory arrangement. The teacher having previously examined them, they were again examined by me as usual, the passes and failures being finally determined on consultation between the teacher and myself.

INFANT CLASSES.—These classes continue to be efficiently conducted, and I am pleased to note there is a growing disposition to make their work more interesting.

THE PASS-SUBJECTS. — *Reading.* — This subject continues to make steady improvement, more attention being paid to the production of proper expression. In some of our smaller schools, however, the subject is still indifferently treated.

Writing.—In most of our country schools this subject does not progress at all satisfactorily. Like all other subjects, it must be taught. It is absurd to suppose that constant writing in a copy-book will teach a child to write correctly. Far too little attention is paid either to posture or to the holding of the pen, and until the pupils are thoroughly drilled in these respects no general improvement in the subject can be expected. The writing of Standards I. and II., Grey District High School, deserves commendation, being exceptionally good.

Arithmetic.—This subject, on which considerable attention has been bestowed during the past two years, continues to make very satisfactory progress, and the children were in most cases quite equal to the tests imposed. The work was, as a rule, neatly arranged, and showed the subject had received very careful treatment.

Spelling.—With few exceptions, this subject was most satisfactory.

Composition.—This subject on the whole is very fairly treated, though in a few cases it still bears a very mechanical appearance. Next year I intend to use as tests for Standards IV. and V. the reproduction of a short story or anecdote, and for Standard VI. the same, or an essay on some common subject connected with every-day life, or having reference to other school work. The usual paraphrasing, correction of sentences, &c., will also be required as usual. In all cases the composition exercise will be required to be written on paper direct.

Drawing.—In our larger schools steady improvement continues to be made, but in our smaller country ones the improvement is by no means so noticeable. As in the writing, so in this subject, there is too much exercise in it and too little actual teaching. Several of our schools entered candidates for the first-grade drawing examination conducted by the Wellington Technical School. The pupils sent up by the Grey School were very successful throughout, and the pupils from the country schools were also successful so far as the geometrical drawing was concerned; the freehand, however, proved too difficult for them. I would again recommend the Board to furnish all schools requiring them with sets of Chambers's Graduated Drawing-charts.

Geography.—I find that the practice of tabulating the matter in connection with this subject is having a very marked effect in curtailing the information supplied. I hope, therefore, teachers will discontinue it, and have all answers written in complete sentences, thus using this subject as an aid to composition.

CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.—Both class and additional subjects still receive very satisfactory attention. Drill is taught in all schools where a master presides, and the usual disciplinary exercises are gone through where a female teacher is employed. Grammar, though by no means a strong subject, shows steady improvement, and the knowledge of history, so far as the selected events, dates, and persons are concerned, is generally good. Science has improved, most teachers now making use of simple experiments, thereby making the lessons both intelligible and interesting to the pupils. Sewing is generally fairly well and neatly executed. I am sorry to say, however, that many teachers experience great difficulty in getting parents to supply the necessary material. Surely parents should have a little more consideration for the teacher than to provide art muslin in lieu of calico.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION.—The carpentry class at the Grey District High School has this year been placed on a satisfactory footing, and Mr. W. Arnott, to whose exertions the success of the class is due, is still in charge. It always gives me great pleasure to go through the workshop and to inspect the work being turned out, which is always of a most satisfactory description, and reflects credit on both master and pupils. So popular has the class become that many would-be members have to be refused for want of room.

The Roman Catholic Schools.—These schools were both inspected and examined by me during the year, and reports were prepared and sent to them in every respect similar to those furnished to schools under the Board. Appended are tables similar to those dealing with our own schools:—

Presented for Examination.*	Presented in Standards.	Present.	Passed.
247	154	153	130

Total number in class above Standard VI., 8; total number of infants, 85; total number of infants over eight years of age not presented for Standard I., 13.

* Including infants and class above Standard VI.

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

to the pupils promoted. Writing has not, in general, reached the standard of previous years, and too frequently it was necessary to draw attention to copy-books and exercise-books carelessly written and insufficiently corrected. The instruction in this subject is, however, very satisfactory in the largest schools. In geography, as in arithmetic, want of success is owing largely to a mistaken estimate of the function of a text-book. The preparation of this subject is very imperfect when not including oral teaching and the frequent use of the necessary maps. In all the work of a school, whether in pass or extra subjects, it cannot too often be insisted that the course of treatment should essentially consist of careful lessons and abundant practice, with frequent recapitulation and special tests. If such a routine were common, teachers would not so often need to express surprise at the failure of pupils when attempting to answer simple questions on the day of examination.

The following statement relating to the class-subjects gives the number of schools obtaining the various verbal awards from "Weak" to "Very good." (Two schools with only junior classes are omitted):—

Class-subjects.

Subject.	Weak or not taught.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Very Good.
Grammar	2	16	11	2	1
History	9	7	6	9	1
Elementary science ...	8	7	5	11	1
Object-lessons ...	5	8	11	7	1
Mental arithmetic ...	10	10	7	4	1

It will be seen that only in elementary science and object-lessons do 50 per cent. of the thirty-two schools reach the award "Satisfactory," and in these a large number are unsatisfactory. In grammar and mental arithmetic the results are good in only three and five schools respectively. Through the neglect of these subjects the pupils lose both in mental training and in the assistance their preparation affords in the study of several of the pass-subjects.

In connection with a similar statement relating to the additional subjects, it should be explained that in a number of schools the elimination of drill, singing, and needlework from the course of instruction is owing to smallness of the number or a lack of the requisite knowledge on the part of the teachers. It must be admitted, however, that there are schools where this omission has no excuse. There is especially a disappointing absence of physical training in the form of drill and other exercises. In the larger schools gymnastic apparatus was recently supplied by the Board, but apparently little advantage has been taken of the opportunity thus provided.

Additional Subjects.

Subject.	Weak or not taught.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Very Good.
Recitation	...	1	11	17	4
Drill	27	...	3	1	1
Singing	26	...	1	1	4
Needlework	13	1	4	11	3
Comprehension of reading-matter	3	11	11	6	1

The general conditions under which the teachers have worked during the year 1896 have improved in comparison with those of the years immediately preceding. A number of school-buildings have been rendered more cheerful by the painting of the interiors; a sufficiency of material for aids to teaching had, in the previous year, been supplied in the form of extra reading-books, maps, diagrams, and other school furniture, while the absence of epidemics of sickness has allowed the average attendance of the district to reach a high figure. In some cases progress has been checked by special causes, but, if during 1897 good conditions still obtain, some advance in the educational status of the weaker schools may reasonably be expected.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Westland Education Board. A. J. Morton, B.A., Inspector.

Summary of Results for the Whole District.

Classes.	Total presented.	Presented in Standards.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1895.
					Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary classes ...	31	...	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI. ...	34	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	105	105	104	92	14 2	14 1
" V. ...	166	166	159	131	13 3	13 3
" IV. ...	197	197	188	155	12 5	12 3
" III. ...	201	201	198	170	11 1	11 2
" II. ...	160	160	157	148	10 0	10 0
" I. ...	193	193	190	175	9 2	8 11
Preparatory	470	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,557	1,022	996	871	11 8*	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Education Office, Christchurch, 29th January, 1897.

We have the honour to submit our annual return for the schools of the North Canterbury District for the year 1896, as required by section 12 of the regulations under "The Education Act, 1877."

The appended lists give in detail the information in regard to individual schools required by the regulations. In addition, the usual summary tables are here furnished, presenting the general statistics of examination in a form convenient for comparison, and, so far as figures go, providing a means of estimating what has been done in each group of subjects.

At the close of the year there were in operation under the Board's control a total of 194 schools, of which 190 were examined in accordance with the standard syllabus. The remaining four were aided schools, opened or reopened during the year, and therefore not yet prepared for examination. One school examined in the early part of the year was subsequently closed and replaced by another in a more convenient position, which will be taken in its stead at the usual time.

In the 190 schools examined, there were presented 21,318 children, of whom 19,957 were present on the days of examination. In the standard classes I.–VI. 12,212 were reported as satisfying the tests at the different stages, and 2,390 failed. Of the latter number, 384 had made less than half attendances during the three quarters preceding, and under the older regulations would have been returned as "excepted." Some rule of distinction which will mark out cases of bad attendance still seems to us desirable, and accordingly, although a better rule than that formerly in use might probably be found, we have in the school reports continued to distinguish as excepted those cases of failure in which the conditions of attendance come within the limits of that rule.

In the classification of the pupils presented, 5,887, or 27.6 per cent. of the total enrolment, were included in the preparatory division. Of this number, 826, or 3.9 per cent. of the school-roll, were eight years of age or more on the dates of presentation, and in these cases generally satisfactory reasons were assigned for the classification adopted.

I.—PASS-SUBJECTS: NUMBERS.

Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Did not Pass.		Passed.	Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
			Excepted as under Old Rule.	Failed.			Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	308	205	...	...	...	83	...
Standard VI.	1,458	1,403	38	196	1,169	159	13 10
" V.	2,214	2,138	81	479	1,578	179	12 11
" IV.	2,909	2,777	93	604	2,080	180	12 0
" III.	3,226	3,116	101	523	2,492	184	10 11
" II.	2,788	2,725	55	136	2,534	181	9 8
" I.	2,528	2,443	16	68	2,359	182	8 7
Preparatory	5,887	5,150	...	...	...	190	...
Totals for 1896 ...	21,318	19,957	384	2,006	12,212	190	11 4*
Totals for 1895 ...	21,227	20,028	314	1,925	12,373	185	11 5*

II.—PASS-SUBJECTS: NUMBERS REDUCED TO PERCENTAGES.

Classes.	School-roll.	Class-roll.		Passed, 1896.		Passed, 1895.	
	Presented.	Present.	Did not Pass.	School-roll.	Class-roll.	School-roll.	Class-roll.
Above Standard VI. ...	1·4	66·6	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	6·8	96·2	16·0	5·5	80·2	5·3	84·4
" V.	10·4	96·6	25·3	7·4	71·3	7·6	74·9
" IV.	13·6	95·5	24·0	9·8	71·5	10·4	75·9
" III.	15·1	96·6	19·4	11·7	77·2	11·4	75·0
" II.	13·1	97·7	6·9	11·9	90·9	12·0	90·0
" I.	11·9	96·6	3·3	11·1	93·3	11·6	93·6
Preparatory	27·6	87·5	...	...	...	...	...
On totals	100·0	93·6	15·8	57·3	80·8	58·3	84·7

* Mean of average age.

III.—Class and Additional Subjects: General.

Class-subjects.							Additional Subjects.	
Subject.	Average Marks (0–100).	Number of Schools obtaining Marks.					Subject.	Number of Schools.
		60 and upwards.	50 to 60.	30 to 50.	Under 30.	Total.		
Grammar ...	42·2	28	44	81	34	187	Repetition of poetry	189
History	45·6	43	52	71	21	187	Drill	139
Geography (S. II.)	63·6	123	24	32	1	180	Singing	144
Science, object-lessons, &c.	46·0	45	59	66	19	189	Sewing	180
Mental arithmetic	36·0	12	29	94	54	189	Comprehension of reading-lessons	190

IV.—Class-subjects: Comparison of School Groups.

Subject.	In Twenty-four "Town" Schools.			In Eighty-seven Schools of Intermediate Size.			In Seventy-nine Single-handed Schools.		
	Average Marks (0–100).	Number of Schools with Fifty Marks and upwards.	Number of Schools with Subject as Best Subject.	Average Marks (0–100).	Number of Schools with Fifty Marks and upwards.	Number of Schools with Subject as Best Subject.	Average Marks (0–100).	Number of Schools with Fifty Marks and upwards.	Number of Schools with Subject as Best Subject.
Grammar	48·5	15	3	44·2	33	21	38·1	24	32
History	55·9	19	12	47·3	45	32	41·0	31	32
Geography (S. II.) ...	69·3	21	...	68·0	76	...	56·4	50	...
Elementary science, object-lessons, &c....	56·5	22	15	50·0	56	43	38·0	26	27
Mental arithmetic ...	40·9	7	2	39·1	24	10	31·3	10	16

Note.—A "town" school is taken to be one with at least three adult or certificated teachers employed in it. In defining "single-handed" schools a sewing-mistress is not reckoned.

"Best subject" means "best" exclusive of geography in Standard II. When marks in two or more subjects are equal, each subject is counted.

V.—Statistics of Classification.

—	Standard IV. and upwards.	Standards I., II., and III.	Preparatory Division.	Mean of Average Age, Standards I. to VI.
				Yrs. mos.
1887	18·2	45·9	36·0	11 9
1888	19·3	45·9	34·7	11 8
1889	20·4	44·6	35·0	11 8
1890	22·4	44·8	32·3	11 8
1891	24·4	44·3	31·3	11 7
1892	26·1	43·9	30·0	11 6
1893	28·2	42·3	29·5	11 6
1894	30·1	41·2	28·7	11 5
1895	31·4	40·8	27·8	11 4
1896	32·3	40·1	27·6	11 4

In our school world the special feature of the past year has been the coming into operation of the Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act of 1895. The importance of the event, if measured by the influence it has so far exerted on the practice of our schools, could scarcely be taken to justify more than a passing reference; but, however small the initial influence, and however imperfect the provisions of the Act may be, it marks a new departure in the conception of the educational responsibilities of the State. There is no doubt that the chief question of the day is how far existing educational methods and courses of instruction may be modified in the direction of extending the hand and eye training of the elementary school, and of giving the artisan a more intelligent grasp of his craft through instruction in the scientific and artistic principles underlying its operation.

The Act very properly makes a marked distinction between the objects allied in its title. "Technical instruction" is defined as "instruction in the principles of science and art applicable to industries, and in the application of special branches of science and art to specific industries or employments," while it does not exclude "such instruction in the use of tools and appliances as is necessary to the full illustration of the application of any branch of science or art to any specific industry or employment." Such instruction cannot be "elementary" in the sense attached to "elementary school," and, in so far as the practical and specific features become prominent, it merges into "trade instruction," which may or may not restrict its operation to those who are already working at a trade either as apprentices or as journeymen.

Technical instruction as so defined bears a relation to primary education inasmuch as primary education is required for its foundation, especially in arithmetic, drawing, elementary geometry, and elementary science; but it cannot be regarded as in any way a substitute for primary education; nor is it suited to any but a few of the oldest of the children in attendance at a primary school. The Act no doubt gives the Education Board the right to control the technical instruction in its district, if it chooses to assume the responsibility; but the duty of the Board in this respect is not so clear, and the financial provisions of the Act will require considerable modification before the responsibility can be assumed with safety. For the present we are of opinion that technical instruction had better be left to private enterprise with certain assistance from the public funds. In any case such instruction must from circumstances of population be for many years more or less fragmentary in character and confined within the limits of a modest ambition. By those who think differently the statement made by Mr. Llewelyn Smith in a report of 1892 to the London County Council, to the effect that the "annual loss in carrying on one of the 'Polytechnic Institutes' is, on an average, £5,000," may be studied with profit.

"Manual instruction," as understood by the Act, stands on quite a different footing, and is specially applicable to the primary school. The purpose of such instruction is not stated, and perhaps the expression is not very happily chosen; for "manual instruction" means properly mental training through manual instruction, and only in so far as its methods serve the purpose of such training can it claim for itself a place in the ordinary elementary course. That it may be made to play an important part in elementary education few will now deny, and, in so far as the circumstances of our schools will admit, we are anxious to do what little we can in the encouragement of any efforts in the new direction that may be made.

Manual training, as we prefer to call it, may to a certain extent concern itself with the same matters as technical instruction; but the purposes of the two are to be widely differentiated, and to admit any mental confusion on this point is to misunderstand the whole question. Manual training does not aim in any way at the application of the principles of science and art to specific processes; still more foreign to its purpose are the objects of a trade school; the lessons do not even fulfil their design if they secure merely a certain general manual dexterity, though this in itself is valuable. In the words of an excellent and most interesting report presented by Mr. Inspector Struthers to the Scotch Education Department, and reprinted in New Zealand for the use of teachers and others, "So far as the elementary school is concerned, manual training is to be valued not so much for its direct results, important though they may be, as for its disciplinary effects—that is to say, for the contribution it makes towards the development of character and intelligence." "Well-arranged and properly-conducted work of this kind—the qualifications are most important—is regarded as a very valuable, in some respects the most valuable, means available to the teacher of developing in the pupils such qualities as intelligence, practical judgment, exactness, perseverance, taste, power of initiation, individuality"—a statement which the report amply bears out by convincing reasoning and illustration. To secure such a disciplinary result is worth a sacrifice; and, when we have a demonstration by the same authority that "there are grounds, both in theory and experience, for believing that manual training of a certain kind and amount promotes rather than retards advancement in the ordinary subjects," the experiment, if experiment it may be called, may well engage the earnest attention of all interested in the schools of the district.

Beyond the ordinary subjects of the syllabus, among which drawing, one of the most important instruments of manual training, is of course included, nothing has so far been done in the district in the desired direction except in a few isolated cases where the master, having himself some skill in a manual occupation, has interested himself in cultivating the taste among his pupils, and in a few large infant departments where a short period weekly has been devoted to the simplest forms of manual work—stick-laying, paper-folding, plaiting, colouring—to a certain extent in connection with lessons in drawing or counting.

In the infant department, where freer conditions of method and subject, due to the absence of a prescribed syllabus, exist, the beginnings are most easily made; and little more difficulty should be found in adapting suitably graduated exercises to the First and Second Standard classes where the prescribed programme is limited to a few subjects, and much time must now be wasted in profitless repetitions. All this may be expected to be done during the usual school-hours, and in intimate relation with existing subjects; but when we approach the Third Standard the question of the time-table assumes a more serious aspect; and, although the occupations contemplated must, if they serve the chief purpose for which they are instituted, facilitate the ordinary standard progress, and therefore secure as good a result in less time than before, we are too conscious of the possibility of futile effort, the result of limited experience, and too anxious not to burden teachers whose powers are already severely taxed, to urge the introduction of additional work. Perhaps the difficulty—which extends also to the Fourth Standard—may in time find its own solution, and in the meanwhile something may be done without undue pressure by an extension to these standards of card-modelling practice in connection with drawing-lessons. In the Fifth and Sixth Standards likewise we cannot see how appropriate manual practice can be wholly included in the usual five hours of instruction; but the pupils have then arrived at an age when an hour or two extra time weekly spent in a workshop may prove an agreeable relaxation, and the physical and

mental energy now expended in the cricket and football field may well find another scarcely less attractive field of exercise.

In the workshop the schoolmaster who has received a proper training, and who in virtue of his profession understands the bearing of the manual exercises on general education, must in the end prove the most valuable kind of instructor, and probably a modification in the training of pupil-teachers and students will in a few years supply the requisite skill; but for the present dependence must be placed almost exclusively on the services of intelligent artisans. It is to the larger centres alone that we can look for such instructors, and in them alone will the number of pupils to be served justify the necessary initial expenditure. As a guide to the instructor an excellently graduated course of woodwork with scale-drawing instructions is available, and, although individuality in teachers and pupils is to be encouraged, this course may well be taken as the accepted standard.

While technical instruction is foreign to the purposes of the elementary school, and manual training in connection with elementary education is mainly to be valued as a means of mental discipline, there is one subject eminently suited to the elementary school, which is in one view technical, in another manual, the purpose of which, however, is wholly one of direct practical utility. We refer to cooking and kindred occupations of housewifery. The subject has indeed quite as much claim to be recognised as a subject of elementary instruction as reading and writing, and is equally necessary for at least one-half of the community. At any rate, to be able to cook a dinner fairly is much more important for our girls, as a preparation for the business of life, than the skilful manipulation of vulgar and decimal fractions, or a knowledge of the operations of the bill-discounter and the stock-broker. Practice in cooking is indeed only the corollary of the bookish instruction in "domestic economy" which already forms a part of the usual school course, in larger schools at least, and facilities for the practice should, in our view, form an essential feature of a school's equipment. We do not even think it necessary that practice of the kind should be taken outside the usual school-hours. Where practical lessons in the subject are regularly given—that is, lessons in which the pupils contribute a share of the work—we are inclined to believe that the Inspector might fairly be permitted to make some allowance in other respects. A Sixth Standard girl, for instance, might well be permitted to qualify for the Sixth Standard in arithmetic by doing again a Fifth Standard test, and in the Fifth Standard a similar concession might be made by accepting the half of the Fifth Standard work in the subject. Below the Fifth Sandard it would not be profitable to go.

Again, in this respect the school of substantial size could alone expect to be fully provided with the means of carrying out the work as completely as is desirable; but even in outlying districts some attempt might be made with most imperfect appliances. We need not go very far out of our way to regard the gridiron and the saucepan as necessary parts of school furniture, and expect them to be made use of over the school-room fire as instruments of practical instruction.

We have, &c.,

L. B. Wood, M.A.,
W. J. Anderson, LL.D.,
Thos. Ritchie, B.A.,
} Inspectors.

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,— Education Office, Timaru, 3rd March, 1897.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1896.

During the year sixty-five schools have been in operation, the same number as last year. The number of children on the rolls at the time of examination shows an increase of sixty-eight. There is a decrease of seventy-seven in the preparatory classes, and of forty-seven in Standard II., and the increase is distributed in a fairly proportionate manner among the other classes. The number of Roman Catholic schools remains the same. Two of these are in Timaru, boys and girls being taught in separate schools; and there is a mixed school for boys and girls in Waimate, and similar schools in Temuka and Kerrytown respectively. An improvement in methods and in results has to be recorded for the schools as a whole, and the manifest desire of the managers and teachers to do their utmost for the advancement of their schools gives promise of greater success in the future.

The following table shows the examination results of the Board's schools for the whole district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	114	...	...	...
Standard VI.	301	294	242	14 0
„ V.	500	487	369	12 11
„ IV.	727	697	505	12 1
„ III.	797	778	641	10 11
„ II.	675	657	636	9 10
„ I.	667	657	650	8 8
Preparatory	1,510	...	...	...
Totals for 1896	5,291	3,570	3,043	11 5*
Totals for 1895	5,223	3,439	2,959	11 5*

* Mean of average age.

The numbers show for the year an increase of 68 in the number of pupils presented, of 131 in the number present and examined in standards, and of 84 in the number of pupils that passed in one or other of the standards. Of the pupils examined in standards last year, the percentage of those that passed was 86; this year it is 85. Of those examined in Standards I. and II., head teachers have passed 99 and 96 per cent. respectively. In seven schools I had to report that the promotions of the majority of the pupils from these classes were not deserved, the teachers granting a pass on what I considered too easy terms. In some of these schools the teacher had apparently fixed the passing point considerably under the standard of attainment that obtains generally throughout the district; in others, in their eagerness to swell the list of passes at any cost, the teachers had allowed their zeal or their fears to outrun their discretion. With these exceptions, which, after all, do not seriously affect the general results, however harmful they may prove to be in the sound advancement of the individual pupils concerned, the promotions in Standards I and II. were well merited; and the teachers as a body had exercised sound judgment in what to many is still an irksome duty, and to all should be a matter of grave concern. In Standards III., IV., V., and VI. the percentages of passes in standards were 82, 72, 75, and 85. The comparative frequency of failures in Standard IV. is mainly due to weakness in composition, dictation, and geography, and in Standard V. to arithmetic, composition, and dictation.

The number of children on the rolls in Standards I. to VI. was 3,667, and, of these, 3,570 were present at the examinations, the percentage of absentees being thus 2·6. Satisfactory reasons for the absence of pupils were generally forthcoming, and in many cases letters from parents explaining the absence of their children were handed to me by the teachers, who in so doing wished to make sure that no suspicion of conniving at the absence of dull scholars should rest upon them. If allowance is made for children that were sick, and for those on the rolls that had passed their standards earlier in the year in other schools, it must be deemed satisfactory to find 97 out of every 100 in attendance at the examinations. The regularity with which the pupils attend throughout the year continues to improve. The average attendance expressed as a percentage of the average number of pupils on the roll is 85·7, as against 84·3 for the previous year. The high degree of regularity shown in this percentage is one of the outstanding features in the management of our schools.

The number of pupils over eight years of age who were not presented for Standard I. was 218, as against 239 last year, and 281 in 1892, the first year this return was required. In accordance with regulation 5, written explanations of the reasons for not presenting such children in Standard I. were submitted by the teachers, and on the whole the explanations were satisfactory.

In accordance with the Board's revised scale of staff and salaries, female assistants are now appointed to schools with an average attendance of forty. Formerly an assistant was not appointed till a school had an average of fifty-five. Under this scale the number of pupil-teachers will be considerably reduced, and no pupil-teacher will be employed in a school with an average attendance of less than one hundred and five. The scheme does not affect pupil-teachers who are now serving their apprenticeship, but, when their engagements shall have terminated, about a dozen schools that now have pupil-teachers will be entitled to the services of certificated assistants. In such schools nothing short of excellent work should be accepted as wholly satisfactory; the head teacher will be free to devote his energies to the upper department, always, however, keeping himself in touch with the lower classes by periodical examinations of the children and helpful direction of his assistant; and the assistant, free from the mental harassment and physical strain involved in the government and teaching of large classes of young children, will have a splendid opportunity of showing what she can do in making her department a bright and happy training-ground, passing on her children to the upper school well equipped for strenuous effort there. In some of these schools the teachers will work together in one room—a disadvantage of some moment, which may be minimised to a very appreciable extent by the use of a dividing curtain. At this point I should like to say a word to all who have to do with the preparatory classes and lower standards. While in no way relaxing their efforts in training the children to habits of attention, ready obedience, and courteous behaviour to one another and to those set over them in authority, in developing their intelligence and imagination, and in cultivating their powers of observation and of verbal expression, they should make a special study of the best methods by which the children may acquire a sound knowledge of number, and the power to calculate with rapidity and accuracy. This last is generally a weak part in the work of the lower classes. I find many of the teachers unable to give a clear statement of how they deal with addition tables; and where there is no well-considered system it is not likely there will be success. There must be analysis of every number up to 20, addition to about 100 by equal increments of the numbers under 10, and exercise in series like 7 and 4 are eleven, 17 and 4 are 21, 27 and 4 are 31, &c. The lessons must be oral, of short duration, and graded with the utmost care; and the ground gone over must be secured by abundant practice before an advance is made. What the teacher must specially guard against is *counting* in its nefarious and multifarious forms. A boy who will tell you without a minute's hesitation what 7 times 6 are boggles at 7 and 6, and again at 17 and 6. He did not count before answering 7 times 6; no more should he at 7 and 6, or at 17 and 6; and if he does so the fault is in the teaching. I have met with classes in which each pupil would run up his column without a pause, 7, 13, 21, 25, 34, &c., reeled off as fast as the pointer travelled up the blackboard—not 7 and 6 are 13, 13 and 8 are 21, 21 and 4 are 25, 25 and 9 are 34, &c., with a dead halt and some lip or finger movement at every step. If such classes are not met with every day they ought to be.

The introduction of the new series of reading-books recommended by the Board should be hailed with pleasure by the teachers. The series that has been in use for the past six years was an excellent one in many respects; but going through the same books twice or thrice a year, and year after year, must have deadened a teacher's interest in the lessons, and produced a grooviness of treatment that could have little stimulating effect on the pupils. At my suggestion some teachers have asked the children to leave their old books on the school shelves to be used from time to time

in giving the additional practice in reading which is so much required. In these old books the matter will be new for the pupils, and it is practice in reading new matter, not in re-reading familiar lessons till they are almost, if not altogether, known by rote, that will give the power of reading which the teacher must aim at cultivating. In one or two schools the lower standards have used two Readers during the year, the spelling test at examination being confined to one of the books. When the custom of having two or even three reading-books in every class becomes general, the advantage of this wider range of reading will be remarked in every subject that makes a demand on the intelligence of the scholars.

A great improvement has been brought about in handwriting during the past year. Those teachers who had introduced the "upright" style had taken special pains with this subject so that the results might justify their choice, and their efforts generally met with a commendable measure of success. Some who still adhered to the "sloping" style felt themselves on their mettle to show what their scholars could do; and the spirit of emulation thus aroused has been stimulating and far-reaching in its effects. It is a pity that every teacher has not felt its influence, for the advance which has been shown to be possible in so many schools will be followed by a demand for a higher degree of proficiency in all.

The test-cards used in arithmetic were again those issued by the Education Department. In Standard III. 83 children out of every 100 were right with a sufficient number of sums to pass in this subject, and a good proportion of the 83 had every sum right. In Standard IV. the percentage of those that passed fell to 72; and it was lower in Standards V. and VI. I think the requirements of many of the cards in Standards V. and VI. were in excess of what could fairly be expected from children of ordinary intelligence at thirteen and fourteen years of age, unless we are prepared to allow the teaching of arithmetic to occupy such a position in the curriculum as will make an adequate treatment of the other subjects an impossibility. If the test is generally regarded as too high, a feeling of hopelessness will be engendered which will dull the edge of industry, and damp the ardour of those whose best efforts during the year appear to end in failure. Complaints, which were not groundless, were rife as to the unevenness in the test in Standards V. and VI. To import the element of chance into what should be as nearly as possible a uniform trial of the skill of the teachers and the attainments of the scholars must have pernicious effects. It may happen that the most competent teachers find their year's labour apparently of little value when one of the stiffest cards of the series falls to the lot of their children; and, whatever sort of card the less skilful teacher's class has to negotiate, if success does not come he has an excuse ready to hand in the alleged unevenness of the test. We have all degrees of competency among our teachers, and with fairly-adjusted cards we should be able to arrive at a proximate estimate of their strength.

So far as the other subjects of instruction are concerned, I think we have good grounds for being fairly satisfied with their treatment generally. The quality of the work in the list of subjects that go to make up the full round of "pass," "class," and "additional" subjects varies greatly, but the good preponderates. The teachers as a body are earnest and capable, and give their best energies to their work. I have almost invariably found the children honest workers, respectful and pleasant to deal with in their classes, and in an increasing number of schools not wanting in those marks of politeness out of doors that give token of the spread of gentle manners.

I have, &c.,

JAMES GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

We have the honour to submit the following report on the schools of the Otago Education District for the year 1896.

Except the school beyond Lake Wanaka, all the schools of the district were examined and most of them were inspected within the year. Forty schools which were not examined in 1895 were examined early in 1896, and again towards the end of the year. By the second examination these schools were brought into line with the others, and their scholars received the opportunity, to which they were entitled, of passing upwards in the standards. Though the second examination was held within ten months of the first, the results obtained by most of the schools were of a creditable character.

The following table summarises the examination results gained by the schools in the pass-subjects:—

TABLE I.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	585	...	...	...
Standard VI.	1,510	1,483	1,361	13 10
" V.	2,217	2,163	1,824	12 11
" IV.	2,946	2,875	2,361	12 0
" III.	2,962	2,881	2,517	11 0
" II.	2,769	2,731	2,629	9 9
" I.	2,599	2,575	2,525	9 1
Preparatory	6,792	...	...	...
Totals 1896	22,380	14,708	13,217	11 5*
Totals 1895	21,158	13,728	12,554	11 $6\frac{2}{3}$*

* Mean of average ages.

Table I. shows that 89 per cent. of the children examined in the standards obtained a pass 91 per cent. passed in 1895. The following are the percentages of passes in the several standards: Standard VI., 91; Standard V., 84; Standard IV., 82; Standard III., 87; Standard II., 96; Standard I., 98. The mean of the percentages of passes awarded by Inspectors in the four higher standards is 86; that of 1895 is 88; the mean of the percentages of passes awarded by head masters in the two lower standards is 97, the same as in 1895. Of those who passed their standards, 49 per cent. in Standard VI., 52 per cent. in Standard V., 42 per cent. in Standard IV., and 34 per cent. in Standard III. failed in one pass-subject.

Table I. shows a fall in the average age of making the standard passes. In each of the three higher standards there is a fall of three months; in Standard III., one month; in Standard II., two months; but in Standard I. there is a rise of three months. In 1895 pupils over eight years of age to the number of 1,129 were not presented in any standard; but in 1896 only 1,039 were not presented, and the rise in the average age of Standard I. is probably due to the presentation and passing of an unusual proportion of these backward pupils. It is the duty of head masters to assign reasons for the non-presentation of these pupils, and the reasons assigned are generally satisfactory; but non-presentation in Standard I. should not necessarily imply detention in the preparatory classes. The presence of these backward pupils is generally detrimental to the work, discipline, and tone of these classes, and it would be well for all concerned were they placed whenever possible with children nearer their own age. They are old enough to stand a little extra pressure, accompanied by a little extra encouragement and guidance, and in the course of their progress upwards through the school they will probably reach the passing point of one or the other of the standards. We specially advocate promotion in the case of children of weak intellect. Their presence in the infant departments of the larger schools is an injustice to their young companions, to the teacher, and to themselves; and, though their passing a standard is hopeless, their apparent association in work and discipline with children of their own age may give some tone to their faculties. We shall gladly allow them to go through the routine of the standard examinations along with their companions. We have noted instances in which such children have profited by being thus promoted. In one case a child whose speech was unintelligible while in the preparatory classes was present in a standard class at examination. Of course there could not be a "pass," but to our surprise the child passed in reading. That was clear gain. In another instance we saw a child deliberately brace itself up at the beginning of the arithmetic lesson, work correctly the first sum, a simple one in addition, dream while the second was worked, write nonsense for the third, and copy the fourth, smiling to the Inspector at intervals while doing it. Still, there were two minutes of self-control, the result of the gentle pressure by a wise teacher and of the force of example.

In our last report we advocated the introduction of Kindergarten employments into the infant-rooms of the larger schools. The ideals of Pestalozzi, and the principles, methods, and discipline of Froebel, influence to a large extent the conduct of these departments; but still in many of them there is little variety in the occupations of the little ones. With a wearisome monotony writing tables, making figures, drawing straight lines, reading, spelling, and writing letters succeed each other, and but for the satisfaction of pleasing the teacher and earning a word or a look of commendation there would be but little pleasure in the school life. A child loves dearly to be doing, and we think that half of the slate-work might well be set aside, and ear and tongue, hand and eye be employed in such work as a child, left to Nature's teaching, finds for himself. We should like to see in every infant-room programme provision made for a systematic course of sense-training, leading up to a systematic course of object-lessons. Teachers might well draw up such courses, each for herself, according to her circumstances, and to facilitate this work the list of object-lessons prescribed some years ago is cancelled. The Kindergarten occupations were specially designed for this work, and we again commend them to the attention of teachers.

In our last report we announced our attention to test every class in unseen reading-books. This we did. A pupil who failed in the unseen test was tested again in the prepared book, and passed or failed by that test. Only about 5 per cent. of those who were presented in the four higher standards failed in reading. The passes were divided into three classes, and Table II. shows with fair accuracy the condition of the schools with regard to reading.

TABLE II.

Class.	Read well the unseen books.	Read satisfactorily the unseen books.	Failed in the unseen but passed in the prepared books.
Standard VI.	37 per cent. ...	46 per cent. ...	17 per cent.
" V.	35 " ...	47 " ...	18 "
" IV.	33 " ...	47 " ...	20 "
" III.	31 " ...	45 " ...	24 "

In our last report we expressed the opinion that, "so far as the prepared books are concerned, reading is, in quite a large proportion of schools, distinctly good." Table II. warrants us in expressing that opinion without the limitation. When we consider that the large city and suburban schools were examined with but short notice of the altered character of the test, and that many teachers who had ample notice of it made no special preparation to meet it, we cannot but characterize these results as creditable to our teachers. We cannot, however, commend so highly the reading of the preparatory classes. Teachers themselves were frequently surprised by the poor reading in the

unseen books. The children again and again failed to recognise words with which the teacher declared they were familiar. That they were in a sense familiar with them was shown by the instantaneous recognition of them by the children who listened while the puzzled child spelled them aloud. By dint of frequent repetition they had been made familiar with the sequence of sounds, "w-h-i-c-h which," just as they had been made familiar with the sequence of words in the too frequently read book; but familiarity had rendered it unnecessary for them to observe closely each word-picture, and lax attention to form had weakened the power of observation. We urge the use by the preparatory classes of at least three sets of books; one set to be thoroughly worked through, and the other two to be merely read, corresponding parts being taken consecutively. It will be found that the same words form the bulk of the reading-matter in all three books, so that the use of the three will not add largely to the labour of dealing with new words. At a small cost sets of books could be got for the school, and with careful handling would serve it for years.

Judged by the failures, the spelling would be considered as very good; but when we find children who have passed in formal spelling making numerous mistakes in the spelling of the geography, and more especially of the composition, exercises, we cannot but question the value of the test applied under the regulations. This test, however, has been cancelled by Order in Council, 26th October, 1896, and we intend in future to give from the class reading-book a passage of five or six lines and six selected words, allowing a pass if not more than three errors are made.

One per cent. of those present in the four higher standards will cover the failures in writing, which must be regarded as very satisfactory. In some schools the children, with few exceptions, were passed on the evidence of their penmanship in the written work of the examination. This is a fair test of efficiency, especially of the penmanship of the upper standards; but its application to all the schools would probably at first raise the percentage of failures in the subject.

Freehand drawing was judged by work done during the examination, the pupils being required to reproduce on a small scale large drawings with which they were unfamiliar. The results were on the whole very good. In a few cases the girls of Standard V. had not practised scale drawing. "Teachers may claim exemption for girls from examination in geometrical drawing," but the Department holds that scale drawing is not practical geometry.

The arithmetic results are not consistent with the actual teaching of the subject. Of the pupils present at the examinations, 44 per cent. failed in arithmetic in Standard VI., 48 per cent. in Standard V., 31 per cent. in Standard IV., and 17 per cent. in Standard III. This statement may take many by surprise, but we feel it to be our duty to make it, and hope it may lead to discovery of the causes of failure. The tests are supplied by the Department. The tests for Standard III. are generally regarded by teachers as too easy to test capacity for Standard IV. arithmetic. Teachers generally concede that Standard IV. tests are fairly trying. The tests for Standards V. and VI. are regarded in a general way as difficult, but serious objection is seldom made to any individual problem. We must look to the treatment of the subject in the schools. Blackboard exposition is, on the whole, very good; but it may be that there is too much of it, and that the children receive too much help, and are not thrown sufficiently on their own resources to make them self-reliant. We believe that sufficient importance is not attached to logical arrangement, and even to mechanical neatness, in setting down solutions. There is frequently a want of the concrete in the first stages of teaching the rules. In country districts, where the children have no opportunity of buying at a store, we frequently find Standard III. pupils unable to divide a quantity of money among their companions, or to take out of it change for a customer buying one of their books. From want of materials we have not tested children in the manipulation of quantities of sand, the division of lengths of tape, &c.; but we feel sure that such exercises would prove as valuable as the manipulation of coins. The same may be said of dealings in bonds and shares, and the making of profits and losses. Such exercises accompanying mental arithmetic and the easy problems by which each rule is introduced would enable the pupils to take a much firmer grasp of the principles involved. We suppose there is sufficient enterprise among our publishers to supply at small cost all the printed forms necessary. In the schools with one teacher there is comparatively little time for blackboard exposition of arithmetic; the greater part of the work must be done at the desks, with but little explanation and direct supervision; and we are not surprised when we find failures in arithmetic in these schools. In many cases, however, higher value might be obtained from the desk arithmetic. The following is the general routine: The children work for forty or fifty minutes, the answers are read, and the sums are marked "Right" or "Wrong." In some cases the marking ends the business; but in others the sums that are wrong are worked at the blackboard irrespective of the character of the errors, and in others the children work again, in their own time, the sums in which they were wrong. We suggest that work be stopped when about two-thirds of the time has passed, answers read, slates marked, and work resumed by those who are right. Those who are wrong should examine their own work, find the nature of their error, correct it, note it for reporting to the teacher, and resume work. The errors which remained undiscovered would require investigation with the teacher's help, either at the desk or at the blackboard. Were the pupils trained from Standard I. upwards thus to examine and report on their own work fewer problems would be considered, but a greater number of correct solutions would be obtained; the subject would afford a better discipline, and the children would have greater success on examination-day. Mental arithmetic is still weak, and cannot strengthen, as it should, the written arithmetic. It may be that our tests have been too limited to do justice, and that our examination results are not an accurate index of the children's capacity to do this class of work. We intend to test with five instead of three problems, and hope that the extension of scope will produce better results. We may mention that in the course of our inspections we frequently see children, while doing their written arithmetic, figuring out results that ought to be worked out in their heads. This practice must tend greatly to weaken their power of mental calculation.

In the composition test the children had the option of writing the story suggested by a picture placed before them, or a short letter or an essay on one of twenty-five prepared subjects. Teachers have felt hampered by the necessity of preparing a certain number of subjects, and they and we have been frequently disappointed with the compositions written on these subjects. We are, on the whole, satisfied with the compositions on pictures. We shall again use these, but shall give the option of a paraphrase or of a subject which is familiar to the children. The instruction to prepare twenty-five subjects is therefore withdrawn. For the first time we tested the senior classes in synthesis and transposition of constructions. Though this useful class of work was first prescribed by the Department of Education in 1894, the results of our examination disclosed considerable weakness in it in the majority of schools. Examples of faulty syntax were given for correction, but comparatively few of the children were able to deal intelligently with them. In the case of the majority of the children taught in our schools the rules of syntax should receive greater attention than they appear to have been receiving.

The teaching of geography steadily improves. In the better schools the geographical features within sight of the school are closely observed for the purpose of helping the pupil in painting his mental pictures of distant regions. Diagrams, pictures, even magic-lantern slides, as well as maps, help in the work. We have been frequently gratified by the realism of even Standard II. geography. In testing geography we have frequently given the option of writing a description or of drawing a map or a diagram, and in most cases the latter has surpassed the former. In some cases the children, without suggestion in the questions, have illustrated an answer by a small rough sketch—half a minute's work nearly doubled the value of the answer. Teachers are wisely treating the text-book as only the complement of the map. In the study of a country the rapid drawing of the rough outline forms, in many schools, the first part of each lesson; the physical features—water-partings, rivers, lakes, &c.—are boldly sketched in; climate resources and commercial advantages are next dealt with; then follows naturally the location of the people in the various industrial centres. By work such as this is created a mental picture of a country which will prove a permanent possession of the child, ready for reproduction at the suggestion of any of the features associated in its creation. But geographical facts and names thus taught must be secured by the ordinary memorising process. Physical and mathematical geography are not so well taught as commercial and political.

We direct the attention of teachers to an injustice to which children coming from another school shortly before the examination are liable. If the geography they have studied is not that of the standard they join, the Inspector's attention should be called to the circumstance, and he will examine them in the geography studied in the school from which they came.

We have in many cases been dissatisfied with the appearance made by the classes in history. This dissatisfaction is due in part to the text-book in use in our schools, but in part to the treatment of the subject—there has been too much memorising and too little teaching. The history text-book recently prescribed by the Board contains about one-third of the amount of reading-matter in the book it supersedes. The time saved in reading should he devoted to teaching the subject. There is not now the slightest excuse for spending the school-hours in writing to dictation the teacher's notes and afterwards committing them to memory with or without understanding. In Standard IV. the story might be told by the teacher with the aid of blackboard and map illustration, then read by the pupils from the text-book, then perhaps used by them in whole or in part as the subject-matter of a composition exercise. In Standards V. and VI. the reading might be taken on one day, and explanation, illustration, and examination on another, these exercises being of such a character as to encourage a little extended reading and research at home. This might well be the character of the preparation for scholarship competition. The dates and topics contained in the prescribed text-book will suffice for the Junior Scholarship examination; but the treatment of the topics will require considerable elaboration.

Needlework is one of the best taught subjects in the schools. Knitting, though not compulsory, is frequently presented, and is generally of very good quality. Cutting-out and fitting might be more largely practised. When cloth cannot be procured for this purpose paper should be used. The work prescribed for Standard VI. has been rather neglected, and work not prescribed allowed to take its place. In the future Standard VI. girls will receive the benefit of the 10-per-cent. reduction on account of needlework only when the prescribed work has been presented.

The following table summarises the examination results of the Catholic schools in the pass-subjects:—

TABLE III.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	2	...	...	...
Standard VI.	35	33	29	14 11
" V.	43	39	34	14 1
" IV.	87	78	68	13 4
" III.	123	113	87	11 11
" II.	122	116	105	10 0
" I.	97	88	85	8 9
Preparatory	278	...	...	...
Totals	787	467	408	12 2*

* Mean of average ages.

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.	Grammar.	Dictation.	Geography.	History.	Arithmetic.	Latin.	French.	Mathematics.	Teaching.
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.

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

The Chairman, Education Board, Otago.

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

admitted to be too narrow. The usual amount has been one small book for each standard class. For some years we have had in this district, in schools with more than one teacher, two books for both Standard I. and Standard II., and we think the time has come when in such schools Standard III. should also undertake another book. Moreover, though we hardly venture to recommend a hard-and-fast rule in the matter, we shall hereafter regard the use of an additional book in any or all classes of all schools whatever as a feature deserving high commendation. It is by no means necessary that every child should have the additional book: in small schools one for each class, which could be passed from hand to hand, would be sufficient. The choice of books might be very safely left to the teacher. The contents should comprise if possible a due amount of narrative, description, and biography; such lessons, in short, as will, while extending the pupils' vocabularies and enlarging their mental horizons, fire their hearts, stir their emotions, and lead captive their imaginations. Anything approaching to a critical knowledge of the language and matter of the extra books would, of course, not be expected. The essential discipline consequent upon the acquisition of such knowledge may be secured by a study of selected portions of the ordinary class-book. The plea for a high standard in reading has been excellently put by Fitch in his lectures on teaching, and we cannot do better than reproduce two sentences: "Consider," he says, "how great an acquisition one person who is a fine and expressive reader is in a household, how much he or she can do to add to the charm, the happiness, and to the intelligence of the home." And again: "If you will further consider that the human voice is the most vivid translation of human thought, that it is the most supple, the most docile, the most eloquent interpreter of whatever is best in the reason and in the heart of man, you will see that there is a very real connection between right thought and right utterance; and that anything you can do to make speech more finished, more exact, more expressive, and more beautiful will have a very direct bearing on the mental and spiritual culture of your pupils."

Spelling.—The average pupil spells, on the whole, in a satisfactory manner; but the teaching of the subject, so far as it may be taught, is not, as a rule, so good as it might be. No subject so readily lends itself to bald treatment, and accordingly in no subject is one more apt to drop into routine. For these very reasons teachers should not be unmindful of any aids that may be available. Whenever a difficulty crops up the blackboard should be resorted to. And not this alone. The mental vision, too, should be stimulated by the visualising of the underlying idea, so that the word may become the pupil's own through the channels of sound, sight, and sense. Then, again, a word may suggest the family or group to which it belongs, and the pupils, after performing a brief induction, will be able to furnish a rule for the correct spelling of the group. This method of arranging words into groups according to well-understood principles of classification has in English schools practically superseded the old method of spelling only the words occurring in the reading-lesson, but with us it has yet secured but little foothold.

Writing.—A fair standard of handwriting has been attained by the majority of our pupils. There is, as might be expected, great diversity in the quality of the writing in different schools. It is uniformly best in those schools in which the teachers are themselves expert penmen, and worst in schools in which the teachers, being deficient in the art, do not make up for their deficiency by a systematic exposition of principles. In schools in which systematic instruction is given and unsatisfactory work uniformly rejected writing will be good, and *vice versâ*. Now that teaching on Kindergarten principles is common in many of the lower departments of our schools, the manual dexterity and knowledge of terms may be, and in many cases are, very profitably utilised when instruction is being given in the more advanced parts of handwriting. There is at present keen competition between the various styles of writing, the vertical bidding fair to oust the sloping hand. Our experience does not as yet warrant our speaking authoritatively on the subject, but the experience of some who have studied the matter under advantageous circumstances is distinctly favourable to the upright hand. It is, they say, more conducive to the pupils' health, to ease of acquirement and production, as well as being more rapid and legible. Of one thing, however, there can be little doubt: the vertical system badly taught leads to very vicious results, and teachers who do not feel that it *is* the best system, and that they can teach it well, may be very safely recommended to leave it alone.

Drawing.—The teachers, having made themselves conversant with the methods of teaching this subject, appear to feel the demands of the syllabus to be much less burdensome than they were when drawing was first put on the pass list, and not a few are justly proud of the manner in which not merely the boys but also the girls go through the entire course. Several teachers who have observed the matter closely tell us that the better methods of instruction now prevalent in the infant classes have greatly minimised the difficulties that pupils meet with in taking a course of drawing-lessons.

Arithmetic.—In the majority of our schools this subject is well taught. Certain outstanding faults to which we called attention last year have been in some measure remedied, though in a number of schools there is still much to be desired in the way of neat work and logical arrangement. No subject more readily discloses the habit of mental orderliness on the part of the pupils, and the spirit of method on the part of the teachers. Arithmetic, considered merely as the art in reckoning, has also been improved in certain directions, but here, also, much remains to be done. Many of the pupils of Standards V. and VI., who will readily work laborious sums and solve intricate problems, are hopelessly puzzled when asked the amount of discount for ready money on a certain sum at $2\frac{1}{2}$, 5, or 10 per cent., or even the cost or $1\frac{1}{3}$ dozen articles at $2\frac{3}{4}$d. each. So long as the social fabric is dominated by a money *régime* these things surely ought not to be so. The results in arithmetic at the annual examinations were in many cases far from successful. But we do not attribute the failure altogether to inferior teaching or the want of capacity on the part of the pupils. Many of the Department's test-cards for the pupils in Standards V. and VI. were of more than average difficulty, containing sums so intricate in working and expression that the pupils' chances of success were materially reduced. On the other hand, the tests set for Standard III.

were considered by many of the teachers themselves to be too easy; and when compared with those set to Standard IV. they were pronounced to be more suggestive of something in the nature of a very awkward leap than of an easy passage along a continuous track.

Composition.—Since composition was first made a pass-subject very noticeable improvement has taken place in the exercises done by the pupils. Formerly many of the papers were disfigured by gross grammatical blunders, crudities of expression, and poverty of matter. All this has been to a large extent changed, and the way paved for a still higher degree of excellence. The possibilities of the subject are of course limitless; but, though we cannot hope for any general evidence of the better qualities of style and of originality of thought, we need not despair of being able to reach a very high standard if improvement proceeds at the same rate as it has done during the past few years.

Geography.—In this subject too we see a satisfactory amount of improvement. There is less sacrifice of the spirit of geography to the letter of topography. What needs to be emphasized is that the heart of the subject is to be found within the pupil's own experience, in his own school and district. This experience, thoroughly interpreted, becomes a centre of light from which the geography of remote regions may be successfully explored. There are, indeed, few geographical facts and principles which do not find apt illustration from the pupil's immediate surroundings. The circumstance that physical geography is very often a closed book to our pupils is largely due to their attempt to commit printed pages to memory while all the time they are in gross darkness as to the secrets that nature stands ready to reveal. As far as possible pupils should in this part of the subject be required to support every *what* with a *why*, every fact with a principle. For the purposes of teaching and examination teachers are allowed to group Standards IV., V. and VI. in geography, but their experience has been that pupils fresh from Standard III. do not take kindly to the work of Standard V. or Standard VI., and that it is much more profitable to instruct Standard IV. as a separate class. Our experience supports that of the teachers.

CLASS-SUBJECTS.—*Grammar.*—Grammar has received widely different treatment in different schools. In some it has been taught with marked success, but in most with neutral or distinctly poor results. Few will seek to deny the excellence of this subject as a means of mental discipline, and it is generally admitted that a love for grammar on the part of the pupils affords presumptive evidence that a spirit of intelligence pervades the school. But its very excellence, implying as it does long and systematic study, effectually bars its adequate treatment. It is not that teachers are indifferent to its claims; much less that, as a body, they are incompetent to teach it. In the competition of subjects for a place in the syllabus it is simply crushed out. We are not alone in thinking that instruction in grammar should go hand-in-hand with instruction in composition, and that the principles of the former should be introduced just in so far as they are necessary to promote the effective teaching of the latter. After all, the main thing for the average pupil is that he should be able to express his thoughts accurately, clearly, and expeditiously. That the mental training consequent on intelligent drill in formal grammar may not be altogether lost to our pupils that subject may very well be retained as an optional subject for Standards V. and VI.

History.—History is on the whole faithfully taught—that is, so far as it is capable of being taught at all in accordance with the scheme at present prescribed. To give detached lessons in the form of little stories about selected persons and events is, no doubt, the natural way of introducing children to the study of history; but the continuance of this method beyond Standard IV. implies, we venture to say, at once an illiberal treatment of the subject and an immense loss to the pupils. Surely the boys and girls of our highest classes are able to seize the meaning of the tendency of the stream of events in, say, the Stuart period, and to relish the keen intellectual enjoyment that comes of the perception of cause and effect in the affairs of the commonwealth. It appears to us that during the last years of our pupils' school-life we continue to give them, in the matter of history, food suited only for babes and sucklings. We are glad to be able to state that in a number of schools the elements of social economy have been taught with marked success.

Elementary Science.—Regarding this subject we have somewhat to say, which though not new is true, and of very considerable import. In a great many schools, some of them very large schools, there is nothing whatever in the way of scientific apparatus. It may well excite wonder that in these days when the scientific spirit is abroad we are still confronted by this startling anomaly. To attempt the teaching of elementary science without the use of apparatus is merely to succeed in wasting time; and to examine to any purpose pupils so taught is a task as unprofitable as it is hopeless. Yet it must be taught and they must be examined on these lines till some mode of introducing a sufficient amount of apparatus into all schools is discovered. Much might be done by the teachers themselves; still more by the teachers in conjunction with the more ingenious of their pupils. The interest in, and the value of, observations on an experiment cannot fail to be greatly augmented when the experimenters have provided the needful materials and apparatus. Perhaps it might not be a bad plan for the Board to make a contribution in aid of the teacher's stock of material and apparatus where he has provided everything it was in his power to provide without incurring direct expense.

Mental Arithmetic.—A passing reference has already been made to this subject in the paragraph dealing with arithmetic generally. In this place we merely call the attention of teachers in whose time-table mental arithmetic finds no place to take the following facts, proved and testified to by those teachers among us who have the courage to teach the subject systematically: It is of immense service in passing from one arithmetical principle to another, as well as in revising and consolidating the work of any given term, and, hand-in-hand with good writing, it is the best introduction a pupil can have who seeks employment in any business capacity.

Recitation.—Though there is some improvement we cannot yet say that good recitation is a characteristic feature of the schools of this district. In many cases the pupils are required to prepare too many verses, with the result that they do not know them, and only succeed in making a

pitiful or painful exhibition when they attempt to repeat them. Here our watchword should be quality, not quantity—quality both of matter and of style of repetition.

Drill.—We are by no means satisfied with the place that this subject occupies in the esteem of many teachers. It is the only open-air subject, and one would expect that this, combined with the fact of its being an invaluable indirect aid to discipline, would be sufficient to secure its popularity. But it is not so. We regret to state that nothing has come of last year's suggestion that all the boys of the town schools should be periodically mustered for battalion drill.

Singing.—In most schools a satisfactory amount of time is given to instruction in vocal music. It is in country schools that a "teacher with a voice" is invaluable. There are in towns various opportunities for the cultivation of the vocal art, but in the country the school is very often the sole centre of song. We know of schools in this district in which, according to the teachers, the children cannot produce a single note; and an occasional attempt on our part to disprove this statement has resulted in our mournfully coming to the same conclusion. Had these children been taught to sing when they were in the infant classes they would now, with but little effort on the teacher's part, be able to drive away dull care by filling the class-room with happy melody.

Needlework.—In a number of schools the programme of instruction recommended by the ladies of the local institute has been carried out; and the work done by the pupils fully convinces us that the end has justified the means. The girls will now leave school fit not merely to sew, but also to cut out, the garments prescribed by the syllabus. We strongly recommend teachers of sewing in all our schools to adopt the new programme in its entirety.

Comprehension of the Language of the Reading-lessons.—Last year we commented on this subject in unfavourable terms. During the past year considerable improvement has been made, though, in some cases, at too great a sacrifice of time. In this matter the teachers might to a great extent cast the burden off their own shoulders on to those of their pupils by showing them approved methods of attacking a difficult word or expression with a view to unfold its meaning, and by persistently declining to give them direct aid.

The results obtained by the Catholic schools show substantial improvement when compared with those obtained last year.

As required by the department regulation, we have to state, with respect to the children over eight years of age that were not presented for examination in Standard I., that in our opinion the number of such children withheld from examination was not excessive, and that the excuses given for their non-presentation were uniformly of a satisfactory nature.

The Secretary, Education Board, Southland.

JAMES HENDRY,
GEO. D. BRAIK, } Inspectors.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	153	...	...	...
Standard VI.	444	435	374	13 11
" V.	904	864	628	13 2
" IV.	1,290	1,256	905	12 4
" III.	1,455	1,424	1,176	11 1
" II.	1,192	1,169	1,104	9 9
" I.	1,179	1,155	1,117	8 9
Preparatory	2,905	...	...	...
Totals	9,522	6,303	5,304	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

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