1899.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:

REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.-1B, 1898.]

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Auckland, 8th March, 1899.

I have the honour to submit the usual report for the year 1898.

At the close of the year there were 369 public schools in operation in the Auckland District, being ten more than at the close of last year. Of this number 359 were examined. The remaining ten were opened after the examination of the neighbouring schools was completed. Three hundred and thirty-two schools were inspected, including fifteen half-time schools, of which only one of the group was visited for this purpose. On being visited five schools were found closed owing to special holidays or bad weather. One school (Oruru) was temporarily closed when the Inspector was in the district. The remaining thirty-one schools were not inspected, as the work could not be overtaken by the staff. Among the schools not inspected were two of the largest schools in the city, which were both closed when one of the Inspectors was free to visit them. Fifteen new schools have been opened during the year, and five old ones were closed, giving a net increase of ten. Only four of the new schools are situated in the goldfields area.

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

TABLE I.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	381	...	...	...
Standard VI.	1,631	1,592	1,382	14 2
" V.	2,502	2,403	1,868	13 2
" IV.	3,767	3,615	2,758	12 5
" III.	3,737	3,602	2,955	11 2
" II.	3,504	3,387	3,159	10 1
" I.	3,362	3,275	3,187	8 11
Preparatory	9,241	...	...	...
Totals	28,125	17,874	15,309	11 8* (nearly).

These figures show for the year an increase of ninety-nine in the number of pupils presented, of 217 in the number of pupils who were present, and of 519 in the number of pupils that passed in one or other of the standards.

Approximately, 86 per cent. of the pupils examined in standards passed—a result in every way satisfactory. In Standards IV. and VI. there has been a very considerable advance in the percentage of passes; but the percentage of passes in Standards IV. and V., 76 and 78 respectively, remains somewhat below the level which I think we should reach. A considerable advance in the percentage of passes in Standard V. was recorded last year, and the improvement has been not only maintained, but slightly increased.

The average age at which Standards IV., V., and VI. have been passed remains unchanged; in each of the lower standards it has decreased by one month.

* Mean of average age.

The percentage of pupils passed in Standards I. and II. by head-teachers is almost the same as that for last year.

The number of pupils over eight years of age who were returned as belonging to the Preparatory Class is 2,100. This number is slightly below that recorded in recent years, but is still high.

The following table shows the number of pupils examined in each of the standard classes, and the number of passes gained in each of the pass-subjects for each standard. The results in Standards I. and II. are still determined by head-teachers:—

TABLE II.

Showing the results of examination in the several pass-subjects of the various standards:—

Standard.	Number examined.	Passes in									
		Reading.	Spelling and Dictation.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.		Composition.		Geography.	
							P. cent.		P. cent.		P. cent.
VI. ...	1,631	1,572	1,484	1,523	1,544	1,160	71	1,323	81	1,410	86
V. ...	2,502	2,170	1,938	2,216	2,229	1,531	61	1,954	78	1,903	76
IV. ...	3,767	3,241	2,929	3,276	3,320	2,752	73	2,706	72	2,575	68
III. ...	3,737	3,249	2,960	3,242	3,357	2,950	79	2,975	80	2,928	78
II. ...	3,504	3,151	3,165	3,211	3,190	2,905	83	...	...	...	...
I. ...	3,362	3,115	3,112	3,215	3,144	3,101	92	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	18,503	16,498	15,588	16,683	16,784	14,399	...	*8,958	...	*8,816	...

The numbers in this table compare, on the whole, favourably with those for last year. In reading the percentage of passes is higher by 1, in arithmetic by 3, and in geography by 2; it is lower by 1 in writing, drawing, and composition; in spelling and dictation it is unchanged. As to the results in single standards, there is an improvement of 13 per cent. in the passes in arithmetic in Standard VI., and of 10 per cent. in that of Standard IV. The tests in arithmetic for the Sixth Standard have, however, been easier than those issued by the Minister in recent years.

The teaching of reading continues to improve, though slowly enough, and it is in general satisfactory. In the larger schools it is very generally good; in the smaller, and especially in the rural schools, the need for improvement is still very noticeable, though even here there are a good many exceptions to this statement. Writing of the latter, Mr. Goodwin complains of the "monotonous, low, and sometimes almost inaudible manner in which the pupils utter the words of the text." "It is not surprising," he adds, "that children do not generally read with a proper regard to expression and inflection; but it ought not to be too much to expect them to read with sufficient distinctness, fluency, and attention to stops to enable the hearer to understand what is being read. I should like to see a knowledge of the passage read taken into account in determining a 'pass' in this subject." With the last remark most Inspectors will, I think, agree. The alteration by which comprehension was separated from reading and set up as an independent additional subject, when the syllabus was last revised, has certainly not tended to make the reading of the higher classes grow in intelligence, and has reacted unfavourably on the cultivation of rhetorical expression. To class a department of study among the "additional subjects" is to affirm officially its comparative insignificance. But surely comprehension of the matter and language of reading-lessons is a matter of the highest importance, and one to be cultivated by every means available. "Children," says a recent high authority† on teaching, "cannot by reading increase their stock of knowledge if they do not understand what they read. Questions on the matter should therefore form part of every reading-lesson, and when the answers show that there is not a full comprehension of the meaning the necessary explanations should be given. Answers consisting of a single word should never be accepted. From the youngest child complete sentences should be required, and from older children a continuous narrative or statement, which should sometimes be in writing."

Mr. Grierson's impression as to the teaching of reading in the North Central District, in which the schools are mostly small, and the attendance frequently very irregular, is more in accord with my own. "Reading," he says, "continues to improve all round. Though much of it is lacking in expression, and nearly all of it is far from being 'rhetorical in the best sense,' it is generally accurate and distinctly delivered, and can be followed without the book. In the smaller schools I do not think much more than this can reasonably be expected." Writing of the Northern District, in which during the winter months the attendance is extremely irregular, Mr. Crowe says, "I think there has been some improvement in this subject. The reading was, on the whole, fluent, but too frequently it was not accurate. The other prevailing faults were indistinctness and disregard of stops. Indistinct reading is, fortunately, much more rare than formerly." Mr. Mulgan says, "Reading in most of the schools (of the Waikato district), especially in the upper classes, lacks that fluency and ease which might reasonably be expected when each class is examined in a special book. It is difficult to conceive that a pupil has an intelligent grasp of the matter of the lessons when the reading of the actual words present such difficulty." In most of the schools to which Mr. Mulgan here refers, pupils who have passed the Fourth Standard are every second year advanced into the Sixth Reading-book, so that Standards V. and VI. may, for the sake of economy of time, be taught together in this subject. This is, no doubt, in part the cause of the defect he notices. But it

* Out of a total of 11,637. † "The Art of Teaching," by D. Salmon, pages 113 and 114.

is in large measure due to the simplicity and faulty graduation of the Readers now used in Standards II., III., and IV. It is this evil that led me to advise the Board to adopt Longmans' "Ship Literary Readers" in lieu of the new Readers, and I cannot but regret that the Board did not give effect to the alteration recommended.

The foregoing estimates are not altogether in accord, but they doubtless reflect correctly in the main the state of the teaching in the districts to which they refer. My impression, gathered from the considerable body of schools I have visited and examined in the course of the year, is much the same as that formed by Mr. Grierson. The reading was in general accurate, fluent, and distinct, but marked by a smaller measure of intelligence, and of the crowning grace of expression that has its root in clear comprehension of the language and a lively appreciation of the sense, than might be expected from the care and the average skill with which the subject is taught. The most common and striking defect in all the standards was a want of taste and judgment in the insertion of short pauses to indicate the close of phrases that are not shut off by pointed stops. In brief, phrasing is very generally faulty. This point needs much more effective attention than it now receives. Good phrasing and correct emphasis are the outcome of intelligent apprehension of the sense rather than a result of teaching-drill. But the latter should suffice to correct such faults as putting a pause after the word "and" instead of before it, and giving too emphatic prominence to such words as "of," "to," "at," &c.

It is my wish that no mean standard of proficiency in the art of reading should be insisted on for a pass in the subject. Reading marred by inaccuracy, by indistinctness, and by want of fluency, should not be accepted as satisfactory by the Inspectors, and has nowhere been passed by myself. Expression, a more intangible quality, and one more liable to be adversely affected by bashfulness and timidity, which, moreover, cannot exist without the previous acquisition of accuracy and fluency, cannot be insisted on in a high degree; but the total want of it should debar the reader from passing, and has in not a few cases done so during the past year. Judged by such a standard of attainments, the net result of the year's work is far from discreditable to our schools and our teachers, since 90 per cent. of the pupils examined in reading satisfied the examiners.

The reading in the classes taught by one teacher is generally all of a piece, and its quality varies from school to school more than that of any other subject, except writing and drawing. Where it is unsatisfactory the fault is in general the teacher's, who wants the force or the skill to interest his pupils, to kindle their imagination, and to raise their efforts step by step to his ideal of the proficiency they might attain. Wherever serious defects in the teaching of reading are observed the fact needs to be plainly noted in the official reports on the work of the teachers concerned. Such defects are, no doubt, often due to unfavourable conditions, but a skilful and enthusiastic teacher rarely fails, often in a surprisingly short time, to surmount this difficulty.

Next to irregular attendance in many rural schools, the greatest obstacle to improvement in this subject is undoubtedly the neglect of preparation for the teaching of the lessons by very many of our teachers. Regular preparation is indispensable if the treatment is to be lively and interesting, fitted to inform the mind and rouse the imagination to a vivid apprehension of the scenes opened to the reader's mental gaze. Many aids to improvement can be gleaned from the newer and fuller text-books of school method*—books which are throughout this district, with very rare exceptions, conspicuous by their absence from the teacher's table and his school library of professional guides. Their usual mentors are antiquated, and, being mere outline sketches, insufficient to boot. Great progress has been made in elementary education during the last twenty years, and those here engaged in the work need to keep themselves more closely in touch with the onward movement. The conservative policy of the Central Department during these years, and its failure to suggest books for study in preparing for professional examinations, have helped to keep us out of the current of progress. One of the worst consequences of the teacher's neglect to prepare reading-lessons before they are taught is a noticeable want of aim and plan in their treatment of them. Defects of many kinds are apparent in the pupils' performance, and they are all more or less dealt with in an unsystematic, disconnected, and relatively ineffective way. This kind of treatment is to some extent inevitable, but at successive stages of advancement the handling of the lessons should disclose some large and dominating aim, such as accuracy and distinctness in the lower classes, fluency and ease in the intermediate ones, and intelligence and expression in the upper. Other points are not to be ignored, but these greater matters should receive a preponderating share of care and attention. One often feels that teachers are too anxious to show how many defects they can detect and point out, and that they display but little sense of the relative importance of small and of great interests in their direction of the efforts and the training of their scholars. Much benefit would result from a heartier encouragement of home preparation, and, in suitable circumstances, of preparatory study in school, of reading-lessons. Only a few of the teachers I have seen at work during the year make a practice of testing this preliminary study. Those who do so tell me they find the practice very helpful; and I should like to see it in universal use in the higher classes. This counsel, together with much more that has been submitted to teachers in the "Suggestions," and in previous reports, has not been acted on as carefully as I could wish.

In spelling and dictation the work of the year shows no falling-off, and I gladly note greater freedom from errors in spelling, both in composition and in geography exercises. In future I do not purpose to take account of mistakes in spelling in composition and geography exercises as elements in determining a "pass" in spelling. It is doubtful if this course is lawful, and I therefore willingly abandon it; but in determining passes in composition and geography the spelling in these exercises will be taken into account, and should receive assiduous attention. The great majority of the pupils who fail in spelling fail through blunders in common words which they have met over and over again in their reading-books. "Teachers," Mr. Grierson remarks, "evidently do not practise

* See in particular Cowham's "New School Method," and Cox and MacDonald's "Practical School Method."

their pupils enough in the spelling of those small common words ('there,' 'their,' 'were,' 'where,' 'to,' 'two,' &c.) over which they are so apt to trip." I believe that half the failures in spelling in the upper classes are due to mistakes in words of this class. Transcription is of little use in impressing the spelling of such words. I have satisfied myself of this by getting pupils who had just done a transcription exercise correctly to turn their slates, and then write, without help, a difficult phrase or two from the same exercise, and very often the pupils have blundered in such words. To be effective, transcription needs to be followed up by writing to dictation some or all of the troublesome words in the passage. This I have never seen a teacher do, but it would be labour and time well spent."

As to the teaching of writing, the opinions of my colleagues show little agreement. Mr. Goodwin "cannot say that writing has much improved, or is improving." He thinks less attention is given to the teaching of this subject now than formerly, and that the test imposed is not so severe. No doubt, in the smaller schools less time is now given to the sole teaching of writing than was once the case. Half an hour a day of the teacher's undivided attention cannot be spared for it in the smaller schools, if justice is to be done to the other subjects of instruction, and especially to reading and English studies generally. But writing can be adequately taught with a less share of the teacher's undivided attention; and the gain from the better distribution of his time and attention, in my opinion, far outweighs the loss. There are, however, not a few schools in which the time devoted to copybook writing is insufficient, and I have repeatedly noted this in reports made in the course of the year. It is undesirable to lay down hard-and-fast rules on such a matter as this, but I think not less than three lessons a week in copybook writing should be arranged for in the higher classes of every school, and more time than this should be given to it from Standard IV. downwards. This is exclusive of transcription and all other forms of written exercises. Mr. Mulgan (Waikato District) reports writing as "not so good as it might be, the letters showing a want of symmetry, and the whole wanting in neatness and finish." Mr. Grierson, himself the best penman among the Inspectors, says: "It is a very unusual thing to find a school in which the writing in copybooks is not at least of satisfactory quality. In the written exercises done at the examinations, the writing in a good few schools is only fair." Mr. Crowe reports as follows: "Generally speaking, the writing was satisfactory, though in too many cases it was wanting in neatness. In only two schools (Northern District) was it unsatisfactory." My own experience is that, though writing has not markedly improved except in isolated cases, it is in no way falling off, and is, on the whole, satisfactory, while in a fair number of schools, both large and small, it is very creditable. The examination exercises in subjects other than the writing test are of necessity somewhat hurriedly done, and the quality of the writing they show suffers from this as well as from the pupils' preoccupation with other matters. If much more time were allowed the writing would doubtless be better, but this arrangement, if otherwise practicable, allows scope for copying and dishonest communication between pupil and pupil, which teachers and Inspectors alike are anxious to minimise.

To make writing better than it is, we want, not so much more attention to it from teachers, for of this there is, as a rule, little lack, but stronger and firmer discipline, and more earnest endeavour and better attention on the part of pupils. Where we find superior writing we almost invariably find stronger government and superior discipline also. A great many of our teachers do not rouse, and do not sufficiently bestir themselves to rouse, the fine working spirit, the concentrated effort and willing application, that are indispensable conditions of the best training in mechanical exercises as well as in those demanding the exercise of intelligence. If it were a mere question of so much time per week, or of a certain degree of attention from teachers, progress in penmanship could be secured with comparative certainty and ease. But the problem is not one of this order. Teachers still pay too little heed to the way pupils sit at writing and hold the pen. In the new copybooks lately selected by the Board a woodcut illustrating these positions with great clearness appears inside the cover of each book. Strict regard to the positions there shown will be expected. Neglect of this can be counted only as an indication of carelessness or of want of proper discipline. Mr. Salmon, in the work above referred to, says: "Good writing is absolutely impossible unless the pen be held properly, and good writing, under healthy conditions, is impossible unless the body, arms, and head be rightly placed also. Children must, therefore, from the very beginning, remember and understand a long set of rules, and the best way to make them remember and understand is to make them practise." These views are out of fashion with many modern teachers, but they are sound and important. To see that proper positions are observed during writing should help discipline in many ways, for the common disregard of teachers' directions in this matter is an insidious and fertile source of disrespect for the teacher's authority. I may add that 91 per cent. of the pupils examined in writing satisfied the Inspectors, and passed in the subject.

Drawing is in general more satisfactory than writing, and is good in a large number of schools. Both Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Grierson speak in favourable terms of the teaching in the schools they have examined. In all the larger schools a test (on slates) in freehand drawing was given, and the same has been done in the smaller schools where time could be found for the exercise.

Little need be said about the teaching of arithmetic, which was referred to in some detail in last year's report. Teachers would do well to look now and then into the suggestions and criticisms offered there. On the whole, there has been satisfactory progress in the teaching of the subject, and this has been most conspicuous in Standards IV. and VI. In the latter the greatly improved examination results are in part due to the easier tests applied, but I think there has been real progress. In Standard III. the examples in addition of money have for some years been so easy as to discourage a thorough drilling in this most useful exercise. This defect in the Education Department's sets of questions greatly needs to be remedied. The class in which the work is least satisfactory is Standard V. Here proportion is not as well understood as it should be, and easy problems in fractions are, on the average, indifferently dealt with. Much of the work of this class demands the exercise of simple reasoning, and I do not think pupils have anything like sufficient drill in

stating it orally. The interpretation of the language of the examples, even when most concise and clear, involves difficulty for many pupils. When they are working sets of examples at desks, one often discovers that they cannot readily tell what they want to find in a particular sum, neither can they readily state the data from which the number or quantity to be found is to be worked out. In such cases nothing can be more helpful than abundant practice in briefly describing the main steps in the solution. Teachers must see to this if their handling of the subject is to become really efficient. The care and neatness in setting out the solutions of examples at examination are now much more satisfactory, but equal care should be bestowed on the setting-out of the pupils' daily work, which is by no means always done. In Standard II. I purpose in future to give more prominence to mechanical examples and to give fewer problems, as there is some danger of our concentrating attention too much on the latter.

Mental arithmetic, while good in a considerable number of schools, is hardly, on the average, satisfactory. Oddly enough, whole classes, now and then, do better in this than in the ordinary arithmetic on slates.

Throughout the year composition has been examined under the scheme explained in a circular issued last year. In Standards V. and VI. the essay subjects set had not been written about before, so that the pupils' work was original. The subjects were chosen by the teachers from a very full list, and each pupil had a choice of two subjects. The percentage of passes was 77, or one less than that for last year. The application of a somewhat stricter standard of attainment in the Standard III. class led to a higher proportion of failures in that class.

Composition is a subject in which it is most difficult to draw a line between exercises that are barely entitled to pass and those that should fail; and no doubt more weak passes are recorded in it than in any other of the pass-subjects. On the other hand, particularly in the larger schools, a large percentage of the exercises—not far short of the half, I should say—were of a character ranging from creditable to quite satisfactory. Considering the difficulty of the subject, the limited knowledge and vocabulary of the pupils, their poverty of ideas, and the small range of their school-reading, the teaching is in the majority of schools fairly creditable. There are, however, many defects in the handling of the course of lessons that we can and should get rid of. One of these is the very elementary work that satisfies so many teachers in the exercises of Standard III. Here longer sentences should be required, and greater variety in the way they are stated should be encouraged. There are not a few schools in which sentences containing a single statement, and opening one after the other with the same grammatical subject, are regarded by the teachers as all that should be expected at this stage. Such exercises cannot be considered satisfactory, and the habitual occurrence of work greatly superior to this in something like half the schools in the district is sufficient to show that, with honest teaching and skilful treatment, a much higher type of work can be produced. Both here and in Standard IV. oral exercises might with advantage be more generally used. Such exercises should develop a considerable degree of smartness and alertness in thought and freedom of expression—qualities that stand in great need of stimulation. In the smaller schools, too, the Standard III. pupils might frequently be taken along with those of Standard IV. for more advanced instruction in this subject.

To some extent the training given to the pupils of the Fourth Standard class has suffered from the undue copiousness and the ready sequence of the heads composing the outline which the teachers put on the blackboard for their pupils' guidance. These in many cases leave the pupils little more to do than to supply connecting words and fill in obvious missing elements of the sentences. Used in this fashion, the outline method cannot yield a satisfactory training in composition. If it is wisely used the heads must contain only the barest suggestions, and the pupils must themselves undertake the work of selecting the points to be combined into single sentences, and make the combination from their own resources. Only matter or topics should be suggested; the selection, arrangement, and literary presentation of it should be the pupil's task, and his only. In rare cases the method has been completely misunderstood, and pupils have been practised in composing a single sentence, and usually a simple one, about each head, thus avoiding even the endeavour to select kindred ideas and knit them into connected statements in the form of a sentence of complex and compound sentences varied by occasional simple ones. Such teachers aim at a type of exercise intrinsically lower than is frequently done in the Standard III. class. It is, moreover, a great mistake to confine the instruction of the Standard IV. class to exercises on the outline method; the pupils need considerable practice in the writing of letters, in which they contribute the whole of the matter as well as its arrangement and expression. They might also with advantage share many of the reproduction exercises given in Standard V.

From Standard IV. upwards there has of late been considerable improvement in grammatical accuracy, and in the division of sentences. In the two higher standards, poverty of ideas, a very childish treatment of such ideas as there were, and the intrusion of irrelevant matter were the principal and most prevalent faults. A main cause of these defects is, I think, correctly indicated by Mr. Grierson. He thinks they may be traced to the narrow range of subjects which teachers select for their pupils to write about, to the limitation of these to the simplest to be found, and to the repetition, year after year, of much the same subjects in successive standards. Certainly the common training largely fails to cultivate the pupils' powers of thought and observation. This is most clearly seen in their attempts to deal with such subjects as the following (selected from the lists submitted for teachers to choose from): "Two Favourite Flowers," "Two Useful Metals," "Two Domestic Animals," "Two Common Birds," when the plain and commonplace points are very generally passed over, while remote, out-of-the-way, and far-fetched considerations are much in evidence. To remedy faults of this kind the pupils must be led to see and to think. The commonplace is there, and is as worthy of notice and observation as the out-of-the-way.

Composition cannot be efficiently taught in the higher classes without more thought and care than is commonly given to it, and without better examination and correction of exercises done in

it. As far as possible, the occurrence of mistakes should only be marked by teachers, and the correction should be supplied by the writers of the exercises. A set of marks indicating the kind of mistake (for school-children's mistakes can be reduced to a comparatively few classes), and understood by teachers and pupils, might be introduced with great advantage. The reason for every correction should be made so clear that the pupils can understand and restate it, and apply the same principle to similar cases. The examination of composition exercises should never be intrusted to junior pupil-teachers, nor to any one else than the class-teacher and the head-teacher. Not less than one subject a week should be dealt with in every class, and the subjects should be largely different for successive standards. In the larger schools additional subjects should be treated in outline, the heads and arrangement alone being considered. On the walls of every school-room should appear a list of forty or fifty composition subjects for the use of each of the classes in the room, and the lists should be so placed that pupils can consult them with little trouble. Besides this, the subjects of oncoming composition-lessons should always be announced a week before, that the pupils may gather a store of knowledge about the subjects set. With all subjects that are not familiar to the children, rapid, and not too narrow, oral questioning about the topics should be employed as a preparatory exercise, and now and then heads might be worked out at the blackboard as models for the pupils. This preparatory work needs to be smartly dealt with both by teachers and by pupils, and with skilful handling the latter can be got to do very much of it without material help or explanation from the teacher.

As a rule, paraphrasing was poorly done, though there were some creditable exceptions in nearly every school. I intend to discontinue the use of this exercise until we get for the upper classes a set of reading-books with a better selection of poetry. When resumed it will be confined to passages chosen from the series of reading-books in the pupils' hands.

Grammar is in general satisfactorily taught in Standards III. and IV. so far as simple parsing goes, but the knowledge of inflections is still more backward than it might be. In Standards V. and VI. parsing is becoming more and more slow and inaccurate, and mistakes in classing the parts of speech are by no means unusual even in the highest class. In most schools a small proportion of the pupils have gained a considerable knowledge of what is taught, but the majority, and usually the great majority, of their class-fellows know very little about the subject, and are entirely indifferent to it. Here, as in writing, it is feeble discipline, rather than want of care and skill on the part of teachers, that is responsible for the gravely unsatisfactory state of the instruction. In the small schools this is less noticeable. I am now satisfied that it was a mistake to rank grammar as a class-subject, and I regret that I supported the change. Under the system of oral examination teachers and Inspectors too have been largely imposed on, the merit of a few good scholars cloaking the defects of the mass of their class-fellows. An appeal to a brief written examination in Standards V. and VI. has fully satisfied me of this. The bad work seemed to be equally a revelation to the class-teachers. I hope the unpleasant exposures we have so often encountered during the past year will lead to greater thoroughness and more systematic testing of the teaching by written exercises. Much of the dryness of this study is due to overdoing routine parsing. When a fair foundation has been laid it would probably be better to deal with particular points in the parsing of single words, and have reasons given for the answers. This would lessen the deadening routine even if it does not add interest to the work.

Analysis, though better known than parsing, was, on the whole, barely satisfactory. It is to be regretted that the analysis of compound sentences should be omitted from the syllabus. Why should analysis, in Standard VI., not deal with easily understood sentences containing three or four statements, whether these show the relations characteristic of complex or of compound sentences? The grand considerations in all analysis are two, and two only—the number of clauses or statements, and the relations of these to one another as co-ordinate or subordinate. These matters are as easy to recognise and describe in compound sentences as in complex ones. All the other details are easy to see, and of less significance.

There has been a noticeable improvement in the teaching of geography, and the written answers have, in general, been more fully and better set out. Mathematical geography is, however, still poorly understood. This topic is singularly ill-suited for treatment in the elementary school. Much time is spent on it to very little purpose, because the interaction of the various conditions is too complicated for immature minds to clearly and easily apprehend their working. It would be a gain if it were thrown out of the syllabus altogether. In its place we might well have an elementary study of geographical changes that are going on under our eyes, such as the formation of cliffs, bays, and sandhills; the eating-out of valleys; the formation of gravel and sand; the filling-up of lake-basins and nearly level valleys by gravel, sand, and alluvium; the effects of floods; the deposition of the varied strata that compose the earth's crust; and kindred topics. The study of such subjects would afford ample scope for the practice of observation and inference, would minister far more to the training of the intelligence, and would draw out and strengthen the strong "naturalist" interest that is dormant in us all.

Of history Mr. Goodwin writes, "I can see very little value in the teaching of history in our schools. The disjointed and fragmentary way in which the events are generally arranged in the programmes prepared can be of little use to children. Even in the rare instances where a well-thought-out lesson, enriched with the results of mature and ample reading, is given I fear that few scholars carry away with them more than a very vague idea of its true scope and meaning. I think it would be better if the pupils read regularly some suitable text-book, and were questioned afterwards to ascertain if they remembered and really understood what they read." Mr. Grierson says, "Though the teachers go religiously through a course of lessons, I am afraid they make very little lasting impression on the minds of their pupils. The reading of a suitable historical text-book would, I think, be attended by much better results." To this I may add that the few dates taught are seldom thoroughly known by more than a minority of the pupils. The teaching of history by

oral narrative and exposition, which is almost a necessary consequence of the arrangements laid down in the syllabus, may be suitable enough for junior classes unable to read and understand an easy text-book, but it is little suited for the instruction of more advanced pupils who experience no such difficulty. On the oral system of instruction revisal and repetition of lessons cannot be efficiently carried out, and for reasonably thorough knowledge much revisal and repetition is indispensable. In schools in which the "Southern Cross Histories" have been used as text-books in Standards IV., V., and VI. the knowledge of this subject was, in general, much more satisfactory. The instruction of Standard III. has been distinctly better than that of the higher classes.

It is only in a minority of the schools that lessons in social economy have been given, though these should form part of the teaching of every Standard VI. class. This is excused on the ground of want of time—in many cases a very good plea. Many have, no doubt, avoided it because they did not very well know how to treat it. For the future the outline of social economy contained in the "Southern Cross History," No. 2, Part II. (or No. 3), will be expected to be taught in every Standard VI. class.

The treatment of science and object-lessons is of much the same character as in recent years. Where teachers take an interest in science, and have the means of teaching it experimentally, sound and instructive work is very generally done. This is true of a good many of the smaller schools, as well as of numbers of the larger ones. The general science course is again being taken up in a good many schools where agricultural science was formerly preferred. This is a change to be welcomed, for the educative value of the two courses, and the facilities they offer for experimental illustration, are very unequal.

During the year a few schools have added to their equipment for performing illustrative experiments. These improvements are almost entirely due to the exertions of head-teachers, who organize entertainments to raise funds for this purpose. Committees approve of these exertions, but make little or no effort by economizing the school fund or by giving contributions to swell the sum that can be devoted to this excellent object. Object-lessons are still too much tainted by the false aim of giving instruction. Lists of the objects, illustrations, drawings, &c., shown in connection with each lesson should always appear at the head of the notes, but they are not rarely wanting. Both in science and in object-lessons the answers given to questions are frequently too short and incomplete, and contributed by too small a portion of the class.

In additional subjects most progress has been made of late in comprehension, though much remains to be accomplished even here. The Inspectors have bestowed a great deal of pains and of time in endeavouring to encourage more and better attention to it, especially in Standards IV., V., and VI. Recitation, though rarely unsatisfactory, should be more uniformly good. It suffers in some schools, at any rate, from neglect to teach the tasteful reading of the poems before pupils are set to learn them by heart. Such a practice is stupid to the last degree. In many cases simultaneous recitation is better than individual, and for this reason should never be used alone, and always sparingly, as a test of the teaching.

Considering the time available for their practice, singing and sewing are, in general, as well taught as we can expect. Only a few pupils learn to sing even simple melodies at sight; the great majority follow the lead of a few proficients. Drill in singing in sections, or with a number of the better singers mute, is the only cure for this; but too little time is available for instruction in it. Too many of our female teachers are unable to teach singing.

The instruction of the primer classes has in recent years improved much more than any other department of the work of the public schools. The teachers, whose intelligence, fidelity, and persevering diligence have effected this great change, deserve the greatest credit. They have the further distinction of having honestly tried new methods suggested to them, and of having applied them with zeal and good judgment whenever they found them of service. The great improvement that has been made in the teaching of reading and arithmetic in the primers is not, however, as well maintained in Standards I. and II. of the larger schools as it should be. Head-teachers need to see to this. In a number of the smallest schools the work of the primer classes is still unsatisfactory, and their teachers do not devote to these classes the time and pains they merit and would richly repay. In such cases monitors might be more used in revising reading, hearing and drilling in tables, and similar mechanical exercises.

There is still great room for improvement in the statement of oral answers. The care and completeness with which these are given is the best index of the educative training that is being given in a school. Many teachers habitually insist on answers being stated as complete sentences, but questions are constantly cropping up that cannot be adequately answered in one sentence, and pupils still show little facility and poor training in dealing with these. This defect is as evident in the answers given to questioning by teachers as in those given in reply to Inspectors' questions. Its great prevalence is little to the credit of our teachers, and it is an additional indication of faulty discipline, for it is often evident that pupils do not really try to give the best answers of which they are capable.

Nothing has been done during the year to lessen the too heavy burden imposed on teachers by the official syllabus. Nothing would do more to promote sound education than a substantial reduction of the wide course of study prescribed for the higher classes. Very many of the defects I have commented on in this report are the direct outcome of overpressure; and we can hardly hope for more educative and more thorough work until the pressure is relieved. With history treated only as a subject for reading, and the extravagances of the syllabus in geography, higher arithmetic, and agricultural science rigidly pruned, there would be time to do honest educational work all round, and little excuse but incapacity for not doing it.

In special subjects—more particularly in science, domestic economy, drawing, singing, and drill—it is high time we had special certificates testifying to a thorough practical and theoretical acquaintance with them. It is notorious that teachers who cannot sing a note, or perform and

explain an experiment in agricultural science, can now get a teacher's certificate. This may be to a certain extent unavoidable; but what is to prevent the department from instituting special certificates in these subjects, which would guarantee a thorough knowledge of them? Were such special certificates attainable, I do not doubt that most young teachers would bestir themselves to secure them, and the gain accruing from their possession would be unquestionable.

While the management of the schools remains, in the main, good, I have noted in some of the larger schools a laxity in one aspect of discipline that has too long passed without remark. The order and behaviour of the pupils are nearly always very satisfactory, and usually good, but their attention and honest and persevering application to study leave a good deal to be desired. Head-teachers are, I believe, fully alive to the existence and gravity of this blot on the good management of their schools, and are making earnest efforts to cope with it. Where this weakness is due to the employment of inefficient assistants, it may be necessary to strengthen the head-teachers' hands by removing them to a less exacting sphere of labour. But there are cases where the weakness appears as much attributable to the head as to the assistants. There is no need for advising hasty action in dealing with this difficulty, for in many instances it would be hard to make changes for the better; but it will be well for those concerned to realise how important—indeed, how indispensable—is the power of maintaining satisfactory attention and application throughout the various classes of their schools. Except for the qualification just mentioned, the order, discipline, behaviour, and manners of the pupils of the public schools are highly creditable to themselves and to their teachers.

As in former years, I have pleasure in acknowledging the manifest fidelity and diligence with which the vast majority of the teachers in the service of the Board discharge their important and onerous duties. The past year has been one of heavy and continuous work for my colleagues. It was only by the most strenuous exertions that all the examinations were completed, and the inspection so largely overtaken. Mr. Crowe and Mr. Grierson have both done yeoman's service, and so too has Mr. Mulgan, who took up Mr. Dickinson's work when he had to retire on leave through ill-health, and carried it on with great expedition. My thanks are specially due to Mr. Grierson for taking up the examination of the East Coast schools in lieu of Mr. Dickinson, when he should have been employed on the less exhausting task of inspecting the schools of his own district.

I have, &c.,
D. PETRIE, M.A.,
Chief Inspector.

The Secretary, Auckland Education Board.

TARANAKI.

SIR,— Education Office, New Plymouth, 22nd March, 1899.

I have the honour to submit to you my annual report for the year ending the 31st December, 1898.

At the close of 1898 sixty-three schools were open, all of which, with the exception of the newly opened schools at Uruti, Durham Road, and Whangamomona, were examined.

The following table shows the summary of examination-results for the year:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	20	...	...	...
Standard VI.	114	111	80	14 8
" V.	261	256	142	13 11
" IV.	482	462	282	12 10
" III.	567	546	390	11 10
" II.	644	618	519	10 7
" I.	540	521	450	9 5
Preparatory	1,325	...	...	...
Totals	3,953	2,514	1,863	12 2*

Comparing this table with that for 1895 (the first year I was here) I find that the number on the rolls at examination has increased by 239. The number in standards present at examination has increased by 316, or by over 14 per cent. Despite the increase in the roll-number the number of pupils in the preparatory classes has decreased.

I am pleased to note that Standards V. and VI., the standards beyond the compulsory standard, show considerable increases—in Standard V. nearly 20 per cent., and in Standard VI. 67 per cent. This, to my mind, is an indication that parents are recognising more and more the benefits to be derived from giving their children advantage of the education beyond merely that which is insisted upon by the School Attendance Act. I cannot but think that the sound instruction imparted in some of our best schools has been an important factor in bringing about this result. Standard II. also shows a considerable increase. This I believe is due to the promotion of pupils who at my earlier examinations I found had been kept back amongst the infants without sufficient reason.

* Mean of average age.

The number of pupils absent from the examination in standards shows a considerable falling-off (130 in 1895 to 84 in 1898, or 35 per cent.). During the latter part of the year measles were very prevalent or the number of absentees would have been still lower; indeed, of the eighty-four one school was responsible for thirty-two, thirty of whom were in Standards I. to III. The number of passes has increased by 410. Taking the percentage of passes on the number of pupils presented in Standard I. to Standard VI., the increase has been from 62·4 to 71·4.

So far as statistics can be an indication of educational progress, the above figures all point to increased efficiency; but what to my mind is of much greater importance is the fact that the quality of the work received (and therefore the quality of the passes), which is a better test of progress, has greatly improved. In satisfactorily taught schools an Inspector has seldom to hesitate about passing the pupils, but in badly taught schools many, if not most, of the passes are weak and even doubtful. Where many such cases occur the work cannot be considered satisfactory, for a pass does not imply that the child obtaining it shows full proficiency in the work prescribed for the standard, but that he has been able to grasp a certain portion of it. Good work in the school must therefore be judged by the quality of the work or passes, rather than by the percentage of passes, which I have always maintained to be a most misleading test of a teacher's success; indeed, in respect of the individual schools a percentage of passes is never calculated. A good school will obtain a high proportion of passes, but so also may a badly taught school, for in the latter the pupils may be crammed to a certain point, while much of the work may be badly taught or neglected altogether.

To exemplify this we may take as an instance arithmetic, say, in Standard III. The syllabus prescribes some of the simple rules, and compound addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, with simple problems. Now, as the regulations fix as a pass three sums correct for boys and two and a half (two correct and one partly correct) for girls, and as last year the cards contained three sums in simple rules and two in compound rules, it would be possible for every child in the class to pass in arithmetic and yet be unable to work a sum in compound addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. Although I have not found this occurring in a whole class, I have not infrequently found it hold good for a large proportion of a class. For a school where such results as the above are found a numerical estimate of the passes would make it appear that the teaching was just as good as in one in which every pupil worked all the sums correctly. The same principle may be applied to the other subjects.

Now, one object in examining a school is to reclassify the pupils—that is, to indicate who shall pass and who shall fail—and in deciding this I consider a pupil's work as a whole, allowing good work in one subject to weigh against weak work in another. Thus, of two boys, suppose one obtains five sums correct and the other only three, more allowance for weakness in other subjects would be made to the former than to the latter. The passes having been determined, a general report on the work has to be written, and in so doing I scarcely consider the number of passes, but estimate the quality of the teaching by the quality of the passes, and by the quality of the work in the several subjects. Take, for example, two schools or classes—A and B—each containing, say, twenty pupils. In A seventeen out of the twenty pass, five getting excellent passes, seven getting good or very good passes, and five getting fair passes. In B, eighteen out of the twenty pass, two getting good passes, nine getting fair passes, and seven getting weak or doubtful passes. Now, B gets a better percentage of passes than A, though the work on the whole is much inferior. The teacher of A has educated his pupils, the teacher of B may have crammed his pupils, and some of the subjects may be quite unsatisfactory. With these facts kept in mind one can easily conceive a case where the proportion of passes and the written report on the work may seem contradictory, but a reference to the schedules showing the pupils' work will reconcile the two.

In the pass-subjects steady progress is being made, and the adoption of better and modern methods is producing improved educational results. Indeed, without hesitation I may say that the work done in a few of our schools would do credit to any district, even the most favoured. Such results can be obtained only by continuous effort throughout the year (not "jogging along" in the early part of the year, and cramming-up for examination, as, I am afraid, is too often the case), and by careful and intelligent planning, systematizing, and organizing of the work. In other cases, however, teachers have made little effort to improve the quality of their work; indeed, some seem to think that it is quite unnecessary to keep pace with the times in their methods, and the same faults and defects have to be pointed out year after year. As is the case with every other employment or profession, experts are using their best endeavours to improve the means by which their labours may be rendered more efficient, and methods of teaching are becoming more rational and less empirical. Every detail of method is carefully thought out, criticized, and tested practically, and the teacher who fails to keep himself up to the mark must inevitably prove a failure. I am afraid we have some such in the service, and when lack of ability to control or to teach be added the results to the children are disastrous. These teachers are very good at attributing their non-success to any cause other than their own incompetency, though year after year their results may be unsatisfactory, while other schools, examined under exactly the same conditions, with similar, or it may be the same, cards, do uniformly satisfactory work.

I cannot but speak favourably of the energy, earnestness, and intelligence displayed by many of the younger teachers, some of whom have been comparatively only a short time in responsible positions requiring considerable organizing power in arranging work for several standards, or it may be for all the standards. The pupil-teachers on the whole are doing good work.

Of the class-subjects I cannot speak favourably. Grammar in particular is frequently very unsatisfactory in the upper standards, pupils in Standards V. and VI. being unable to parse the simplest parts of speech.

Though during the past year the progress in some schools has been unsatisfactory, in the district as a whole steady and sound progress has been made. The success of our pupil-teachers at the certificate examinations must be gratifying to the Board, and I am pleased to see that some, while still serving their apprenticeships, have been successful at the matriculation examination.

I have, &c.,

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc.

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Education Board Office, Wanganui, 20th February, 1899.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending 31st December, 1898.

Number of Schools.—At the close of the school-year 132 schools, including two half-time schools in the Ngamatapouri Block, were in active operation, as against 127 at the close of 1897.

Attendance.—The average number of pupils on the rolls during the year, taking one week with another, was 10,454, and the strict average attendance for the year was 8,451, so that 80·8 represents the degree of the regularity of the attendance. This percentage, we are pleased to see, has again improved, by 0·4 for the year; but it is still 2·1 below the mean of the colony. It would probably have been higher had it not been for an outbreak of measles during the December quarter.

Roman Catholic Schools.—The four Roman Catholic Schools in the district were duly examined. 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	68	68	68	18	50
St. Joseph's, Wanganui ...	111	55	51	12	39
Hawera...	90	56	54	8	46
Palmerston North ...	98	59	50	4	46
Totals	367	238	223	42	181

The work of these schools, especially of those in Wanganui, continues to improve. Paper work generally was characterized by extreme neatness, but frequently bore evidence of purely *memoriter* teaching. The oral work, as a rule, pointed to mere instruction, not, as it should, to educative teaching. The manners of the pupils were particularly pleasing.

Inspection.—Recognising as we do the great importance of thorough inspection, we made strenuous efforts to visit all the schools. We were, however, able to overtake only 102, but we unfortunately lost a fortnight early in the year through illness. The preparation of examination-papers for standards, for pupil-teachers, and for scholarships takes up a considerable portion of our time. For standards we make out 112 papers, for pupil-teachers thirty papers, and for scholarships fifteen papers. Then the clerical work necessitated by the various examination returns devolves upon us, and consumes time that surely might be more advantageously spent. It seems absurd that Inspectors should have to spend days transcribing and adding figures, when such work could be done as efficiently by a boy. The schools in the back-country take more time for inspection than their number and average attendance appear to warrant, owing to the long distances they are apart; but we do not on that account like to neglect them. One thing is quite certain: we could not have inspected so many schools did we not work a great deal of overtime at night.

With the methods and quality of instruction seen at our inspection visits we were often very pleased. Many of the sole teachers, especially ex-pupil-teachers, show considerable skill in keeping all classes engaged, and at the same time giving educative oral teaching. Still a few teachers neglect to map out their day's work beforehand, and so much time is wasted. The number of schools at which oral answers are well expressed in statements yearly increases, but still many teachers do themselves too much of the thinking, and give their pupils too much aid. They neglect to get the pupils to give clearly their reasons for certain steps, and to state in their own words explanations given; and they do not generalise the principles applied. While the lessons are carefully prepared and intelligently given, the teaching is not driven home: a brush is used, not a graver. We will write some further remarks on methods under "Instruction."

The attendance registers, diaries, log-books, &c., we generally found at these visits well kept. The exercise-books at several schools were not as carefully marked as they should have been.

Preparatory Classes.—The teaching in the preparatory classes in the majority of schools is very sound, and in some of the larger schools really excellent work is done. In very few schools did we fail to find a class sufficiently advanced to begin the work of Standard I. Multiplication tables were generally well known, but in the addition tables more systematic instruction is needed. Pupils should be thoroughly trained in the addition of numbers involving an advance from a lower group of tens to a higher. Little sums in addition and multiplication were at many schools neatly put down, and accurately worked; while in oral treatment of the same sums the pupils were very ready in saying aloud all the working without any prompting. At some schools the teachers, when using the blackboard for such sums, do too much for their pupils. Reading varied from poor to excellent: it was often far too low in tone. The bad effects of low speaking in reading and oral answering are so self-evident that particular care should be taken that pupils do not form such a habit at the beginning of their school-life. Spelling often was excellent, especially in the schools where the phonic system was well taught. Writing seldom was poor, while it often was excellent. At some schools it might be remembered that what is wanted is a fairly accurate copy of the letters set, not a number of scribbled letters bearing no resemblance to the model given. Object-lessons were taken at the larger schools, but both the matter and the method were generally unsuitable.

Examination of Schools.—The following table summarises the examination results for each standard, and for all standards, in the district, and also shows the average ages of those that passed. The table showing the results of individual schools has not been printed.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Absent.	Failed	Passed	Per Cent. of Passes on		Average Age of those that passed.
						Number presented	Number examined.	
								Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	114	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	472	458	14	50	408	86·4	89·1	14 6
„ V.	823	799	24	204	595	72·3	74·5	13 5
„ IV.	1,380	1,301	79	260	1,041	75·4	80·0	12 7
„ III.	1,509	1,453	56	255	1,198	79·4	82·4	11 6
„ II.	1,353	1,311	42	77	1,234	91·2	94·1	10 3
„ I.	1,366	1,336	30	41	1,295	94·8	96·9	9 1
Preparatory	3,159	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	10,176	6,658	245	887	5,771	83·6	86·7	11 11 (Mean.)

All the schools open for the full twelve months, with the exception of Brunswick, were examined in standards. On the days appointed for the examination in standards there were 10,176 pupils (5,282 boys and 4,894 girls) on the school-rolls. Of these, 6,903 were in Standards I. to VI., 3,159 were in the preparatory classes below Standard I., and 114 had already passed Standard VI.

The number of pupils presented in standards expressed as a percentage of the roll-number (the class above Standard VI. is thrown out of the calculation) is 68·6. This is the highest percentage yet reached in this district, and is 0·4 higher than in 1897. There were 563 children in the preparatory classes who were over eight years of age and were not presented in Standard I. Of these 55 were Maoris, and 328 had not been two years at school. The total number presented in the six standards is 254 higher than in the previous year. In Standard II. there is a decrease of 68, and in Standard III. a decrease of 5; but all the other standards show substantial increases. Standard III. shows the highest number presented—viz., 1,509.

Of the 6,903 pupils presented in the six standards, 6,658, or 96·5 per cent., attended and were examined, and 245 were absent. The prevalence of measles during the last quarter of the year prevented several children from attending the examination. The number of absentees was, as usual, highest in Standard IV. At thirty-nine schools all pupils were present, and at thirty-six schools all pupils but one. In the three schools at Palmerston North, out of 726 pupils presented in standards only ten were absent.

Of the 6,658 pupils examined, 887 failed, and 5,771 satisfied the requirements and were promoted. The number passed is considerably higher than in any former year (483 higher than in 1897), while the number failed is considerably lower (252 lower than in 1897). We do not calculate percentages of passes for individual schools, for they serve no good purpose, and are more often than not misleading to outsiders. The percentages of passes for the district in the various standards, however, are useful for purposes of comparison, and are interesting and instructive; and on comparing those in the foregoing table with similar calculations for the previous year we find a decrease in Standard V. of 0·7, but increases as follows in all the other standards: Standard VI., 12·7; Standard IV., 8·9; Standard III., 3·9; Standard II., 2·7; Standard I., 3·4. That Standard VI. should obtain such a high percentage as 89·1 is very creditable, especially as ninety-five schools were represented, and many of these were staffed by only sole-teachers. Standard V. this year, with a percentage of 74·5, took the lowest place, a position usually occupied hitherto by Standard IV. The percentage of passes for all standards, 86·7, is the highest yet reached in the district, and is 4·4 higher than that of the previous year, which then was the highest. The percentage of passes for the colony in 1897 was 84·6.

It should be mentioned that the pupils in Standard I. and Standard II. were classified by the teachers. In Standards III. to VI., of the 4,011 pupils examined by us we were able to promote 3,242, or 80·8 per cent., an improvement of 5·3 for the year.

The percentage of passes on the total roll-number (inclusive of the 3,159 in the preparatory classes below Standard I.) is 57·4.

The average ages of those pupils passing each standard are very nearly the same as in the previous year. We should state that they are likely to give an incorrect impression of the average ages at the majority of schools, owing to their being raised out of all proportion by the abnormally high ages at a few bush schools.

Instruction.—Little new can be written under this heading; still, a few remarks upon some of the subjects will not be out of place.

Reading, we think, continues to improve slowly, and altogether it is generally as good as can be expected. Certainly "comprehension" has of late been treated more effectively.

The following faults in the treatment of reading have been pointed out at one time or another in former annual reports and at our inspection visits, but, as we still occasionally find them at some schools, it may be well now to draw attention to them again: (1.) Putting on pupils in large classes to read in turn as they stand, and to read paragraph about. This must inevitably cause inattention. Every pupil in the class should feel that he may be called upon at any moment to read. The value of the paragraph cannot well be known if each child reads only one. (2.) Putting on pupils

in consecutive passages, so that each reads a different passage. Emulation is a valuable help in teaching any subject, so pupils should be encouraged to improve upon each other's rendering of the same passage. Children are only too ready to pick holes in each other's work; and if the teacher can turn this little failing of theirs to good account he should do so. A new passage should not be treated until the teacher is satisfied that the pattern set for the previous one has been fairly reproduced. (3.) Neglecting to group the words and phrase them as one does in speaking; or grouping the wrong words, and so slurring final consonants. Even in the preparatory classes words should be grouped from the first, as "A good cook—is worth much—at any house." "John—and James," not "Johnan—James." As the pupils advance in their standards, their reading should show the rhetorical pauses at the logical divisions of the sentence: yet we often hear, "Why did you pause there—there is no stop there?" Grouping of the kind meant is a valuable aid to analysis and synthesis. (4.) Frequent, and often unnecessary, interruptions by the teacher while the pupil is reading. This tends to flurry and disgust the pupils, and so raise an antagonistic spirit, and finally it produces a feeling of irritation all round. We believe that this antagonism between pupils and teacher in the reading-lesson accounts for the fact that some very earnest teachers fail year after year to produce good reading. It is better to leave the corrections until after the passage has been read, except in the case of glaring errors. (5.) Individual attention not secured during simultaneous reading in the lower classes. Simultaneous reading is a valuable method in the hands of a skilful teacher; but when no care is taken to see that every pupil is actually reading the words, and not merely echoing them or saying them by rote, when the model is badly given by the teacher, or badly reproduced by the children, it must do a vast amount of harm. In the preparatory classes all the pupils should be required to point with long pencils, not with fingers, while reading simultaneously. (6.) The blackboard is not used sufficiently for the correction of mistakes. Corrections written on a blackboard are far more effectual and impressive than oral corrections. The spelling of difficult or unknown words should be educed syllable by syllable from the pupils, and written on the blackboard.

In addition to the faults mentioned in the foregoing paragraph one other is occasionally found, and that is—mumbling; but we are glad to be able to say that it is fast disappearing. Also, a very different kind of reading, but not the less deserving of censure, is received at a few schools—viz., a kind of screaming song like a "town-crier's recitative."

Dictation and spelling showed a very decided improvement in the special tests, and at very few schools was the subject poor. On the general papers, however, carelessness was too often in evidence.

The writing in copybooks and on transcription-papers is very satisfactory at many schools, and the papers in general subjects on the examination days were usually well written, and they showed nice arrangement and setting-out of work. On the whole we have a high opinion of the writing in this district; but, while saying this, we must confess to having heard complaints from business-men about our writing on the ground that it is too sprawling. The series of copybooks in use—Vere Foster's—was blamed for this sprawling, and so it has been decided to adopt Collins's Graphic Series. As regards the complaint itself, no doubt some pupils do write wide when they leave school; but, judging from the writing of the large number of clerks we know who have been through our schools during the past fifteen years, the habit soon disappears, and individuality asserts itself. Then, again, it goes without saying that, when writing is being taught, it is better for the letters to have plenty of breathing-space than to be cramped. But, apart from the teacher's aspect of the question, are not complaints such as this one just mentioned founded upon an incorrect view of the aim of our primary-education system? "It does not," in the words of another Inspector, "profess to make experts in any department, yet this is what seems to be expected in every department: the employer who uses mental arithmetic wants an expert, the employer of clerks wants an expert, and so on *ad libitum*. What we hope is that, with the groundwork we give to pupils passing through our best schools, specialisation of practice will produce the expert, but we cannot supply him ready-made." Or, to quote the words of Mr. Payne, Professor of the Science and Art of Education in the College of Preceptors, London, "Although education is to be a preparation for afterlife, yet it is to be a general, not a professional, preparation, and cannot provide for minute or special contingencies. The object of education is to form the man, not the banker; the man, not the lawyer; the man, not the civil engineer."

In arithmetic the general results showed much improvement, though the subject has been for some years one of the best that we examine. We notice that year after year several Inspectors complain that arithmetic is the subject that is most unsuccessfully treated. We are glad that we have no complaint of this sort to make, although we by no means consider, as some appear to do, that arithmetic is the "be all and end all" of the primary-school course.

In Standard VI. failures to work the limit-number of sums for a pass were very rare, while many pupils readily cleared their examination-cards in a reasonably short time. As no pupil was granted a pass for the standard who obtained under 40 per cent. of the possible marks in arithmetic, and as only 10·9 per cent. of the pupils examined failed for the standard, the subject must be considered good on the whole. The improvement for the year was very marked in this class, and no doubt it is partly accounted for by the fact that the sums set were not as difficult as those of the preceding two or three years. Failure was most frequent in sums in the metric system, and this perhaps was only natural, because for some years hardly any sums have been set in it.

In Standard V. the work was disappointing, and this was the weakest class in arithmetic. Errors were frequent in simplification of fractions, easy percentage calculations, and interest sums requiring time or principal. We think the finding of principal might well be left for candidates for Standard VI. It should be mentioned that the sums set for this standard were relatively more difficult than those set for the higher standard.

In Standard IV. improvement was quite as marked as in Standard VI., and at many schools very fine work was done. Feilding School is especially deserving of mention, for of 40 pupils examined in the standard, 34, or 85 per cent., worked all the sums correctly, 5 pupils had only one sum wrong, and 1 pupil had two sums wrong; or, to put the result in another way, out of a possible 200 sums correct, only 7 were wrong. This is a very fine performance; and when it is remembered that all the members of a class of the same number of pupils might have passed with 120 sums right (110 sums right, supposing half the class to have been girls), and that this class had 293 sums right, it will be seen how fallacious a mere percentage of passes is for estimating the comparative quality of the work of different classes or schools. A margin of 73 sums in 200 would point to a vast difference in the efficiency of the teaching of the two classes, yet percentages of passes alone would show 100 per cent. in each class. Bills of parcels this year we were pleased to find worked more accurately than usual.

In Standard III. the work varied very much. At a few schools, notably Feilding, it was excellent; at a few it ranged from bad to inferior; and at quite a large number there were far too many pupils who just worked correctly only the bare limit of sums to qualify for a pass. But a better record than this might well have been expected, especially considering the simplicity of the questions set by the department. We are of opinion that the examination-cards were too easy to be a fair test of the requirements of the syllabus for this standard; and hence we were the more disappointed with the quality of the work received. For instance, although the course of instruction is supposed to cover advanced numeration and notation, simple long multiplication, simple long division, and the four money rules, on many of the cards a pupil could gain by the regulations a limit pass in arithmetic without attempting a money sum. Now, there can be no doubt that it is especially desirable that passes in arithmetic in this standard should be particularly strong, considering the amount of new work that has to be overtaken in Standard IV., and so we think the test set should be a searching one. But the strange part of it is that though the tests set by the department during the past few years for this particular standard have been much easier than those set by us when the work was in the hands of the Inspectors (the tests in Standard V. have always been more difficult, and also those in Standard VI. until this last year), the quality of the arithmetic in this standard has undoubtedly very much deteriorated. The question then arises, Why is this so? Well, perhaps, the "If you wish to hit high you must aim high" theory has something to do with it. The very simplicity of the questions often seemed to be the cause of bringing pupils to grief, though this should not have been so had the teaching been thorough. But undoubtedly the chief reason for the falling-off lies in this: that many teachers, since the classification of the pupils in the two lowest standards was placed in their hands, have promoted Standard II. pupils who failed badly in arithmetic to Standard III.; while when the classification rested with the Inspectors we invariably refused a pass to a Standard II. candidate if he failed to obtain 40 per cent. of the possible marks in arithmetic. At the last examinations some pupils in Standard II. who failed with us in every sum out of six, and several who were correct in only one sum, were promoted to Standard III. by the teachers. Now it is surely evident that such pupils cannot do credit to Standard III. at their next examination. It is this leniency on the part of the teachers in passing pupils in Standard II. that accounts for Standard III. having for the past few years the highest roll-number, for those that should not have been promoted almost invariably spend two years in Standard III. Teachers might note that over one-third of the pupils examined failed in numeration and notation. Now, these should be kept up almost daily, as by invariably requiring pupils to read and write their answers in words, and to put down in figures numbers dictated in words. Then, again, problems in the simple rules generally brought to light wrong methods. Thus, in "What must —— be multiplied by to produce ——?" multiplication was employed; and in "What must —— be divided by to produce ——?" division was employed. But we think that it is only natural, however sound the teaching, that such young pupils as are in Standard III. should make mistakes like these, especially considering the prominence of the words "multiplied" and "divided." Furthermore, we are of opinion that a teacher's time would be better employed in obtaining quick and accurate working in purely mechanical sums of reasonable length in addition, multiplication, &c., rather than in getting such young pupils as are found in Standard III. to grasp the rationale of such problems as these mentioned, even though they involve only a few figures. No doubt some will say, if multiplication or division has been intelligently taught, it is as easy to find one term as another. This, no doubt, sounds very nice, and is all very well in theory; but ask the practical teacher how much time he has to give to such work before he can obtain any compensating results, and see what he will say. Children are only children after all; and perhaps the fact that sums of a similar description are not considered beneath the intelligence of a candidate for a teacher's certificate may speak in their favour. It appears to us that Standard III. is above all the standard in which accuracy should be aimed at, if a teacher is to have any success or comfort in treating the advanced rules with his upper standards; hence we would respectfully suggest that in future the test set for this standard should involve more purely mechanical work of some length.

In Standard II. the work on the whole was good, though the quality of the passes, and the style of the figuring and setting-out, varied considerably. It is worthy of note that schools with an average of, say, fifty to eighty pupils generally did superior work to the largest schools. In the former it was quite a common experience to find the majority of pupils, and sometimes all the pupils, working every sum correctly. At many schools pupils readily proved their sums, and in proving multiplication by factors showed a sound knowledge of Standard III. long multiplication. Subtraction generally was the weakest rule, and inability to recognise whether multiplication or division should be used in sums expressed on the cards in words was again in evidence.

In Standard I. the majority of the schools did fine work. At many schools the pupils showed considerable skill in setting-out in logical style little problems; at some the explanatory writing in such sums, which we invariably require, was omitted. Failure was, as usual, most frequent in numeration and notation.

In Standards III. to VI. the arithmetic was done on foolscap, and we are very pleased to be able to state that at the majority of schools the quality of the work as regards neatness, good figuring and arrangement, nice setting-out and ruling-off of answers, and logical setting-out of the steps in problems was very good, while in some schools it could not have been surpassed. Our teachers are deserving of much credit in this respect. Also the slate-work in Standards I. and II. was generally characterized by neatness and good figuring and arrangement.

Mental arithmetic showed a decided improvement during the year, but there is still much to be desired at many schools. At small schools a teacher has so many classes in reading and other oral lessons that it is difficult for him to find time for the actual teaching necessary to produce good results in mental arithmetic, and so the lesson in the subject frequently degenerates into a mere setting of sums on a blackboard, with a few cursory questions later on. The common practice in slate arithmetic of using the pencil in making the simplest calculations, as farthings to pence, pence to shillings, and shillings to pounds, must have a prejudicial effect upon mental arithmetic.

In geography the work varied very much. We are pleased to note an improvement on the whole, but in many schools this subject still remains unsatisfactory in the higher standards. We think failure to produce good results is in many cases due to loose methods of revising. While the prescribed work is being gone over for the first time, the lessons may be well arranged, and be made interesting; but, in revising, the memory is wearied with tiresome reiterations in the same beaten tracks. Then the teaching takes the form of cram. But such need not be; for the facts in geography can be presented in so many different ways of relation to each other that revisal lessons can be made interesting, as well as a training in applying knowledge already acquired. In this connection we would strongly advise the frequent drawing of sketch-maps on the blackboard. For example, the teacher would show a range of mountains to represent the Himalayas; and then he would mark in and name, with the aid of his pupils, the rivers rising from its slopes, the adjacent countries, mountains, &c. This example is suggested by the poor answers received to one of our Standard VI. questions, viz., "Name the rivers whose sources are in Thibet." There is no doubt that at many schools there is too little map-study and map-drawing, while there is too much dreary grind at text-books. And one thing that leads to this unsatisfactory treatment is, that maps of New Zealand only are prescribed for examination, and even these only in Standards IV. and V. We should say that the outlines of the maps received of the North Island and South Island were at many schools excellent, but knowledge of features and spelling of names were too often inferior. Misspelling of names is a bad fault, for it points to a most reprehensible want of thoroughness in the teaching.

Another cause of failure in geography in the higher standards is, we think, the inability of pupils to form a mental picture of some desired part of the globe. This inability is the more surprising to us when we think of the fine work in this connection we so often get in Standards II. and III. "Name the most important seas connected with the ———— Ocean," was often very badly answered, often not attempted, by Standard IV. pupils; but such a question requires knowledge of merely Standard II. requirements. In a word, questions in geography which require some mental effort on the part of the pupil to determine what are to be the salient features of his answer, —questions, in fact, which do not baldly ask what or where are so-and-so,—are almost invariably badly treated.

Then, again, if the requirements of the syllabus for the higher standards were defined more clearly in detail, no doubt we would obtain better results. When we find the majority (sometimes all) of the members of class after class unable to write anything about Gobi, or Pamir, or Deccan, or Magellan—when we find pupils unable to state in what countries Glasgow, Bremen, Buenos Ayres, and suchlike are situated—we must come to the conclusion that for some teachers at all events the wording of the syllabus—"conspicuous geographical features of continents," and "great ports"—is not clear enough. We may say here that no name that is not to be found in the text-books recommended by us for use in the schools appeared on any of our examination-cards. We should like to see the work of Standard IV. lightened. At present the requirements are very varied and extensive; while some of them, to admit of intelligent treatment, require more power of thought than can reasonably be expected from such young pupils.

Physical geography in Standards V. and VI. was, as usual, generally poor. The answers on "the globe" and on "climate" were particularly disappointing. The "text-book grind" before referred to was here much in evidence, and we obtained some beautifully-worded answers that had a familiar ring about them: unfortunately they were lacking in one important essential, for they had nothing whatever to do with the questions.

In Standard III. good to excellent work was received at most schools. The prescribed rivers and mountains we always took orally: on the whole they were well known, and it was nothing unusual to find every pupil in a large class answering every question in five to ten rounds, and voluntarily giving many rivers and mountains outside those prescribed. But this has been the case for some years in Standard III.; yet the pupils, when they reach Standards IV., V., and VI., fail to write answers to questions concerning the same rivers and mountains. The towns of New Zealand were generally well prepared. The prescribed countries and colonies, with their capitals, we had written on slates: these generally were well known, but the spelling too often was inferior. Standard II. pupils made a fine appearance in their work at the majority of schools. Sometimes the definitions, sometimes the oceans and seas, were not well known, but very few classes failed in both.

Before leaving this subject we should like to say that we are of the opinion we could obtain more intelligent and useful work in the higher standards in geography if we could examine some of the branches orally, and therefore we again recommend that geography be placed in the class-subject group. Geography especially lends itself to oral examination; but as long as it is a pass-subject the examination in Standards IV., V., and VI. must be a written one. There is no doubt that, as

the Otago Inspectors point out, geography is *the* cram subject of the syllabus; and, do what we will, we find ourselves powerless to stop this cramming by means of a written examination, especially as we are debarred from demanding a map of any country but New Zealand.

Drawing generally is a satisfactory subject. Most of our teachers appear to find no difficulty with it, and for this, no doubt, we are largely indebted to the Technical School in Wanganui. In freehand drawing we still have sometimes to complain of unlawful aids being used. Standard IV. geometry showed improvement, though at too many schools it is yet below the mark. Standard V. scale drawing was often really excellent.

Composition is by no means as strong as we should like. In Standard III. the little exercises were often very creditable. In Standard IV. the letter-writing was very fair at a number of schools, but combining of sentences was seldom well done. In Standard V. and Standard VI. the subjects treated in the letters varied very much in difficulty at different schools, and frequently the composition was purely a feat of memory. The number of subjects on the list presented to us for the year's work was often far too small, while some teachers were not prepared with any list.

In this subject we are of opinion that there is still on the part of many teachers too much of a tendency to have recourse to "reproduction" in one or other of its various disguises; and for this some of the popular text-books no doubt are partly responsible. But reproduction, although it may be, if well handled, a useful exercise for occasional practice, can hardly be called true composition at all; for the child with the best verbal memory, and the least originality, does the best work. Original work, however crude, must be intellectually superior. In educating in written composition we should, as in other subjects, be guided by Nature's teaching. A child should be trained to use his own materials, to reproduce his own familiar talk, to write of the things he has seen with his own eyes and felt with his own hands. No matter how awkward and clumsy may be the structure he raises, still it is something put together by himself after his own fashion, and with materials of his own collection.

Paraphrasing in Standards V. and VI. seldom was good, while at many schools it was very poor, and at some ludicrously senseless. Pupil-teachers and candidates for scholarships, also, seldom showed any power in dealing with paraphrasing. But weakness in this branch of the work is much to be regretted, for, as Inspector Petrie points out, to give in other language the sense of a passage of verse constitutes a fine test of intelligence and insight; and our teachers should do all in their power to train their more advanced pupils in the acquiring of the width of understanding, the sympathy, and the imagination that are necessary to cope with this exercise. We sometimes found paraphrasing confused with explanation.

Another requirement that was badly treated in the higher classes was the changing of phrases into clauses, and *vice versâ*.

Grammar continues to be more or less unsatisfactory above Standard III. at many schools, while at a few schools the subject was particularly bad. In Standard III. it was often good to excellent, and seldom poor. In Standard IV. we sometimes received good work, but, as a rule, the pupils broke down when some thought was required. In Standard V. and Standard VI. the analysis and the parsing were evidently more often than not the outcome of pure guesswork; while in correction of false grammar, the rules and the examples given exactly contradicted each other. An illustration of the kind of work received in analysis will not be out of place. Of ten pupils in the same class five were asked to analyse, "The cowardly thief kicked the unfortunate policeman," and five "Three children had Tom Long, the smith"; and what was the result? The parts in the same order as they appear in both sentences were called "subject," "predicate," "object." But this is another example of the "text-book grind" referred to before under "Geography," and of course points to defects in teaching; and for such defects both the text-books and the syllabus are partly responsible.

First, as regards the text-books. It is not sufficiently emphasized in them that the consideration of the functions of words is the only true guide to their classification under the parts of speech; and that the names of phrases, clauses, and sentences should be judged upon the same basis. The more modern books certainly have improved in this respect, but they are too loose in their treatment. For instance, the child is told in one line that "The verb is a telling word," in the next that "The adjective tells what sort, &c.," and in the next that "The adverb tells how, when, or where." Now, why should not the adjective and the adverb have their own exclusive technical terms—viz., "limiting, describing, or modifying"? Then we could have generally—(1) The naming word, (2) the telling or stating word, (3) the limiting word of (1), (4) the limiting word of (2), (5) the connecting word of sentences, (6) the connecting and governing word of words. Then, again, the text-books generally disregard synthesis, and give examples in analysis merely for its own sake, in place of for the sake of guiding pupils in phrase-arrangement and clause-arrangement—in the requirements of composition, in fact. Many teachers err in this respect.

Secondly, as regards the syllabus. Well, some of the foregoing remarks apply equally as well to the syllabus as to the text-books. There is no need to go into detail here, for this was done during the year in reply to a request from the Education Department that we should express our views on the subject under discussion. We shall, therefore, now merely state that the syllabus does not, by its requirements, clearly indicate what we think goes without saying—that all the teaching of grammar in elementary schools should be based upon what is most suitable for obtaining sound composition. We are of opinion that the treatment of the structure of the sentence and the logical relation of its parts is left until too late in the child's school-life; and that, even when it does find a place in the two highest standards, it is such a subordinate one to mere classification as to be almost useless. Grammar would be a more educative subject than it is at present, and would take a higher place in public estimation, if the requirements paid more attention to the securing of good composition, and less to "gerund grinding." Then, the fact of grammar being placed by the syllabus in the class-subject group will always militate against really good treatment; and this is

only natural as long as a "pass" depends on subjects of which grammar is not one. When complaining to teachers of poor work in grammar, we have from some received the reply, "I know it is, but then it is only a class-subject"; from others, "I know it is, but I can't find time enough for it."

Some remarks with regard to "methods of teaching" were made by us under the subject "Reading," and a few now in the same direction under this subject will not be out of place. Some inexperienced teachers, we noticed at our inspection visits, put the cart before the horse, so to speak; they required words, phrases, and clauses to be classified before the functions of such were investigated. But, as we have already pointed out, such is quite the wrong order of procedure. In this connection an amusing example of the difficulty of breaking bad habits came under our notice several times: we saw papers ruled carefully in three vertical columns headed as required—"Word," "Function," "Part of Speech"; but it was the first and the third columns that were filled in, while the pupils were scratching their heads in a vain endeavour to elucidate what on earth was to go in the second column! It is this kind of thing that leads to the difficulty Standard IV. pupils—and Standards V. and VI. pupils, for that matter—find with the "fors," "buts," "thats," &c.

But failure in grammar was almost quite as frequent with our experienced and most earnest teachers as with our inexperienced and easy-going ones; and for this we think that the following, in addition to reasons before mentioned, is responsible: Too much reliance is placed upon the deductive method of teaching, rather than upon the inductive. In passing, we may say this remark applies to the treatment of arithmetic also. The pupils are required to learn rules by heart, and then to apply them deductively. But, as only that which is understood should be committed to memory, and as the pupil should be led to teach himself rather than to receive anything on his teacher's authority, we should put in a plea for the following method: Let the teacher proceed from the concrete to the abstract, from the particular to the general, from what is familiar to what is strange, giving some knowledge of the thing itself before the rule that refers to it; let him employ his pupils in analysing matter put before them, rather than in working synthetically according to precept; let him elicit the rule by comparison of familiar examples, and so establish it inductively. And this method is particularly easy of application in teaching the pupil his own language; for he is already familiar with examples of inflexion in number, comparison, &c.: in a "dead" language, of course, it would be different.

Another very noticeable feature in oral lessons in grammar (and in arithmetic also) was the inability of pupils to go through their work without a great deal of help from their teachers. Numbers of questions have to be put to elicit points that well-trained pupils would give as a matter of course; and so during a lesson not only is little work got through, but the little that is tends in a harmful rather than in an educative direction. "All the best cultivation of a child's mind," says Dr. Temple, "is obtained by the child's own exertions, and the master's success may be measured by the degree in which he can bring his scholars to make such exertions absolutely without aid." "I try to make myself useless to my pupils," was an eminent French teacher's terse but pithy way of expressing the same idea.

History continues to be a very weak subject. In Standard III. we frequently found it had been intelligently treated, and at some schools the pupils in this class took the greatest delight in the examination of the subject. In the higher standards it would appear that the method most in favour is to have dry summaries and catalogues of names and dates committed to memory: yet often even these were not known, and it was nothing unusual to find Julius Cæsar and William the Conqueror changing places, or Marlborough and Wellington. We were often surprised at the weakness in Standards V. and VI. at some of the large schools. It was amusing, but at the same time annoying, to find how pupils had learnt by heart answers from note-books, and could not be stopped until they had repeated them to the last word, like a town-crier over an auction-sale. The fact is that the general present treatment of history, with a view to examination, is calculated to create in the ordinary child a feeling of disgust for the subject that will endure with him for a lifetime. Now, there is a fundamental principle of teaching that it is not so much the thing taught as the manner of teaching it that constitutes its value to the pupil. But history cannot be taught well in many of our schools where one or two teachers have so many subjects and so many standards to look after. We should, therefore, be in favour of abolishing history, for examination purposes, from Standards III. and IV. in all schools, and from all standards in small schools, and of treating it in the other schools by reading-lessons from an Historical Reader.

Science and Object-lessons.—The number of schools at which elementary science is well taught yearly increases. Agricultural chemistry (Blackie) appears to be popular, except in the third year's course. In physiology too much attention is paid to the "dry bones" of the subject, and not enough to "function," pupils being wearied with names which even adults would know to-day and forget to-morrow, to say nothing of the fact that a knowledge of these names is of no educative value. In botany, also, *names* were much in evidence, but not *things* or specimens—a common mistake in our teaching in many subjects, and one that accounts for such answers as, "Carbon is a gas."

Object-lesson teaching shows little improvement, many teachers plainly evincing quite a dislike to it; yet no lesson can compete successfully with a well-conducted object-lesson in sustaining the interest of a class. At quite a large number of schools the treatment is at fault in paying more attention to processes of manufacture and the like, which as often as not are above the grasp of the class, than to the actual properties of the object itself, which could easily be educed by a proper guiding of the children's senses. Again, at many schools too few lessons were given, or shown in the note-books as given, during the year—some ten or twelve, for instance, though the time-table allowed for two lessons per week. Going over the same lesson several times until it is learnt by heart is not object-lesson teaching; and, be it noted, such a system invariably breaks down in its results on the examination day. Yet one other matter: We sometimes noticed,

when object-lessons were being given before us, that nothing was more conspicuous than the absence of the objects themselves. But the teacher should have not only several samples of the object being treated for handing round the class, but also any other objects required for comparison and illustration. For example, when he is educing "porosity" in chalk by letting the children see the bubbles rise when the chalk sinks in a glass of water, specimens of sponge, pumice, sugar, &c., also should be available. It is, therefore, very desirable that there should be in every school a case (with glass front) with numerous specimens in it ready for instant use.

The old fault of telling too much is still in evidence in much of the science and object teaching. But, as a celebrated educationalist puts it, we notice that Nature, who makes her pupil teach himself, gives no explanations of this kind. She does not explain the difference between hard and soft objects—she says, Feel them; between this and that fact—she says, Place them side by side, and mark the difference yourself; and generally she says to her pupil, Don't ask me to tell you anything that you can find out for yourself. Science-teaching, then, in a few words, consists in bringing the pupil's mind into direct contact with facts—in getting him to investigate, discover, and invent for himself. Its only basis is the method of investigation.

We have now been far more diffuse than we intended with regard to some of the subjects of instruction, and trust we have not been wearisome. Our excuse, if any be needed, is—the readiness and skill with which many teachers adopted and carried out suggestions we were privileged to give them in former reports encouraged us to once more try and be of some service in this respect.

Discipline.—The discipline at the majority of the schools is very satisfactory indeed, and is creditable to the community as well as to the teachers. Manners generally to us are very pleasing in the school, in the playground, and in the street. At some small schools we found pupils, when once outside their class-rooms, deficient in politeness; and teachers might attend to this, for it arises simply from want of a little training, and not from any wish to offend against good taste.

In conclusion, sir, we must bear testimony to the fact that the Board's teachers, as a body, are most painstaking and zealous in the discharge of their duties. Methods of treatment are improving year by year, and good methods are more general; as a natural consequence, not only is the number of passes increasing, but also—and this is of far more importance—the pupils are receiving a sounder education, in the highest sense of the word, than formerly. Few teachers now are uncertificated, and all but two of those who are have charge of very small schools. At the departmental examinations several pupil-teachers and ex-pupil-teachers obtained their certificates in the E Class, or promotion to the D Class, some with honourable mention in various subjects. University distinctions, also, were obtained by some teachers who had few advantages in the way of outside assistance. We are very pleased indeed to find our teachers so eager to obtain higher certificates, and therefore we hope we shall not be misunderstood if we conclude with this one note of warning to them: "Do not, on account of mere certificates or academical distinctions you may hold, blindly give yourselves up to that egregious *non sequitur*, 'I know; therefore I can teach what I know'—one of the most remarkable educational fallacies that ever blinded the eyes of sensible men, and yet one commonly found amongst the general public. Rather remember that teaching is a profession in itself; that it is a psychological art—an art which, beyond most others, requires peculiar knowledge, experience, and tact; and that therefore he who would be a teacher must for ever be a learner."

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, 28th February, 1899.

We have the honour to report on the working of the primary State schools of the Wellington Education District for the year 1898.

We have examined 132 schools, being all in operation at the time of our visit to their locality; but, owing to pressure of work, we have not been able to inspect more than about one-fourth of them. At the time of the examinations the number of children on the books was 14,684, an increase on last year's roll of 490, which is slightly below a normal increase, those for the two previous years being 506 and 402 for 1897 and 1896 respectively.

The following table shows the standard passes compared with those of the previous year:—

	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
1897	1639	1684	1588	1407	1080	709
1898	1651	1731	1688	1539	1072	819

Besides these there were 420 pupils in the schools who had previously passed Standard VI., the number for the year before being 392. We notice that the numbers in Standards I., II., and V. remain fairly constant, with a marked increase in the higher Standards III., IV., VI., and the class above Standard VI.; and this we consider in itself a very satisfactory result. The total number of passes made, 8,500, is 89 per cent. on the number examined in standards, or 2 per cent. higher than last year, and 5 per cent. higher than in the previous year. From this point of view also the results are satisfactory. The present high proportion of passes is again

mainly due to the exceedingly good work of the large schools of Class A* of the appendix to this report; for these schools include fully one-half of all the candidates of the district presented for examination, of whom 94 per cent. passed. The thirty-three schools of Class B† also contributed in a fair degree to this result, for they proved quite self-reliant, and scored a total return of 90 per cent. of passes.

It should be noted that the average age at which children now pass the several standards remains fairly constant as compared with last year. Assuming eight as the age for Standard I., nine for Standard II., and so on, the average age at which standards are now passed is from nine to eleven months above that normal age. Now, as many brighter children, whose attendance is regular, pass the standards at least six months under the specified age, and as there appears no difficulty in children of average ability and good attendance passing at the normal age, it follows there are yet very many irregular children who fail to reap the full advantage of the present State system of education. If the system were as compulsory in practice as it is in theory, then the average age at which the standards could be passed would be lowered by at least six months; and this would probably mean that every child of the irregular class would reach a standard higher than that now attained.

The truant officer is doing much-needed and useful work in compelling neglectful parents to do their duty in at least some degree. His ministrations no doubt have a far-reaching effect in maintaining a better attendance on the part of others; and yet there is a widespread feeling of indifference as to the value of school-time, to which so many parents lend themselves, with the result that the irregular attendance of a section of any class is a constant drawback to its progress.

We find that the more essential parts of the school course, the pass-subjects, are for the most part very satisfactorily taught, and more especially in schools and classes under experienced teachers. The quality of the reading and writing is fully maintained; composition and spelling show improvement in many schools; arithmetic and drawing give still greater satisfaction; and geography is admirably taught in the best schools. Geography varies much in value, according to the way in which it is taught. We do not find that the dry bones of some geographical text-books now in use afford any intellectual pabulum; and we have all along discountenanced the old-time plan of cramming with mere names of localities, a method never attempted in the best schools. Then, again, at times both examiners and teachers fail to see that it is the importance of a place from any given local standpoint which makes its name worth memory-room. Thus there is every excuse for a boy in an English school or even one in a Dunedin school not knowing where Ngahauranga is, but that excuse can hardly be extended to a Wellington school-boy. Everything in political geography is a question of degree of importance; and, measured by such a standard, we are generally satisfied with what is known; and in many cases we have been highly pleased, for again and again we have met with classes in which it was difficult to puzzle children with fair questions. Moreover, in one-half of our best schools a wide range of physical geography is successfully covered, including such elementary knowledge of physiography as is necessary to explain the causes of ordinary natural phenomena.

Referring to our notes on the class-subjects, we find that grammar and mental arithmetic continue to receive more moderate marks than the other subjects. The successful treatment of these subjects certainly indicates skill on the part of the teacher and the exercise of trained thought on the part of the pupil. It is more than probable that under a system of free classification such as we advocated in our last report these subjects would deservedly get more consideration. The teaching of history year by year becomes more satisfactory, and the new class-books, such as the "Victorian Era" are more suitable. It is a subject of which too much cannot be expected of children of tender age; but in Standards V. and VI. we have generally found an intelligent and satisfactory knowledge of the period studied.

Science instruction year by year becomes more comprehensively taught, more experimentally illustrated, and more appreciated by the pupils. A great feature of the year has been the establishment of cookery classes as a part of the domestic-economy programme. These classes are taken by two specially trained teachers at Wellington, Masterton, and Pahiatua as centres; and at present fifteen large schools and a few smaller ones benefit by the instruction. As classes are also held on Saturdays for teachers, the work will soon be extended to other schools.

Certain alterations have lately been made in scholarship work, and it may be found necessary during the coming year to revise our existing science programme by separating physiology from domestic economy, and also amending the chemistry syllabus by way of compensation. In this, as well as in drill, and in many other matters pertaining to the interpretation of the syllabus, the time has now come when the whole colony should be put on the same footing, and the plan of work fully defined by the Education Department.

Touching the additional subjects, recitation is nearly always prepared and said with fair taste and expression; and in many schools it is an interesting feature of the work. In the lower standards the pieces selected are sometimes too difficult of comprehension, and for Standard I. and infant classes we prefer nursery rhymes and ditties. In all standards selections might be made from books not in the hands of the children, as such a selection imparts freshness to the exercise. In many schools this is now done.

In the past year the subject of drill has been much discussed; and suggestions were made by us to the Board recommending the adoption of company drill, which might develop into battalion drill on the lines now adopted in New South Wales. This proposal at first found much favour; but imaginary difficulties presented themselves, and other considerations prevailed for a time, the upshot being the appointment of a drill-instructor whose duty it will be to form companies and extend the system on military lines much in accordance with the original suggestions. In the discussion, injustice was done to the existing work, for it was assumed that the present

* Eleven schools, each presenting 300 or more. † Twenty-one schools, each presenting from 100 to 300 children.

instruction was to be set aside, whereas that of the sergeants sent by the Defence Force is admirable; cadet corps in uniform have been in existence for years; also, pole and indian-club and Swedish drill will still be retained for the instruction of girls and junior classes. All that is wanted is the extended formation of companies on uniform lines under competent supervision; and this can soon be accomplished. Other adjuncts, which appeared as a part of the original proposal, will follow. We hope the Defence Department will continue the valuable assistance hitherto so much appreciated.

The issue of diplomas, for the first time this year, to teachers who pass a satisfactory examination in ability to teach singing, as well as in the theory of music, is calculated to have a good effect on the teaching of singing in schools, and to form a useful stimulant in maintaining interest in the work of the instruction classes for teachers. Mr. Parker's work continues to be in greater evidence in the improved instruction in the schools, both in the quality of the singing and in the increased number of class-teachers capable of giving instruction. In many schools newer and brighter songs have been introduced, and most of the larger schools are provided with a piano, generally purchased by the School Committees with funds raised by subscriptions or by entertainments.

Sewing is making satisfactory progress, and nearly all schools now teach the making of small dresses and work in wool in addition to plain sewing. The plan is also adopted of giving a moderate amount of varied work in small garments instead of the old-time plan of much work in large garments. The sewing of any small school or of any particular class in a large school depends on the skill of the teacher. Of course this remark may be made with some truth in regard to any subject, for much of all learning is imitation; but it holds with greater force in regard to sewing.

There are two important columns in the appendix to this report, one under the heading "Order and Discipline," and the other "Manners"; and in these columns we have differentiated the schools as fairly as we can at present, for we recognise both the desirability of doing this more thoroughly and the difficulty of making a just distinction. Now that, with the additional assistance, more time can be given to inspection, when there is more opportunity of observing these features of a school, we hope to make a closer discrimination. It is sometimes said, often on slender evidence, and as a reproach to our national system of education, that, while good instruction is imparted in reading and writing and generally in the attainment of knowledge, the teaching of manners is sadly neglected. Speaking generally, we think teachers deserve the sympathy of the public for the pains taken to correct the faults of their pupils; but in large mixed schools almost insuperable difficulties sometimes arise in bringing under proper control children who are either altogether neglected at home or subjected to counteracting influences.

In these days, when consumption and all forms of tuberculosis are known to be transmitted by matter given off from others, it becomes imperative upon all connected with the management of schools to safeguard as far as possible the health of children at school, for where many congregate the danger is great. Therefore the duties of teachers in this respect are onerous; and almost daily vigilance should be exercised. In the buildings erected of late years due attention has been paid to sanitation; but, for all that, much supervision is needed. On the whole we are persuaded that due attention is paid to cleanliness and the abatement of nuisances as commonly understood, and yet much more could be done in what are ordinarily considered matters of less importance—such as by burning all waste-paper, rubbish and litter, instead of throwing it into pits and waste places, in the use of wet rags for cleaning slates, in the substitution of paper as much as possible for slates, in the suppression of expectoration in public places, and in the airing of rooms before and after school. Most important of all are the frequent use of dry earth in offices and the periodic disinfection of rooms after school.

Reporting on the several classes of schools, we note that all the eleven largest, averaging 630 children, in Class A, are in a very satisfactory condition. Except in one there were no weak classes, and the best classes in all of them did very commendable work.

We notice also that all the twenty-one schools, averaging 156 pupils, in Class B were under experienced teachers, that during the past year no change has occurred in the head-ship of any of them, that the results everywhere gave satisfaction, and that commendable work was done in all but one or two below average merit.

In Class C are twenty-nine schools, with an average of sixty-three ppuils, some taught by three teachers, but most of them by two. In two or three of them some of the work was moderate; in the rest good work was done, and we commended ten of them. In these schools there had been no change during the year in the head-teachers.

But when we examine the results of the fifty-five schools in Class D, averaging twenty-eight pupils, and under one teacher, we find many changes have occurred in the management—some are new schools, and others are under the control of teachers who have much to learn. Although many of them are in good hands, the standards were passed by only 82 per cent. of those examined, showing that the results in the weaker schools must be low. There is danger of these smaller schools falling off in efficiency, and the best remedy for this is in the most careful and discriminate selection of teachers to fill vacancies.

In Class E are thirteen aided schools, all but two of which are of recent institution. Some of them are under unqualified teachers; others are working under more satisfactory conditions. One of them, Waingawa, has been established over twenty years, during the whole of which time it has produced some of the best freehand drawing in the district.

In the infant schools and in the infant departments of the larger schools we notice considerable extension of the kindergarten system, especially in musical drill. At Mount Cook and Thorndon funds are annually collected for the purchase of new material, which is most useful in supplying fresh and attractive occupations. Basket-work on industrial lines is the newest and best occupation introduced; but the use of small ball-frames by each child for learning to count,

and of boxes of letters (over sixty in number) by each child for learning to build words, also afford excellent occupation. We have recommended many teachers in infant departments of small schools to seek an opportunity, with the permission of the school authorities, of visiting a city school when at work. This is more necessary in cases where the teacher has not previously taught in an infant school. In the city infant schools proper, as distinguished from infant departments, we should like to see some improvement in the First Standard class reading and spelling, for it is noticeable that those lately promoted are not quite up to the average standard of children in the best schools. In Longmans' "Ship" series there is now published an introductory Reader to Standard I., which we recommend as a fourth book to be used before Standard I. Reader.

Of late years many teachers show much taste in the wall-furnishing of the class-rooms, which is now a great feature in modern schools. Sometimes, instead of mounted pictures and tasteful illustrations, a huge quantity of small pictures—the details of which cannot be made out—tradesmen's advertisements, and other odds and ends are tacked on the walls. It is now well understood that the few maps required should be labelled and placed on racks and not hung on the walls to fade, and that the pictures, nicely mounted, should illustrate history, nature, or some incident pointing a moral or affording a good subject for composition. Nothing is sweeter in a room than fresh flowers supplied all the year round, but not profusely—say, a few on each teacher's table or mantelpiece. The mounting on walls of exercises in writing and drawing might be retained with advantage.

We beg to call the attention of the Board to our last report, and also to our report on the late pupil-teacher examination, as touching upon the question of supply of teachers. We still think undue stress is put upon our young teachers assisting in large schools, and that the appointment of supernumerary pupil-teachers in these schools would afford much-needed relief from over-pressure, be a means of improving the education of the teachers themselves, and overcome the difficulty now existing of finding temporary relieving teachers. On a full supply, the best selection, and the facilities afforded for the self-improvement and instruction of pupil-teachers the whole good work of the elementary classes in the schools depends; and it is in these matters that our system is much behind the order of things recently inaugurated in the Mother-country.

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.
Class above Standard VI.	420	...	...	...
Standard VI.	961	943	819	13 11
" V.	1,366	1,327	1,072	12 10
" IV.	1,828	1,772	1,539	11 11
" III.	2,005	1,964	1,688	10 9
" II.	1,871	1,833	1,731	9 8
" I.	1,704	1,694	1,651	8 9
Preparatory	4,529	...	...	...
Totals	14,684	9,533	8,500	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,— Inspector's Office, Napier, 10th February, 1899.

I have the honour to submit a summary report on the work of the schools for the year ended the 31st December, 1898.

At the beginning of the year sixty-seven schools were in operation, and at the close seventy were working under Board management. The three additional schools are situated—one at Whetukura, a bush settlement seven miles or so eastward from Ormondville; one at Elsthorpe, a Government settlement a few miles coastwards from Patangata; and one at Tokomaru Bay, seventy miles to the north of Gisborne. As yet the new schools are of small size, but they supply wants of settlers in outlying districts, where, remote from towns, they carry on their arduous labours of bushfelling and the breaking-in of rough fern lands.

The recent publication by the Board of amended school boundaries and the establishment of a number of new school districts is, it appears to me, a wise course to adopt. I have long held the view that the granting of a certain amount of educational authority to the people of every district where a school is established tends to foster self-reliance and emulation among the people, and though at times the "village Hampdens" air their educational views apparently to the detriment of the end they usually have in view, I do not think that, on the whole, the results have either been prejudicial to teachers or to education.

Two hundred and six teachers are engaged in the Board schools, classed as principal or head teachers, assistants, and pupil-teachers. With one or two unimportant exceptions, all the principal teachers hold certificates of competency from the central department, and the new regulations of the Board dealing with the instruction and training of pupil-teachers will make it impossible in the course of a few years for any one to act as principal or assistant who has not been through a special course of technical training in the art and management of schools.

Last year's report directed attention to the state of the school-buildings and residences, and a few words will suffice now. With suitable out-offices, good drainage, water-supply, fencing, and well-ordered buildings there is little to desire in the way of school wants for country districts, and it must be said that in the majority of cases all the requirements are fully met. It would be well, however, if Committees in some of the school districts realised their responsibility to the same extent that their wants have been supplied by the Board. The highest state of neatness should characterize everything connected with the school-buildings and the grounds in which they are situated. Internal and external arrangements should be of the highest and best, and these can only be carried out and maintained by the united efforts of teachers and Committees.

In seven districts buildings are used for school purposes that are not the property of the Board, and in thirty-nine districts no house provision is yet made for teachers. I have many times drawn attention to the desirability of housing in a proper manner the teachers who have charge of schools, especially in country and outlying districts. Men who are well housed work with good heart in carrying out their duties, and to me it is always pitiful to find a man with a large family living under conditions which belie every lesson he gives to his pupils in hygiene and sanitary science. The needs of the district just now are not so pressing in the matter of school supply, and the expenditure of money in the erection of residences in places like Patutahi, Ormond, Makauri, Manga-atua, Weber, Te Ongaonga, and a number of other places would do much to insure a succession of good and capable men in those districts. In proof of this I would point to Takapau, where a residence has lately been provided, to the great advantage of the district. The buildings used for school purposes supply accommodation for over eight thousand pupils, but in the case of the smaller schools the accommodation is usually in excess of the attendance. Thus, the Waimata aided school of ten pupils is carried on in a public hall capable of holding a hundred to a hundred and fifty people; and other places might be cited where there is an apparent excess of accommodation, but such is not provided by the Board.

The school at Waipiro was overfull at the time of my visit, and efforts were being made by the few settlers to erect a building on the sea-beach, there being no public land available for building purposes. In this connection, I would direct attention to the desirability of the Board issuing a circular letter to all schools containing information with respect to drainage, water-supply, and office conveniences for the children and teachers. Hygiene should be insisted on in a public school if anywhere, and settlers merely require to be educated in elementary sanitary science in its application to the schools to inductively apply the same requirements to their own homes.

The school returns as sent in to the Board by the teachers at the close of each quarter of the school-year give an average weekly roll for the whole year of 7,763·75, with a working average attendance of 6,550·25, and a strict average of 6,663·25, which is 85·8 and 84·3 per cent. respectively of the roll-number. These percentages represent the regularity of the children at school for the whole year. Taking the time of my visits to the schools as a criterion of attendance, the rolls contained the names of 7,582 pupils, and of these 97·3 per cent. were present at examination; in other words, out of every hundred children belonging to the Board schools, there were eleven and a half more present at the time of my examination than at any other period during the year.

As usual, all the schools have been duly visited and examined by me except Portland Island, which I could not reach, for the same reasons as stated last year. Unfortunately, the school is now closed; but I have lately heard that the Union Steamship Company will land me on the island from a steamer when proceeding north. This arrangement will suit me well, and I hope to be able to visit the school soon after its reopening in February.

Besides the seventy schools now under the Board's control, I have been able to inspect and examine five Catholic schools, containing 442 pupils on the rolls, and, in addition, there are two others at Hastings which were inspected and will be examined by me in the first half of the coming year. These schools, I am informed by the Board, may or may not be examined at my own option. The increase in the number of pupils attending the Board schools, and the opening of schools in the more remote portions of so extensive an educational district, naturally take up a great deal more of my time than formerly. Indeed, when away from home I examine schools on Saturdays just as on ordinary school-days; and, much as I should like to do so, I am doubtful whether any of my time can in future be devoted to inspection visits at the Catholic schools, although to me this work is of much more importance than examination. Naturally, the district schools are paramount so far as my own duties are concerned; but I am bound to say that my visits to the Catholic schools have been pleasurable ones, for the Brothers in Napier and the Sisters in Gisborne, Hastings, Napier, Meanee, and Waipawa make the most strenuous efforts to carry out the syllabus requirements, and, considering their slender means, it is creditable to find a steady and growing advance in the work they are doing.

The Board schools continue to advance, not merely in numbers, but in the standard of efficiency as well. In no previous year have the passes been so numerous and so encouraging in anticipation of future progress. There are still, however, far too many pupils over the age of eight years in the preparatory classes, and it seems to me an extra effort might be made in certain schools to lower the high proportion of children over eight years of age who still occupy the preparatory classes. It is curious to find that backward pupils are much more numerous in town than in country schools.

Of the 7,582 pupils who are returned as belonging to the schools at the time of my examination, 4,949 were in standards and 2,633 in the preparatory classes. The passes for the year,

excluding the 47 pupils in the class above Standard VI., numbered 4,154, or 86·2 per cent. of those who were examined. The following table gives in summary form the complete returns for the year, and for comparison the results of the previous year are added :—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Absent.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of passed to examined.	Average Age of those that passed.	Improved or otherwise, in Proportion of Passes.
							Yrs. mos.	
Above Standard VI.	47	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	316	313	3	65	248	79·2	14 1	Fallen.
" V. ...	547	536	11	126	410	76·5	13 3	Improved.
" IV. ...	876	854	22	141	713	83·4	12 6	Improved.
" III. ...	983	966	17	156	810	83·8	11 4	Improved.
" II. ...	1,047	1,028	19	108	920	90·0	10 1	Improved.
" I. ...	1,133	1,121	12	68	1,053	93·9	9 0	Improved.
Preparatory ...	2,633	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals for 1898	7,582	4,818	84	664	4,154	86·2	11 8	Improved 3 per cent.
Totals for 1897	7,297	4,559	82	762	3,797	83·2	11 7	...

Catholic Schools.

	442	310	6	114	196	63·3	...	...
Preparatory ...	126	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

The number of pupils actually examined by me in Board and Catholic schools was 8,024, exclusive of those belonging to the senior division at the Gisborne District High School, who were examined in December, at the same time as the candidates for Board scholarships.

Compared with the previous year the increase in the number of pupils in 1898 was 285, but the preparatory classes may be set down as the same for the whole time. It is interesting to observe that the number of pupils in Standards V. and VI. and the class above Standard VI. remains almost constant, the difference between 1897 and 1898 being represented by a single pupil. The increase of 285 pupils in the latter year is mainly in the two lowest classes, and in these the passes are in the hands of the teachers themselves. On the whole, however, I have no cause to complain at the standard adopted by most of the teachers; indeed, some of the pupils in the schools are as well advanced as many Standard II. pupils were ten or a dozen years ago. A free classification under judicious control is clearly beneficial to the average school, and I am inclined to think that the plan might be extended yet further, always assuming that the Inspector has the power to examine a school in detail if he has reason to think that honest work has not been done.

There is not the slightest doubt that the improved regularity for the year, although not so great as I had expected in certain schools, is having a beneficial effect upon the school work. It is a pity that an attendance officer should be necessary in the larger centres of population, but the fact remains that some parents in matters of government are only amenable to force. The school increase and regularity for the whole year show only normal growth such as might have been expected had no expenditure been incurred in the enforcement of attendance. Without an attendance officer the average regularity of pupils in the country schools is higher than in the towns.

During the course of my examination forty-two schools had no pupils away on examination-day, and twelve others had each only one. Such result, considering that the district extends more than 340 miles in length, is most creditable to both teachers and pupils, and it supplies evidence as to what is possible where the spirit of work and duty pervades homes and school-rooms alike.

My attention has been directed during the year to certain aspects of school work of supreme importance to the future of the children. As pointed out on many occasions already, there is a tendency among the great body of teachers to keep strictly to the letter of the syllabus of instructions in the preparation of their pupils. Now, the syllabus makes no reference to pupils below Standard I. beyond the fact that such children are known as forming the preparatory classes. Children may attend school from the age of five years, and the average age of passing Standard I. is nine years. Four years are thus spent in preparatory work. Under proper regulations, what might not those four years be made to produce? Some of the junior departments under the Board are doing remarkably good work considering how the lady teachers in charge are circumstanced in the matter of suitable arrangements and appliances. Thus, at Ormond and Waerenga-a-hika, in the Poverty Bay district, in addition to the maintenance of an intelligent infant department, the mistress in the former school gives instruction in hat-, mat-, and kit-making, and in the latter in basket- and mat-making. It is the more creditable because the hats, kits, and mats are made from the bark of the *Plagianthus betulinus* (native name, "whawaho")—the settlers' "ribbon-wood"—which is found in the bush not far from the school. The teachers take the girls to gather the bark, and everything is done by the pupils themselves. In this way the children are being taught to make their own hats, kits, baskets, and also table-mats suitable for home use. Kindergarten instruction beyond what is described here makes headway but slowly. Wairoa, Waipawa, Taradale, and Napier do something, but the aim of the schools generally is to prepare the pupils in reading, writing, and arithmetic, to which are added a little

singing and recitation. But the latter subjects suffer sadly in the preparation. How much might singing and recitation be made to add to the pleasures of school life! They are certainly two of the best means of creating taste, and of giving pleasure; yet how seldom it is that one listens to singing which carries with it the thought that the pupils are being trained in an art, and to recitation that is inspiriting and withal beautiful. The proper choice of songs and pieces for recitation, together with the methods of preparing them in school, need much more care and attention from the principal teachers if the children are to advance to higher things when their school life is over. I would mention the Hastings school as illustrating what I mean by training children to sing as an art, and Manga-atua as to the effects of good poetry properly prepared for recitation.

It is always refreshing to me to discover teachers who are not afraid of leaving the old ruts and strike out in new lines of thought for themselves. As a rule, our teachers do not possess much originality in school method. When examining at Napier, however, I was much impressed with the improved tone and widened intelligence of the senior classes. From inquiries I found that quite a new plan had been introduced, with the view of fostering among the pupils a taste for reading good literature. The results were so marked that I asked the master in charge to be good enough to write down for my information the plan he had adopted, and the following is his reply, which I quote in full:—

"I was induced to use the 'unseen' Readers by being struck with the following considerations: (*a.*) That 25 per cent. of an ordinary Standard VI. can pass in reading as soon as they enter the class, and therefore, after once mastering the meaning and allusions of the set Readers, further going over them is not of much benefit to them. (*b.*) In large classes most attention has to be given to bad readers, and the good ones have to sit and hear the beautiful thoughts in a poem, or the easily flowing prose, simply murdered. (*c.*) Above all, in an upper class good reading does not consist in reading a text-book, but in being able to read expressively and intelligently any ordinary reading-book.

"The details of the plan are as follows:—

"(1.) Only the good readers could bring books of their own to read.

"(2.) Any improvement entitled a weak reader to join the silent readers.

"(3.) Each book was brought to me for inspection, and only books with some claim to literary and instructive merit were accepted; only I made one exception: If I saw a pupil was not naturally a lover of reading, I allowed him or her to bring almost anything which interested or amused him, my idea being to encourage reading first, and a choice of better books soon followed.

"(4.) In taking the lesson, I let the class as a whole go on reading, but called on each in turn to read at least a page, and if necessary I would stop the others and let them listen. In this way they saw the varieties of style in different authors, and the corresponding varieties of ways of interpreting these by expression, accent, and modulation.

"5. Nearly every pupil had a dictionary of some sort, and turned up any unintelligible words. Any whose meaning given in the dictionary did not fit in were made a note of, as were any phrases or allusions which the children did not understand. Ten minutes at the end of the lesson sufficed for me to explain these.

"6. One or two children actually could not get a single book from home to read. These I gave a copy of Stead's cheap books, "Ivanhoe," "The Hour and the Man," and the like. The children seeing these books asked me if more could be got, and on showing them the list I got orders for 120 copies of standard books. One of the boys who had no books at home ordered half a dozen.

"The books "Deeds that Won the Empire," and "Fights for the Flag," to which you referred, are in the school library. They are splendidly bound, and were presented by Mr. J. V. Brown. They have been in constant demand during the year."

The preparation of a single reading-book is not conducive to intelligent training. In some schools young pupils can repeat by rote the lessons that are read by their seniors, and when they reach the higher standards the lessons become distasteful in the extreme, by reason of the too frequent repetition. How much better the plan described above! It must be said, also, to the credit of teachers, that the majority of schools in the district use three sets of Readers, one being a literary Reader only, the others being used to assist in the preparation of history and science, or science and geography, under the standard course.

Many of the children within the limits of what is known as the Forty-mile Bush, but which is now for the most part fine grazing country, are placed under some disadvantages compared with other children in the district. Within the past few years quite a number of cheese- and butter-factories have sprung up in the different settlements, and my attention has been called to what teachers term "overpressure," but what seems to me better defined as "overwork," in the case of quite a number of both boys and girls. "Milking cows" is an institution of growing importance, and children become quite as competent as adults in this business. From an incident that took place in one of the bush schools during the progress of my examinations, I was led to make inquiries as to the number of children attending school who milked cows, and in eight schools over which my inquiries extended it appeared that 160 pupils milked 556 cows every morning before starting for school. The majority of the children rise at five, some at half-past four. The ages vary from seven years and nine months to fifteen, and all standards, with the preparatory classes, are represented. The children reside at distances varying from one to four and a half miles from the schools. A few, besides fetching in the cows, milking three, four, or five, as may be, have to take the milk to the factory, return home, get breakfast, walk to school, and reach there in time for the opening! When school is over in the afternoon the same children go through a repetition of the morning toil, and are then supposed to sit down to "home lessons," such as are usually set in the district schools! Thus, the children are really working twelve and fourteen hours a day. The Factory Acts limit the overworking of young children and

women in the factories, but what is to be said in the case of the "milking-children," whose life of toil is unapproached by any form of factory employment within my knowledge? And yet this picture, though a sad one, might be productive of great good even to the children themselves if placed under proper control. Employment, directive and useful, is the need of our colonial youth. To make a life beautiful in itself right conduct and employment should be inculcated as necessary attributes to a successful and honourable career. The most successful men have been those who have toiled hardest in the fields of duty. The suggestions made by me last year in the matter of technical education would direct this abuse of "child labour" into proper channels. Milking cows is a branch of technical education that might be productive of the very best results to the children and the country. Government inspectors of butter- and cheese-factories are common. Why cannot their services be utilised for technical training in the case of these children, so that when they become men and women they may possess a practical and technical knowledge about butter and cheese, of the highest value to them? Such children, taught in the schools to read, write, and do arithmetic well, could readily dispense, if parents so desired, with those adjuncts such as history, grammar, and geography, which can be learned in after-years without the help of the schoolmaster. I have no wish whatever to see children limited either in the acquisition of knowledge or in the milking of cows, but the system I have described is little better than a species of modern slavery, and is the outcome in a large measure of our present system of standards. It is not the parents or the teachers who are at fault, but rather our defective system of departmental organization, and which is bringing about so much harm to our growing youth, both mentally and morally.

In the work of the schools defects in class preparation are not as common as formerly. As to class and optional subjects there is little to be said that is new. Few schools omit to take up even the latter subjects. This year my history, grammar, and mental arithmetic tests were more searching than formerly, and sometimes the results, particularly in grammar, were disappointing; but I do not anticipate weakness in this direction another year. On the whole, however, I am satisfied with much of the work that is done. It is honest and earnest, and often capable; and, though defects do appear now and then, it is the outcome of two many subjects rather than carelessness or neglect.

School discipline, which includes military drill for boys and calisthenics for girls, is making fair headway, and all the large schools may be set down as satisfactory. The country pupils often lack the precision that one finds in the larger schools. The physique is there, but the soldier-like bearing is absent. Still, the moral influence exercised by the teachers in the country is perhaps more pronounced than in the towns. "Saluting the flag" has become an institution in the Napier schools. It is an effective incident which no doubt brings up feelings of patriotism among the pupils. The plan has not been initiated in any other school district.

The old plan of teaching sewing in the schools is to be discontinued, and I am glad of it. Many of the lady teachers spent hours every week working overtime preparing and fixing work for the sewing-lessons. The amended programme lacks one or two matters of importance, but, altogether, it is a syllabus that is likely to be approved by the lady teachers who give instruction in this subject. In future, no annual examination of finished specimens will be necessary.

The establishment of a training-school for ex-pupil-teachers is an event of great moment to the district, but remarks upon it may well be deferred until experience has proved its utility. In conclusion, I would like to say of the teachers that they work with diligence and often with commendable success, and now that all the schools are placed under the government of separate Committees I look forward to the manifestation of much greater activity in school matters throughout the district during the coming year.

I have, &c.,

H. Hill,

Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

MARLBOROUGH.

Sir,— Blenheim, 25th January, 1899.

I have the honour to present my eighth annual report on the primary schools of the District of Marlborough.

At the end of the year 1897 the number of schools under the control of your Board was sixty-four. Six of these were permanently closed at the end of the year. Six new schools were opened during the year 1898, and two were temporarily closed during the last quarter of that year. All these are small aided schools; and it would seem that the number of such schools in this district has nearly reached the upward limit, for though doubtless some new ones will be required, the earlier established household schools will soon begin to drop out when the children have passed through the several standards.

The total number of scholars returned as on the rolls for the last quarter of 1898 was 2,121. The number on the examination schedules was 2,135, the discrepancy arising from the fact that a number of schools were examined during the currency of the third quarter of the year.

By the regulations, the teachers are required to explain the non-presentation in Standard I. of all children above eight years of age. The number of such children was 131 out of 615 in the preparatory class, or 19·6 per cent.—slightly less than the proportion in 1897. The reasons given for their retention in the preparatory class were: Late entrance, 52; irregular attendance, 26; dull or weak intellect, 18; ill-health or delicate, 12; no reason given, 21; frequent change of schools, 1; truant-player, 1. Under the head of "no reason" are included such explanations (?) as "not fit for

Standard I."; "to be transferred directly," &c.; also some cases in which the teachers neglected to supply the information. Some, perhaps many, of the fifty-two under "late entrance" had attended other schools previously, but for how long is not known. The children in the preparatory classes amount to 28·8 per cent. of the roll-numbers: this is 2 per cent. less than the proportion for the whole colony in the previous year, and about 0·8 per cent. more than that for last year in this district.

The scholars in the class above Standard VI. have decreased by sixteen, and those in the preparatory class have increased by nineteen. The number of scholars in Standards I. to VI. this year was, 1,468, or two more than in the previous year, while the number of absentees was seventy-one, or an increase of seventeen. These last figures, though apparently trifling, have yet some significance, for though the absentees on the whole amount to no more than 4·8 per cent., the absence is not uniform, but varies from 3 per cent. in Standard I. to 7·4 per cent. in Standard V. Of course there is always a more or less plausible excuse for this absence, but it is rather unfortunate that in several small schools the absentees should be the only representatives of the higher standards. An epidemic of measles was responsible for some absentees.

The number of scholars actually examined in standards was fifteen less, and the number passed was nine more, than at the previous examination, giving on the whole an increase of about 1½ per cent. In all the standards excepting Standard VI. there is a slight improvement in the proportion of passes to the number examined, ranging from 1½ to 6 per cent. In the sixth, however, there is a marked falling-off, for which I regret to say some of the larger schools are mainly responsible. It must not be assumed that in the smaller schools with one, or at the most two, teachers the failure of scholars to pass Standard VI. is necessarily to be regarded as reflecting upon the ability of the teachers, or the efficiency of the teaching of the school as a whole. The head-teacher might consider himself bound to aim at "the greatest good of the greatest number," and when there is evidence of this in the general condition of the whole school I do not regard the partial or even the total failure of a small Sixth Standard class as a serious cause of complaint. Young teachers are more apt to err in the opposite direction, and to devote more time to the upper standards than they can well afford without injury to the great bulk of their scholars.

In an early edition of the Government's standard regulations this principle was recognised and embodied in a note to the effect that in small schools the scholars in Standard VI. should be regarded more as "students," and should receive only occasional assistance from the teacher. It is, however, an entirely different matter in the case of large schools when the staff is sufficient, and where no teacher has more than two classes to attend to. Here the failure of the upper standards, unless otherwise accounted for, must be taken to indicate a serious defect in the teaching and general management, which demands immediate correction.

The work in the pass-subjects of the four upper standards shows a small improvement in all subjects excepting composition and geography, ranging from 1 per cent. in reading and writing to 12 per cent. in arithmetic. Although, judging solely by the results of the examination, this is still the least satisfactory of the pass group (passing only 59 per cent. of the number examined), the improvement this year is decidedly encouraging, and justifies a hope that ere long it will assume a position more suitable to its importance. Out of fifty-four schools presenting scholars in these standards, nineteen—all small schools—have passed all examined in arithmetic, five passed between 78 and 90 per cent., seventeen passed between 50 and 75 per cent., and thirteen less than 50 per cent., and amongst these last will be found six of the larger Board schools.

In geography, which this year is the weakest of the pass-subjects, twenty schools passed all presented, six passed 75 per cent. or over, fourteen between 50 and 75 per cent., and fourteen less than 50 per cent. There is a slight falling-off (about 2 per cent.) in the number passing this year as compared with last year. Composition also was less satisfactory, there being about 5 per cent. fewer passes this year than there were last.

It is very gratifying to notice that the smaller schools, as a rule, come out so well in this analysis. Nor must it be assumed that this is on account of the low standards presented. Taking only schools presenting scholars in the three higher standards, there are fourteen that passed all the scholars presented, and, with the exception of one, these are all aided schools. The great advantage enjoyed by aided schools in the almost absolute regularity of attendance, together with the large amount of individual attention that can be given to the scholars, will fully account for their uniform success when they have the good fortune to be under the care of fairly efficient teachers; and, having regard to the small salaries they receive, I am sure that the Board has reason to be well satisfied with the results of its efforts to convey the benefits of the Education Act into the remote corners of the district.

Reading.—This subject is, generally speaking, well taught throughout the district, and the comprehension of the subject-matter of the lessons is in most cases good, and in some remarkably so. Although the First and Second Standards are examined in pass-subjects by the teacher, I invariably hear them read, in order to judge by subsequent oral examination as to their comprehension; and in very few cases have I felt disposed to differ from the teacher in my estimate of a pass in reading. The reading of the Second Standard at the Convent School was far superior to any of the same standard in this district. On the whole, this subject has much improved of late years. The aspirate is more generally respected than formerly, and another stumbling-block—the final *ng*—has been to a great extent overcome. In only a few schools is the nuisance of almost inaudible reading to be found.

Spelling and Dictation.—This troublesome subject is slowly improving, but, considering that the tests are confined to the (in the lower standards) very limited contents of the reading-book, a better result might be expected. It must not, however, be forgotten that in this, as in most other subjects, the work of the majority of scholars at an examination is never equal to their actual and ordinary capabilities.

Writing, as exhibited in the copybooks, appears to be taught in a satisfactory manner at most of the schools, but were it to be judged by the written work of the examination it would occupy a very different position amongst the pass-subjects. There are now three different sets of copybooks used in the district—namely, the "Southern Cross," Whitcombe's "Erect," and Jackson's "Vertical." The upright style is becoming more popular, but I cannot find that anything is gained by its adoption. The schools that have always been remarkable for the excellence of their copybook writing have remained constant to the sloping style, and in these schools the writing of the examination papers is always more uniformly satisfactory. The vertical system is certainly more easily learned by scholars who were apparently unable to master the sloping style, and in some cases it has been adopted on this account. There are two disadvantages connected with the vertical system—the tendency to slope backwards—indeed, some of the copies themselves are rather inclined this way—and the monotonous uniformity of the handwriting of the scholars who have adopted it. Possibly this last objection may not be a matter of much importance, the permanent characteristics of each individual's writing being usually developed in after-life. There is, throughout the district, abundant evidence of the care bestowed upon this subject in the cleanliness of the copybooks, and, as a rule, the absence of blots, blunders, and other disfigurements.

Drawing shows a steady improvement in freehand and scale drawing, most of the failures in the upper standards being due to geometrical and model drawing. There is much indifference amongst parents with regard to this subject—an indifference which in some country districts almost amounts to hostility—but they cannot be aware of its educative value, nor of its practical utility (especially scale drawing) in almost every occupation in after-life. Nearly all the Board schools, and some of the larger aided schools, are now supplied with suitable drawing-charts, and to this, together with the impetus given to the subject by means of the examinations under the Wellington Technical School, the improvement may, in a great measure, be attribnted.

Arithmetic.—For the low position occupied by this subject, as already referred to, it is not easy to assign a cause. The fact that a large proportion of the failures occur in the two higher standards of the larger schools must be as unsatisfactory to the teachers concerned as it is to the writer; but it is hoped and expected that this reproach will be removed at the next examination. The matter will be referred to again later on in this report.

Composition.—The smaller proportion of passes this year was caused principally by a pretty general weakness in the composition of Standard V., which was tested by the paraphrasing of a passage of poetry from the reading-book. At the end of each poem in the book there is a short summary of its contents, and not a few scholars contented themselves with simply copying this verbatim, for which, of course, they received no marks. Others fail through attempting to substitute words of a somewhat similar meaning, but without any regard for their fitness in association with the rest of the sentence. Some simply copy the exact words of the poem, but arrange them as in ordinary prose—that is, not in symmetrical lines. The author of a very useful little work entitled "Lower-grade English" (Nelson and Sons), speaking of paraphrasing, says, "A paraphrase resembles a 'free translation,' which, without following the original word by word, gives its pith or spirit in a new form. Paraphrasing of this kind is one of the most useful exercises in composition. It obviates the chief difficulty which young beginners encounter—the difficulty, namely, of finding material. In paraphrase the ideas are supplied. The pupil is required only to express them in his own words." Dr. Fitch, too, writing on the same subject, says, "Exercises of this kind, though more often in writing, may often with advantage be oral, and should always be made the subject of conversation and questioning before they are attempted." If these principles were kept steadily in view and acted upon the teaching of the composition prescribed for Standard V. would be more successful, and would considerably contribute towards success in the original composition required in Standard VI. In the Third and Fourth Standards the same old, old defect is still too frequently apparent—viz., the neglect of the period—the total absence, in fact, of short and intelligible sentences. Instances of composition exercises of ten or twelve lines, containing a series of statements connected by "and" or "so," are of frequent occurrence; sometimes there are more "ands" than there are lines of composition. This defect has its origin at the very base of the school, in the practice of constantly accepting oral answers to questions without insisting on the answers being themselves complete sentences. If a child in Standard I. be asked how many pennies there are in a shilling, the answer "twelve" should not be accepted; but "There are twelve pennies in a shilling," or "A shilling is worth twelve pennies," or the like, should be insisted on. In this way the teaching of this subject—perhaps the most valuable in all the school course—would be constantly, though almost unconsciously, promoted in connection with every other subject of the syllabus. Doubtless these remarks are, or should be, quite unnecessary for the guidance of our older and more experienced teachers, but they may be useful to some of the younger members of the staff, and therefore require no apology for their appearance here.

Geography is the other subject spoken of in the earlier portion of this report as showing a falling-off from last year's results—poor though those results were. It is certainly the least important of the pass group, and, personally, I should prefer to make it exchange places with grammar; but as long as it remains a pass-subject it must be taught and examined as such. I believe the failures are not altogether due to want of knowledge of the subject, but partly to the great extent of the ground covered by the prescribed course. It may be that a scholar fairly well acquainted with geography may yet be unable to give satisfactory replies to some of the few questions to which the examination papers are necessarily limited. Hitherto there has been no text-book prescribed for this subject, but in future I intend to confine my questions to the contents of the "Southern Cross" Geographies, which are now generally used in this district. In map-drawing from memory the requirements of the syllabus for Standards V. and VI. are also uncertain, and I propose in future to limit this part of the subject to maps of New Zealand and Europe (the whole or a part) for Standard V., and to New Zealand, Australia, and Asia for Standard VI. Very imperfect com-

prehension of the meaning of the expression "the approximately stable direction of the earth's axis," is manifested either by scholars or pupil-teachers. All who answered the question at all confined themselves to the inclination of the earth's axis to the plane of its orbit, and know (or say) nothing about the equally or more important fact of its constant parallelism.

Class and Additional Subjects.—A new form of report upon these subjects has been introduced by the department. The degrees of proficiency are henceforth to be indicated by the expressions, "Excellent," "good," "satisfactory," "fair," "moderate," and "inferior." In the following summary of class and additional subjects the same nomenclature has been adopted, but each subject is shown separately:—

—	Number of Classes examined.	Inferior.	Moderate.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.
Class subjects—							
Grammar	53	4	16	10	13	5	5
History	50	...	10	23	10	4	3
Geography (Standard II.) ...	31	...	2	1	11	5	12
Science and object-lessons ...	52	4	15	17	13	2	1
Mental arithmetic	47	9	19	18	1	...	...
Additional subjects—							
Recitation	56	...	15	19	15	4	3
Drill	8	...	...	4	1	3	...
Singing	7	...	1	3	1	...	2
Needlework	38	...	4	2	15	2	15
Comprehension	56	...	6	13	27	5	5

The whole of the Board schools, and most of the aided schools, have made a praiseworthy but fruitless attempt to grapple with all the class and some of the additional subjects. The attempt on the part of teachers of small schools is praiseworthy, because it manifests an earnest desire to attempt to comply with the inexorable demands of an exorbitant syllabus; and, as far as some of the class-subjects are concerned, in most cases it may fairly be described as fruitless, since little or no lasting benefit is conferred upon the recipients of such instruction. As illustrating the miserable results of the teaching of the class-subjects, I gave last year some specimens of grammar (?) papers, and, though the treatment of that subject was much better this year, many similar cases might have been quoted. I now subjoin a few specimens of answers to history questions, which will show better than I could describe the hopeless confusion that must exist in the minds of the scholars as to some of the "leading events," &c., dealt with. (1.) Conquest of Canada—"Admiral Nelson led an army and defeated the French at the Battle of Quebec." (2.) First Parliament—"King Edward was wanted to go to the Catholic Church, and was wanted to go to the Scotch Church, and he went to the English Church, and thirteen Welshmen had laid sixty barrels to blow up the house with the king in it." (3.) Battle of Hastings—"When Henry died the French king was called upon to do homage for Henry. They met at Stirling Bridge, and were defeated." (4.) "Magna Charta, or Simon de Montfort's Parliament, was signed in 1215. It was fought at Wakefield Green, when King Richard was struck down with a dagger by the Lord Mare. But Henry escaped, and was finally captured and put to death." (5.) "Battle of Bannockburn was fought in 1415. It was defeated, and King John was crowned King of England; he led the Scotch army." (6.) "Magna Charta was fought in 1215. It was fought between the English nations on the west and the Mohandioms, in which the (?) bound himself up to the door"!!! (7.) Simon de Montfort's Parliament was fought between the French and the English in 1265." (8.) (Standard V.) "Christopher Columbus was a Roman General who discovered the New World." It can scarcely be doubted that as far as these scholars are concerned they would have been more profitably employed in the playground during the time occupied in teaching "history."

The fact that object-lessons (in Standards I., II., and III.) and elementary science (in Standards IV., V., and VI.) are considered as a single subject disguises to some extent the shortcomings of the latter. Excepting at the largest schools, the marks awarded for object-lessons frequently cause the report for the combined subjects to be much more favourable than the work in the upper standards alone would justify.

Under the English education system the teachers have long since been allowed to choose two out of a list of subjects corresponding to our class-subjects, and an alteration in this direction has been frequently recommended by myself and others. I notice that the New Zealand Institute of Teachers has recently resolved to press upon the Government the necessity for some such change. I believe that nothing but good would result were the alteration made. Much valuable time at present wasted (at least in small schools) in the vain attempt to cope with the entire syllabus would be saved and profitably applied to the more thorough teaching of the essential subjects. Moreover, each teacher, in choosing his optional subjects, will naturally select those for which he has a decided predilection, and is consequently most qualified to teach; and, having made his selection, he will certainly make every effort to obtain such success as would justify his choice.

Irregular attendance still continues to give trouble, in spite of—or we might almost say, in consequence of—the School Attendance Act. This last attempt to "tinker" with the Education Act has rather increased than diminished the irregularity it was supposed to prevent, since it almost authorises a certain number of absences every week; and, moreover, allows parents to keep

children away from school with impunity, all and every week in which the school is closed for one day. Undoubtedly the best check on irregularity is that which was employed in some districts before the Act of 1877 came into force, and that was, to exclude altogether from the examination all scholars who failed to attend a certain proportion of the school-time. By this method the progress of the regular scholars would not be retarded, as it sometimes is now, by the frequent revision of some part of the work, supposed to be necessary in the interests of the absentees. Independently, however, of any regulations, I think that teachers have the remedy to some extent in their own hands. At the beginning of the year the work of each class should be carefully apportioned (with due regard to really necessary recapitulation) to the time at the teacher's disposal, and this programme should be steadily and consistently adhered to throughout the year, no departure from it being permitted on account of irregular attendants. At first, possibly, the adoption of this plan might entail some hardship on individual scholars, and might even for a time lessen the apparent (but not the actual) efficiency of a school; but the interests of individuals must always be subordinate to those of the people generally, and I feel sure that the gains, even as regards the mere number of passes, would greatly outweigh the losses; for at present, no doubt, many of the regular attendants fail through the delay caused by the absentees. It would, I believe, soon be found that all but really unavoidable absence would greatly diminish under such a system; and as, happily, the judgment of a school is no longer based on the percentage of passes, but upon the general condition and tone of the school, the credit of the teacher could not be injured, but would rather be likely to increase through the more general intelligence of his scholars, and the higher level of proficiency that would prevail throughout the school. I dare say something like this plan is already adopted in a few of our schools, and the sooner it becomes general the better for all concerned.

General Remarks.—On the whole, and even with regard only to success at the examination, there is no cause for serious complaint. The failures throughout New Zealand in 1897, expressed as a percentage of the number examined, amounted to 15·32 per cent. (see Minister's twenty-first annual report, page iv.). For the same year in Marlborough the percentage was 16·3, and for the year under review it was 14·8; so that, notwithstanding the disappointing results at some schools, there is evidence of steady, if slow, improvement in the district as a whole. The admirable work done at some of the smaller Board schools is highly creditable to their teachers; and it has been a matter of considerable regret to me to notice that, in consequence of the method of making appointments pursued in this district, it occasionally happens that really excellent teachers seeking for promotion or for a change are passed over. The Board, although it undoubtedly has the power, rarely exercises its right to remove a teacher from one school to another, and consequently misses some of the few opportunities of showing its appreciation of valuable services in a substantial manner. I cannot but think that all School Committees that have a regard for the good of the schools would willingly assist the Board to reward faithful and efficient servants, if the matter were fairly put before them, by consenting to such proposals.

With regard to matters outside the syllabus, and which do not materially affect the results of the examination, I see no cause for complaint, but rather for congratulation. The general behaviour of the scholars in the playground and elsewhere is, on the whole, quite satisfactory. The little courtesies of civilised life are observed; and with the progress of years there is a corresponding improvement in many apparently, but not really, trivial matters. The once common and disgusting method of cleaning slates, for instance, is now almost entirely forgotten, each child, or desk, being provided with a little bottle of water and a piece of rag. The playgrounds, once liberally decorated with unsightly luncheon papers, scattered by the winds all about the premises, are now generally pretty free from this disfigurement. These improvements are most noticeable when teachers take an active interest in the play, as well as in the work, of their scholars. The old idea that a teachers' authority and dignity would be imperilled by any association with the children outside the classroom is happily almost abandoned, and teachers may now frequently be seen directing and assisting the sports as well as the studies of their scholars. Some of the School Committees have added considerably to the attractiveness of the playground by planting ornamental trees, and in several instances either the teacher or the Committee have assisted or encouraged the children to cultivate little gardens—a most valuable means of unconscious education, which ought to be more general in our country schools.

There is one practice which strikes any one acquainted with the extreme poverty so common in the Old Country as being very reprehensible—namely, the terrible waste of wholesome food that prevails at dinner-time in every school in the district, and, perhaps, in the colony. It is a daily experience to see whole slices of good bread and butter or jam thrown away—to the great benefit, however, of the neighbours' fowls; and I am within the mark in saying that there is sufficient food wasted annually in the playgrounds of this district alone to feed scores of hungry little ones almost starving at Home. Surely this is a practice which, on moral and economical grounds, should be discouraged, and as far as possible prevented, by the teachers. An improvement—which is, however, not yet quite general—is evident in the appearance of the cupboards, drawers, &c., used by the teachers. These formerly appeared, in many cases, as if the contents had been "shovelled" in at random, and, when exposed to view, afforded a pernicious example of slovenliness and disorder to the scholars. Such cases are now happily few, and will, I hope, soon cease to exist in the district. The immense importance of these apparently trifling matters is scarcely so generally recognised as it should be. At one of the aided schools, for instance, the teacher and the head of the household waxed highly indignant because I pointed out at my visit of inspection that the schoolroom was in a most disgracefully untidy state, and they seemed to think that, because the building in question was not the property of the Board, the Inspector had no right to interfere. The faintest conception of the true object of schools (and schoolmasters) ought to have suggested to the latter that the inculcation of habits of order and decency both by precept and example is one of the most important duties of teachers and parents, for the neglect of which no amount of mere book-learning will compensate. Moreover, the parties referred to must have overlooked one of the chief conditions

upon which aid to such schools is granted—viz., that a schoolroom shall be provided "to the satisfaction of the Board."

The examination of the schools in the Sounds County was delayed this year, with the intention of taking advantage of an offer made by the owner of the "Torea," and to enable me to carry on the examinations as suggested in my last report, and approved by your Board. The "Torea," unfortunately, could not be got ready in time, nor was any similar boat available. I was therefore conveyed to the several examination centres in an open boat as heretofore, excepting that the settlers were relieved from the duty of conveying me from place to place. I shall endeavour to make an arrangement this year to carry on the examination as contemplated, and, if successful, will submit the same for your approval. One of these schools missed the examination this year, being prevented by bad weather from reaching the rendezvous on the appointed day.

I have, &c.

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

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT (exclusive of Private Schools).

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	52	...	...	...
Standard VI.	168	157	108	14 2
" V.	201	186	147	13 4
" IV.	319	301	240	12 6
" III.	311	300	255	11 5
" II.	239	230	222	9 11
" I.	230	223	218	8 11
Preparatory	615	...	...	...
Totals	2,135	1,397	1,190	11 8*

* Mean of average age.

NELSON.

SIR,— 6th February, 1899.

We have the honour to present the following report on the schools of the Nelson District for the year 1898:—

One hundred and eighteen schools have been examined this year, the number including household schools which have been recently opened at Moutere Bluffs and Upper Stanley Brook. Those at Bedstead and Sandy Cove have been closed during the year, but a new district school at Millerton and household schools at McNabb's and Berlin's, that were established too late for examination, make the total number at work at the close of the year 120. Visits of inspection have been paid to 106 schools. On these occasions we found to our regret that considerable apathy is still apparent in the matter of enjoining regular attendance; that in some schools certain subjects, such as object-lessons, had not been begun at the commencement of the school-year; and that supervision during recess is not always systematically attended to. As a rule, the buildings and grounds were in good condition, but there is still a great deficiency in pictorial and instructive wall-decorations, and teachers often omit to use to advantage the means at their disposal for thoroughly ventilating the schoolrooms. The examination of certain private schools, with an aggregate attendance of 681, made some demands upon the time of the Inspectors. This year the list comprises St. Mary's Industrial Schools at Stoke and at Nelson, St. Mary's Parish School, St. Canice's School at Westport, the Sacred Heart School at Reefton, the Whakarewa Home, and the Bishop's School, Nelson.

The number on the rolls at the end of the September quarter was 5,992, the average attendance for the first three quarters being 4,869. We regret that this year, for the first time in our experience, we have to record a decrease in each of these items, the corresponding figures for the last year being 6,069 and 4,927. The falling-off is very general, but is particularly noticeable in the largest centres, Nelson City and Westport. We have repeatedly called attention to the low average attendance prevailing throughout the district, and were struck by the marked decrease shown in the returns for the December quarter, 1897. The March and December quarters usually show the lowest returns. Fruit-picking, harvesting, and hop-picking are perhaps the chief causes of the small average attendance for the March quarter, but even this might be to some extent remedied if all Committees were more careful about timing the hop-picking holidays. The falling-off in the December returns cannot be accounted for so satisfactorily. Except in parts of the district where children are detained for such industries as pea-picking and small-fruit gathering, the cause of the falling-off, which is a very general one, points to a more widespread evil. As soon as the examinations are over the children are apt to loose their keenness of interest, parents become less careful to insist upon regular attendance, and we fear that some teachers, too, relax their efforts and betray culpable negligence in this matter. They do not appear to recognise the importance of using every effort to secure regularity at this particular time, which is, in our opinion,

the most important in the whole year, as new subjects are then being treated for the first time, and the absence of individual members of a class is most to be regretted. The average for the colony, which, apparently, is steadily improving, was 82·9 per cent. for 1897, and this, the Minister of Education reports, is the highest yet reached. For this district the return was only 80·5, which compares very unfavourably with 87·4 per cent. in Otago.

At our annual examination 5,520 children were present, the absentees numbering 453. In twenty-two schools this year the examination results were very unsatisfactory. In eleven of these the teachers were newly appointed, and in some cases inexperienced. Seven others did badly for the second year in succession, and the teachers of two of these have since left the service. To account for the failure of the remaining four, which were unsuccessful for the first time, no satisfactory explanation presents itself.

A general summary of results for the whole district has been extracted from the annual return, and with the corresponding totals for 1897 is shown below.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	179	...	...	...
Standard VI.	453	444	336	14 2
" V.	639	610	447	12 11
" IV.	777	743	584	12 0
" III.	891	867	705	10 10
" II.	738	719	648	9 8
" I.	646	625	597	8 5
Preparatory	1,650	...	...	...
Totals, 1898	5,973	4,008	3,317	11 4*
Totals, 1897	6,054	4,179	3,358	11 4*

* Mean of average ages.

A comparison of these figures with those of the two previous years shows that head-teachers are passing children in the First and Second Standards more freely even than hitherto, possibly as a result of greater care in presenting only fit candidates for the First Standard examination.

In the Inspectors' pass examinations Standards III. and IV. were much more successful than hitherto, while the proportion of passes in Standard V. was the same as in 1897, but in Standard VI. it was slightly lower. The percentage of passes in all standards—82·5, the highest we have yet recorded—is over 2 per cent. higher than that of the previous year, and that without any lowering of the standard of efficiency, but rather the reverse. The proportion is still considerably below that recorded by the larger districts, and below the general average of the whole colony; but this may as fairly, we think, be attributed to irregular attendance and the strictness of the local Inspectors as to weakness in the teaching staff. We are astonished to find the idea still prevalent in certain quarters that the Inspectors' opinion of the success of any particular school is based entirely upon the number of passes. Our estimate of the efficiency of a class in any one subject depends on the average quality of the work of the class in that subject, or, to express it in figures, upon the average-mark of the class, and not upon the number of passes or the number of failures. A class of ten may, for example, all barely pass in arithmetic, or, say, five of them may just fail and the others get full marks. In the latter case the work of the class is of far higher average merit than in the former. It practically makes but little difference in the Inspector's judgment whether in a few doubtful cases the children pass or fail. In Otago, Inspectors—with whose general practice we have always agreed, though we have not gone so minutely into arithmetical calculations in all subjects—have, in their report for 1897, given very full explanations on this head, and we commend what they have written to the careful consideration of any who still feel unsatisfied. As they point out, it follows as a matter of course that in all well-taught schools the pass-results in subjects will be fairly high because the average marks will be high, but it does not follow that a class which passes well is a well-taught class. The pass examination, after all, only requires the minimum of attainment which determines whether the child is fit to pass on to higher levels of thought and to subjects requiring greater mental capacity. The teachers who make the mistake of treating the pass requirement as the maximum by limiting the scope of their work to the attainment of mere passes are doing the scholars a gross injustice which will produce bitter fruit in the following year. It is at best a penny-wise-pound-foolish policy, for the children's minds will, in consequence of their narrow training, be less developed and less capable of taking up new lines of thought. If the children attend with regularity, the discipline is efficient, and the course of training wide enough to cover the subject in all its branches, there need be no anxiety concerning the result of an examination which must necessarily be of a plain and straightforward character.

The introduction of systematic kindergarten instruction into the infant schools of Nelson City has done much to relieve the monotony of the work in this department, and we have no doubt that in time it will generally tend to improve the style of infant instruction throughout the district. The number of children over eight years of age, and yet considered unfit for presentation in Standard I., was 222. In most cases the reason given for withholding them from the standard examination appeared to us satisfactory. They may be roughly classed under the following heads: Shortness of school-life, 78; exceptional dullness or imbecility, 76; irregularity of attendance, 48; delicate health, 9. In eleven cases we can find no reasons given.

As usual, we give a short criticism upon the way in which the different subjects in the syllabus are being taught.

Reading.—We have little to add to what we have written in former reports on this matter. We are generally well satisfied with the enunciation and voice-inflection, and comprehension of the language is rightly receiving more attention. Preparation is becoming more thorough, but it runs in too narrow a groove, little encouragement being given to general reading. When it was thought necessary, previously unseen tests were applied, and we are bound to confess that the results were better than we anticipated. Very few schools, however, are supplied with extra Readers, and we have not yet found that our suggestion *re* silent reading has anywhere been acted upon.

Spelling.—The spelling is not so accurate as it should be. It is true that the tests given to the higher standards were rather more severe this year than formerly, and this may partly account for the failures in this subject being more numerous, and far above those in any other subject except arithmetic. The training is, in many cases, even more narrow than that in reading, being confined to the repetition of selected "hard words" to the neglect of word-building and derivation, which can so often supply the key to difficulties, and which afford much more interest and instruction than mere rote-work. Accuracy of observation should, of course, be continually encouraged, especially in connection with the words in the reading-lessons. Writing from dictation is mainly useful for examination purposes, and should never take the place of teaching spelling, although the exercise is invaluable when used for the purpose of testing the children's knowledge of a prepared lesson.

Writing and Drawing.—These subjects are almost invariably of such a nature as to satisfy the requirements of a pass examination, but we fear that really good writing is becoming rare, and must look for a better average quality in future if the high standard that has hitherto prevailed is to be maintained. We note that Mr. Hill, the Hawke's Bay Inspector, recommends, in addition to the ordinary copybook, the use of a class copybook, in which each member writes a copy in turn, so that the book represents the quality of the writing for the whole class. It is to be regretted that very little interest was shown in the first- and second-grade drawing examinations held by the Wellington Technical School in September and December last, Appleby being the only school to send up candidates.

Arithmetic.—The results in this subject have shown a steady improvement year by year. We again record, for the sake of comparison, the percentage that the number of passes bears to the number present in each class:—

	Standard VI. Per Cent.	Standard V. Per Cent.	Standard IV. Per Cent.	Standard III. Per Cent.
1898	60	60	75	75
1896	31	44	63	74
1894	31	39	45	61

Last year we were able to report for the first time that over half the number in each class were able to work the sums satisfactorily, and this time the proportion has increased to three-fifths. More attention is being paid to addition tables in the preparatory and Standard I. classes, but deficiencies in this respect are still too common.

Geography.—In this subject we are glad to note some improvement, the children generally being able to answer questions in topography and in political geography, but the physical and mathematical departments, which offer less facilities for getting up the work by rote, were, as in former years, not so satisfactory. In Standard III., where the programme is minutely laid down, very good work was the rule, and in Standard II., where geography does not affect the individual pass, there were rarely any signs of the neglect of this interesting subject. In all classes above the third the children were expected, as usual, to draw a map from memory, and in some of our best schools the maps handed in were really beautiful. When it is remembered that a bare hour was allowed for the whole paper, of which the map forms a part, the neatness of finish and fullness of detail were worthy of the highest commendation. In this connection the Motueka School deserves special mention.

Composition.—The work of Standard III. in this subject, though generally marked by grammatical correctness and tasteful arrangement, often shows evidence of being a literal reproduction from memory of prepared exercises, and consequently wanting in freedom. The children are taught to write essays on certain well-rehearsed subjects rather than to cultivate the power of expressing their ideas in their own language. This is especially noticeable when the choice of themes is, as still too often happens, unduly limited. Those preparing for Standard IV. seemed to us weaker than before in the exercises in amalgamating sentences; nor was this compensated by exceptional skill in reproducing a story from memory—a test set to this class this year for the first time. In Standard V. a larger proportion of sensible paraphrases were handed in, and some few of these made really pleasant reading. We still find, however, a great deficiency in the comprehension of very plain English words, a result, probably, of imperfect training in general reading. The following are glaring instances: "He gave the tar a piece of gold," when rewritten with its context, made utter nonsense, in the midst of which "a piece of tarred gold" was conspicuous. "They then brought out the best of cheer" was several times interpreted, "They gave a loud hurrah," or "They gave three cheers"; while "The stern advance of the men in red" was once ingloriously rendered, "The soldiers came on stern first." In Standard VI. a story was as a rule reproduced with considerable skill; but in the other exercises, especially in correcting faulty sentences, far less ability was displayed. If the mistakes were rightly pointed out, reasons for the alterations were seldom given, and, if given, were almost invariably the wrong ones. Though the quality of the composition as a whole is not yet so high as we have a right to expect, marked improvement is apparent in the teaching of this subject, especially as compared with that of five years ago.

Class-subjects.—Our estimate of the efficiency of the schools in class-subjects is given in the subjoined table, most of the terms used being supplied by the Education Department:—

	Not expected.	Not taught.	Inferior.	Moderate.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.
Grammar	8	0	37	18	38	8	9	0
History	8	4	12	1	35	18	35	5
Geography, Standard II. ...	20	0	17	4	17	6	20	34
Object-lessons and science...	0	0	3	3	19	23	43	27
Mental arithmetic ...	0	0	31	16	48	11	12	0

The first column shows those schools which have no classes to take the particular subject prescribed—*e.g.*, the number 20 denotes the number of schools in which there were at the time of examination no Second Standard children. Grammar and mental arithmetic are evidently the most unsatisfactory in this list, and we are pleased to welcome even the very slight improvement shown in the treatment of the former, a subject of great educative value, one in which the element of cram can be almost eliminated, and one which vies with arithmetic in forming the best basis of a logical training.

In the report to the Education Department embodying the results of the examinations will be found a column containing in one word a summary of our estimate of the efficiency of the instruction in the five class-subjects in each school. In explanation of the way in which this has been arrived at we may here state that the whole have been averaged, and that the word expressing the lower mark of efficiency has been retained unless the average of all the subjects fully reached the next higher one. When a subject has been altogether omitted no mark is given, and the average of the whole is consequently reduced. In mental arithmetic we have this year given individual tests to all children above Standard III. The questions consisted of very simple exercises, for the most part of a common business character, such as finding the value of a small number of articles when the price of one is given. The average marks of the class have been generally so low as to clearly show that even if a few bright children can do such mental exercises well the majority are very poorly trained. We regret that teachers, when giving lessons before the blackboard, do not take more advantage of the opportunity thus offered of giving practice in mental calculations, as the loss in celerity alone is so obvious.

History, on the other hand, shows a decided improvement, and we are generally very well pleased with the work done in science and object-lessons, though there still prevails a tendency to merely impart information about unseen and unfamiliar objects, to the neglect of the cultivation of the children's powers of personal observation, comparison, and criticism.

Additional Subjects.—As in the case of the class-subjects, we append a corresponding table dealing with the additional subjects:—

	Not expected.	Not taught.	Inferior.	Moderate.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.
Recitation	0	1	1	0	33	23	37	23
Drill	0	77	0	1	6	10	15	0
Singing...	0	82	2	0	7	13	9	5
Needlework	21	15	1	0	8	28	27	18
Comprehension	0	0	11	11	47	19	20	10

The twenty-one schools indicated in the first column are, of course, in charge of sole-teachers who are males. The children are very generally trained to recite audibly and distinctly, and in many cases with feeling and expression. In this respect a marked improvement has been made in the last few years. In some cases the amount prepared during the year is too meagre, and better judgment might be displayed in making the selections, which should be more suitable and varied.

The needlework has been generally submitted to the criticism of lady examiners, who, for the most part, as our tabulated record shows, have looked upon it with approving eyes. In some instances their reports have been both discriminating and instructive. There is no excuse for the neglect of this important subject in fifteen schools in which female teachers are employed. Though the additional subjects are not expected from schools under sole-teachers, we regret that singing and drill are not more commonly taught, especially the last-named subject, which is apparently treated in the Education Act as compulsory for all boys.

Though by no means satisfied that the majority of our school-children attend as regularly as they might, there is cause for gratification in the marked improvement in the classification of our teachers, and the very general evidence we have received of more intelligent methods of training. The manners of the children are frank and open, the signs of extreme shyness which were at one time common in two or three remote country schools having almost entirely disappeared, while orderly attention and eagerness to please usually prevail on examination-day. Very rarely, indeed, have we had occasion to complain of pupils communicating with one another or practising any petty dishonesties.

That many of our teachers, too, have a higher aim than that of merely imparting information is clearly apparent. Honesty, obedience, application, and order are almost everywhere inculcated, and in many cases politeness, kindness, and consideration for others are taught by example as well as by precept. When competent teachers possessing such qualifications as these carry on their work under a strong sense of devotion to duty no one can doubt that the training given will tend to the formation and building-up of character, which after all is the real object of any sound educational system.

We have, &c.,

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

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

GREY.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit my annual general report on the schools subject to inspection in this district for the year ending 31st December, 1898.

Thirty schools were in active operation at the close of the year, and all of them were duly visited and examined. In addition to these, I both inspected and examined the four Roman Catholic schools in the district.

The number of schools which are under the direct control of the Board has increased by one during the year—viz., a school at Poerua—another small and comparatively expensive school added to an already long list of similar ones in so small a district. The increase of these small and non-paying schools must eventually do serious injury to the whole district: *vide* my remarks on this point in last year's annual report.

Inspection reports were laid before you during the year. These show that although the school-buildings are in a fairly satisfactory state, yet many repairs and improvements are necessary. In many cases there are no fences or playgrounds, whilst shelter-sheds are almost unknown luxuries; here and there, too, is a building which has never been painted since it was erected. The building vote granted to this Board is apparently quite insufficient to carry out improvements and to overtake repairs, which, owing to climatic influences, are rendered more frequently necessary, and which, owing to difficulty of access of places, scattered population, &c., are also more costly to effect, than in most educational districts.

The general result of my inspection visits to the schools was encouraging. I almost invariably found the rooms clean and tidy, time-tables nicely drawn out, children orderly, and the teachers working with diligence and energy. Many difficulties experienced, especially by our younger teachers, are explained at this time, and advice is given with reference to methods and the general working of the schools.

During the latter half of the year school work was considerably interfered with by a visitation of measles, which attacked both old and young—teachers and pupils—without respect of persons, not once, but sometimes twice and even three times. In consequence, several schools were closed for short periods. Those schools suffered most, so far as results are concerned, where the outbreak occurred just prior to the date fixed for the examination.

The following table gives a summary of results for this and the four previous years:—

Years.	Number of Schools in Operation.	Presented for Examination.*	Presented in Standards.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes.
1894	24	1,644	1,024	995	696	69·9
1895	25	1,684	1,066	1,007	829	82·3
1896	28	1,650	1,068	1,040	862	82·8
1897	29	1,698	1,085	1,041	898	85·3
1898	30	1,619	1,091	1,059	920	88·7

* Including infants and class above Standard VI.

It will be noticed in the above table that the number of schools has increased from twenty-four in 1894 to thirty in 1898.

I have again to record a most satisfactory improvement in the percentage of passes, these being numerically represented by nearly 3½ per cent.

The total number of infants is 481, and the total number of infants over eight years of age not presented for Standard I. is eighty-seven, being slightly over 5 per cent. of total roll-number. The number returned under the latter heading in 1896 was 133; so that a very satisfactory reduction has been made.

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

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1897.
				Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary class	19	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI.	28	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	100	95	77	14 3	14 1
" V.	174	169	138	13 4	13 2
" IV.	218	206	166	12 4	12 3
" III.	234	230	205	11 5	11 2
" II.	191	187	175	10 0	10 0
" I.	174	172	159	8 11	8 10
Preparatory	481	...	...	...	...
Totals	1,619	1,059	920	11 8*	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

It is interesting to notice the fewness of pupils absent from examination—viz., thirty-two out of 1,091 examined in standards. Some of these were absent through illness, some from a desire on the part of parents that they should remain for another year in the same standard, whilst a few had lately come from other districts, where they had already passed their standard examination for the year. In the country districts, even in the exceptionally wet weather experienced during the time these schools were being examined, it was a rare occurrence to find a single child absent. I cannot help feeling that such a state of things reflects credit on the teachers, and also shows an excellent desire on the part of the children to pass the examination for promotion to a higher class.

Coming to the subjects taught in our schools, I propose offering a few remarks on those needing more special attention.

I cannot record any great improvement in reading. In many cases the reading is fluent, it is accurate, and enunciation is well cared for, but the expression which one naturally expects is altogether lacking. It is hard to conceive how it can be otherwise with but one book to work from, which is practically known by rote from beginning to end by the expiration of the first quarter of the year. In many educational districts the reading of two books annually is prescribed, and in Great Britain the reading of three books is held to be necessary. I fear our own district is sadly in arrears with reference to the production of really intelligent reading, and I would again direct your attention to my remarks made under this heading in last year's annual report. The comprehension of the subject-matter of the reading-lesson is generally very satisfactory; it would be well if the subject-matter of the poem selected for recitation were treated in a similar manner in this respect. I have occasionally noticed that even in schools where the recitation was well done, questions relating to the language of the poem were somewhat blankly received by the pupils.

Except in one or two cases I was thoroughly satisfied with the spelling and dictation throughout the district. The tests imposed were on the lines indicated in last year's report, and these will be again employed in the future. I am pleased to notice that errors in the spelling of simple words in other written work are of less frequent occurrence. All teachers should keep lists of misspelt words and use them occasionally by way of revision.

In arithmetic very satisfactory progress continues to be made, both in oral and written work. The tests for this subject are still set by the Education Department, and, with the exception of a few cards issued for Standard VI., presented no special difficulty. On the other hand, those issued for Standard III. were easier than those set down for the same standard in previous years.

Freehand and geometrical drawing are generally satisfactory. Scale drawing is very popular with our children, and very well done; whilst model drawing is not much attempted in the district. Drawing is taught most successfully where blank drawing-books only are used. A great many of our schools presented pupils for the first-grade examination conducted by the Wellington Technical School, the candidates meeting with great success. This examination has now become quite an annual institution, the children showing a keen desire to obtain a certificate.

Writing does not improve as it should. I am afraid this is due in a great measure to the fact that teachers do not take sufficient care to train pupils to sit in a good position and to hold pens properly. These are the more important points to be attended to, and I have frequently sought to impress them on the minds of teachers.

Geography continues to show improvement. In a few schools it is intelligently taught; not so, however, in the larger portion, where scanty information indifferently expressed is the chief fault. I am pleased to note that in only one school did I receive the matter asked for in tabulated form. Too little attention is devoted towards having all answers, either oral or written, given in complete sentences. Were this done generally it would prove most beneficial to this subject, and also to composition. As a rule maps are rather neatly drawn in most schools.

Composition and grammar seem to go hand in hand; at the same time they were not examined together, the former belonging to the pass and the latter to the class subjects. The correction of easy sentences was very fairly done, but paraphrasing was rather weak. In grammar, owing to the prevailing epidemic, I did not deem it advisable to impose a test fully up to requirements. The work done, however, showed the subject was receiving a fair share of attention.

The science selected for the year was ambulance-work, and this branch was for the most part taken up by the higher standards in all schools. The subject was well treated, the pupils displaying a great deal of enthusiasm in the practical work.

Needlework has now been placed on a more satisfactory footing, specimens of the required work being accepted instead of whole garments. More time can now be devoted to the actual teaching of sewing, and results are improving in consequence. It having been brought under my notice that certain girls absent themselves regularly on sewing afternoons, I shall in future, in all cases where the required amount of sewing is not produced, make no concession whatever in the arithmetic test.

Some attention is given to drill in all schools where a male teacher is employed, but owing to bad weather at examination time it had in most cases to be abandoned. At the Cobden School the boys did excellent work in their physical drill, and I should like to see more of it in the district. The boys at the Grey District High School are being drilled by the Government drill-instructor.

Grey District High School.—Secondary class: This class, which has a roll-number of nineteen, was examined in October. Fifteen pupils were present, two were absent owing to sickness, and one owing to another examination taking her attention. Results of the examination have been laid before you, which show the work to have been of a highly satisfactory character.

The Roman Catholic Schools.—Reports, &c., were prepared and furnished to these schools in every respect similar to those supplied to schools directly under the Board. The following is the table of results :—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.
Above Standard VI.	14	...	...
Standard VI.	16	15	15
" V.	21	19	19
" IV.	26	25	25
" III.	33	32	29
" II.	41	39	39
" I.	25	25	25
Preparatory	76	...	...
Totals	252	155	152

Total number of infants over eight years of age not presented in Standard I., nil.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Grey. W. L. F. FETCH, M.A., Inspector.

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, 27th December, 1898.

I have the honour to present the following report on the schools of the district for the year 1898.

In addition to the examination of all the schools included in the tabulated lists attached, inspection visits have been paid to all except the smaller aided schools. No reference is here made to the work of the secondary classes of the Hokitika and Kumara District High Schools, or to the results of the examination of the Catholic schools at Kumara, Hokitika, Kanieri, and Ross. In connection with these separate reports have been presented.

The following table relates mainly to the result of the examinations for passes in the standards :—

Classes.	Total presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1897.
				Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary classes	31	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI.	51	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	117	113	92	14 1	14 1
" V.	160	156	127	13 1	13 2
" IV.	142	138	106	12 1	12 3
" III.	189	186	154	11 1	11 2
" II.	160	158	145	9 10	10 0
" I.	139	137	130	8 11	8 10
Preparatory	412	...	...	...	...
Totals	1,401	888	754	11 6*	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

So far as an estimate can be made by such a test, the general result of the examinations of the year has reached the same high level occupied by that of the previous year, the percentage of failures compared with the total roll being 9·7, as against 9·9 in 1897. The table shows that the average age of passing is in each standard within two months of the average for the colony. This indicates that, while with regular attendance and other favourable conditions the age at which the pupils pass is not high, the examination tests are sufficient to provide against too low an average. The distribution of the number presented for examination in the various classes is expressed by the following percentages of the total roll-number : Above Standard VI., 3·7; Standard VI., 8·5; Standard V., 11·7; Standard IV., 10·4; Standard III., 13·8; Standard II., 11·7; Standard I., 10·1; Preparatory, 30·1. The number of pupils over eight years of age in preparatory classes is 18·4 per cent. of the class and 5·4 per cent. of the total roll. In the two largest schools the pupils of Standard I. and Standard II. were examined for a pass by the headmasters, and the results were in accord with those of my test. The teachers of the remaining schools declined to exercise the privilege.

The table next given contains a statement of the results in the subjects outside the pass group.

Subjects.	In Schools with more than One Teacher.						In Schools under the Charge of One Teacher.					
	Omitted.	Inferior.	Moderate or Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.	Omitted.	Inferior.	Moderate or Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.
Grammar	...	1	3	4	2	...	..	4	8	5	6	...
History	...	...	1	4	5	...	4	1	10	5	1	2
Elementary science (Stands. IV. to VI.)	...	...	2	5	2	2	5	4	5	3	6	...
Object-lessons (Preparatory and Standards I. to III.)	...	...	2	5	3	1	...	4	12	6	1	...
Mental arithmetic...	...	...	6	3	2	...	...	4	9	6	3	1
Recitation	...	...	1	3	5	2	...	...	2	15	6	...
Drill	8	...	...	3	...	...	23	...	...	...	...	...
Singing	4	...	1	1	3	2	22	...	...	...	1	..
Needlework	...	...	...	...	7	4	9	...	1	4	9	...
Comprehension of reading-matter ...	...	2	2	5	1	1	...	4	10	6	1	1

In this statement it will be seen that, with the exception of recitation and needlework, in none of the subjects included do more than half the schools of the district reach a satisfactory standard. The proportion is more encouraging in the larger schools; but in general the efficiency of the instruction given shows little advance on that of the previous year. The introduction of special Readers will doubtless effect improvement in history, and it is hoped that the issue of a text-book in drill to the teachers of the larger schools will prove an incentive to the bestowal of greater attention to the subject. During 1898 drill was confined to a moderate course in only three schools. In this district the teachers in charge of schools with an average attendance of twenty-five or more have the assistance of at least a monitor or a sewing-mistress, and there is no excuse for the omission of any extra subject, with the single exception of drill where a mistress is in charge. In aided schools there is more justification for the exclusion of certain subjects, but authority for this should be previously obtained.

Class above Standard VI.—Before reference is made to the more important aspects of the school work, information may be given regarding those pupils who remain in the schools after passing the Sixth Standard. The number in this class during 1898 was 3·7 per cent. of the total roll, and was nearly equal to half the number in Standard VI. In nearly every case no instruction is given in subjects outside the primary course, and the extra year is utilised in revising the work of the standards. To aid in securing this object, marks have during the past year been awarded to these pupils in the chief subjects on the following basis: Reading, with comprehension of the reading-matter, 10; spelling, 10; writing, 10; drawing, 10; arithmetic with mental arithmetic, 25; grammar and composition, 20; and geography, 15. As the total is 100, the marks obtained express a percentage. The inclusion of the more important class and additional subjects, and the fact that, while the course set for Standard VI. is the chief basis of the examination, questions are also set in the work of the lower standards, assist in providing a very fair amount of occupation for the next year. At the same time, the element of competition and the more exact record obtained rouse greater interest than did the mere repetition of a pass in the Sixth Standard. The result has been very satisfactory, very few of the pupils failing to secure at least 60 per cent. of marks.

Reading and Spelling.—Although the percentages of passes, 93 and 82 respectively, are less than in the previous year, the instruction in these subjects has been satisfactory. The spelling is prepared from one reading-book only, but the value of the instruction is increased by the greater correctness more recently secured in the spelling of words employed in the composition exercises of the pupils. The course in reading has been further extended by the introduction of the Southern Cross Historical Readers. The pupils in standards from the Third to the Sixth now prepare three reading-books each year, and those of the lower standards two. Although the passes are numerous, the number of really good readers is comparatively small. This is owing to an insufficiency of attention to such intonation and emphasis as are required to express the meaning of the passage. There is too often a lack of appreciation of the leading ideas of the sentences read that detracts from the value of work bearing otherwise evidence of careful preparation.

Arithmetic.—This subject occupies usually not less than a fourth of the school time, and in consequence is considered by pupils and teachers the most important requirement of the syllabus of instruction. Only a part of the rules studied will be of practical utility to the pupils in after-life, and the importance of the subject must largely depend on its educative capabilities. It is therefore unfortunate that in a majority of schools, owing, perhaps, to the position of mental arithmetic among the class subjects, the urgency of increasing the attention devoted to oral training in arithmetic is disregarded. Only six schools have during the past year earned the mark "Good" in mental arithmetic. It cannot be denied, however, that in arithmetic a great deal that is very satisfactory is achieved. During 1898 the number of passes amounted to 74 per cent., and in the written answers the pupils in most cases followed good methods. The comparative table showing the percentage of passes in connection with the tests issued by the Education Department is here continued:—

	Standard VI.	Standard V.	Standard IV.	Standard III.
1894	68	71	82	70
1895	75	49	74	77
1896	66	48	69	86
1897	81	68	75	78
1898	72	65	67	76

Grammar and Composition.—These branches, which are very closely connected, have in 1898 been examined together in one paper, the work in each being, however, assessed separately. It cannot too often be impressed on the minds of those responsible that a reasonable standard of efficiency must be maintained in grammar if the value of the school work as a whole is not to be lessened to a dangerous extent. Incorrect concords and other breaches of grammatical rules are serious defects in composition, and the preparation of the latter subject must be based on sound instruction in grammar. Yet barely half the schools have in this subject reached the mark "Satisfactory," while the percentage of passes in composition has fallen to 89. This result, as far as relates to composition, is still satisfactory, the chief defects being incomplete knowledge of the necessary forms in letter-writing, and the want of attention to sequence of thought in the various exercises. It is important in the training of pupils to secure a proper regard for the order of the various divisions of a subject.

Geography.—In the other pass-subjects much decried "cram" is possible to a very mall extent. In geography, on the other hand, greater care has to be exercised in presenting tests that will secure intelligent preparation. For this reason it is to be regretted that the syllabus does not allow the setting of sketch-maps, except those relating to New Zealand. While lists of names may be obtained, it is often the case that the relative position of the places represented is very imperfectly known; and to test this nothing is as useful as a sketch-map. It is preferable to secure exact knowledge in reference to a smaller number of important places than to extend the list at the sacrifice of accuracy; and whether the drawing of maps is included or not in the annual test, advantage should be taken of its utility during the year. The percentage of passes in geography—77—shows a decrease of ten compared with that of the previous year, and one cause of the reduction is the sacrifice of thoroughness in the attempt to cover too wide a course.

Manual Instruction.—It is often overlooked that several subjects are, strictly speaking, to be included under this head. Writing, drawing, and needlework, as well as carpentry, are the result of training in manual dexterity, and all are important from both the educative and the practical points of view.

Although in writing the percentage of passes—98—is high, there are a few schools in which, in regard to the neatness of exercise-books, there has been retrogression. So far the vertical system of handwriting has not been adopted in this district, except in the Catholic schools, where, in spite of continual effort, its introduction has not been followed by encouraging results. At the same time the teachers have been advised to avoid too great a slope, the system most generally adopted being similar to the semi-upright. A legible hand is thus secured that will at the same time develop into a useful running hand.

In drawing the percentage of passes is 93. A distinct advance has been made in the instruction in model-drawing, which is the most difficult, and consequently the most backward, of the various branches. The attention paid to the definitions necessary for the lower standards and to proper methods in freehand is rendering the instruction in all branches more complete and less laborious. In connection with the Wellington Technical School, ninety-seven passes in first-grade drawing—freehand, geometrical, model, or scale—have been secured in 1898 by pupils of four schools of this district.

The results in needlework have during recent years continued to show improvement, especially since specimens of the necessary work have been substituted for garments whose tedious preparation left little time for careful instruction. Since the close of the year a new syllabus has been issued by the Education Department. In this reference to garments is omitted, and the course set for each class so limited in amount that a very high standard of excellence may be insisted on.

Beyond these branches, manual instruction is confined to that given to the carpentry class connected with the Kumara School. This class is composed of twenty-four pupils of the Kumara School with four outside students. The more advanced pupils have completed the course of exercises in wood-work set by the Education Department, and have constructed such articles as wheelbarrows, steps, towel-rails, and cupboards. The instruction has been carried on outside of the ordinary school-hours, and has produced very satisfactory results.

Moral Training.—It is doubtless quite unnecessary to prove that moral training receives attention in the schools, although a course is not specially provided for in the time-tables. Every part of the ordinary routine has its ethical side; for the performance of duty under direction necessitates moral training, and it would be impossible to conduct a school without it. This is recognised in the standard regulations, as the Inspector has to report in regard to each school on the "order and discipline, and the tone of the school with respect to diligence, alacrity, obedience, and honour"; also on the "manners and general behaviour of the pupils." In general the order and discipline are good. The chief defect is in the training of the pupils in satisfactory methods of oral answering. In reply to questions they should be taught to make statements distinctly and fully, using, where possible, a full sentence. This will be done habitually and with alacrity if regularly insisted on by the teacher. In regard to honesty I am glad to report that in certain schools where great vigilance had formerly to be exercised to prevent copying and other reprehensible practices at the examination, very satisfactory improvement has been effected, and that in this respect the pupils of this district are very generally trustworthy. No complaint is invited by the manners and

behaviour of the children so far as these are under observation during periodical visits, but greater attention is sometimes necessary to details of school routine. In some cases it is forgotten that an Inspector judges the behaviour of the pupils not only by forms specially adopted for examination-day, but also by incidental openings for the exercise of habitual politeness.

General.—The fact that certain education districts are small and remote often leads to a general impression that the standard of work in these must fall below that of the more prominent districts. A little consideration will show that this is not necessarily the case. The smaller number of schools allows the Inspector to acquire a more exact knowledge of the conditions and efficiency of each, and the lack of distractions causes the opportunities granted by educational institutions to be valued more highly. This has been well illustrated by the successes in colonial examinations of pupils of this district. During 1898 a pass with credit was obtained in connection with the University Junior Scholarship examination, besides a number of passes in the matriculation and in the Senior and Junior Civil Service examinations, two candidates from Westland securing in the junior competition first and second places respectively for the colony. In addition, a pupil of a primary school of the district has been awarded a scholarship in connection with the Victoria College, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Westland. A. J. MORTON, Inspector.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,— Christchurch, 30th January, 1899.

We have the honour to present our report on the schools of the North Canterbury District for the year 1898. In the body of the report, or attached as one of the appendices, are given for transmission to the Education Department the returns required by section 12 of the regulations for inspection of schools and standards of examination.

The routine of inspection and examination has very closely followed the lines of previous years, and, with the examination of pupil-teachers and scholarship candidates, has fully occupied our time, with the exception of the customary February vacation.

Having on various occasions discussed more or less fully the chief topics of school work, we do not in the present case purpose entering into much detail; and, beyond a few general observations and the usual statistics, with the necessary comments upon them, take the liberty of confining our remarks to one or two matters of immediate interest.

The schools in general are in good working-order. The teachers, with few exceptions, provide themselves with suitably arranged time-tables, making provision for the necessary subjects of instruction. They, in the main, carry out their duties punctually and methodically; they rarely fail to apply themselves with earnest purpose to those subjects at least of the school course on which the status of the children directly depends; and if in subjects the effective treatment of which is less regarded by local public opinion greater differences are to be found, we have to remember that schools necessarily differ in their opportunities, and that deficiencies in some respects are the necessary complement of a specialisation which is in many cases to be encouraged. On the whole, the pass-subjects are creditably done, though we have had an indifferent result rather more frequently this year than usual; and the class and additional subjects receive in a majority of instances as much attention as might fairly be expected.

TABLE A.—PASS-SUBJECTS.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
					Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	327	204	...	99	...
Standard VI.	1,454	1,397	1,149	159	13 9
" V.	2,270	2,161	1,579	184	12 10
" IV.	2,999	2,848	2,186	191	11 11
" III.	3,000	2,875	2,211	189	10 10
" II.	2,542	2,466	2,299	192	9 7
" I.	2,384	2,321	2,267	191	8 6
Preparatory	5,914	5,266	...	199	...
Totals for 1898	20,890	19,538	11,691	200	11 3*
Totals for 1897	21,028	19,814	12,003	200	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

TABLE B.—PASS-SUBJECTS (Numbers reduced to Percentages).

Classes.	School-roll.	Class-roll.	Passed, 1898.		Passed, 1897.	
	Presented.	Present.	School-roll.	Class-roll.	School-roll.	Class-roll.
Above Standard VI.	1·5	62·4	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	7·0	96·8	5·5	79·0	5·5	81·3
" V.	10·9	95·2	7·6	69·6	7·5	71·2
" IV.	14·3	95·0	10·5	72·9	10·1	70·6
" III.	14·3	95·8	10·6	73·7	11·7	77·8
" II.	12·2	97·0	11·0	90·4	11·4	90·8
" I.	11·4	97·4	10·8	95·1	10·9	95·6
Preparatory	28·3	89·0	...	...	...	...
Totals	100·0	93·5	56·0	79·8	57·1	80·9

The schools of the district now number 201, one of which was opened during the year. All the others were examined in due course. In the schools examined there were on the rolls, as may be seen in the foregoing table, 20,890 children, of whom 14,649 were included in the Standard Classes VI.–I. Of the latter number 14,068 (or 96 per cent.) of the class enrolment were present on the days of examination, and 11,691 passed their respective standards. These numbers are somewhat lower than the corresponding figures of the previous year, and the proportion passed is also somewhat less, but the difference in neither case is material. Of those who did not pass 320 in all would have been regarded as "excepted" under the old rule superseded by the existing regulations.

The pupils of the class above Standard VI. were for the greater part examined simply a second time in the Sixth Standard programme, in which they were expected to show special proficiency. In a number of cases an extra programme of work was submitted, which commonly included a little algebra and Euclid, or a little Latin. Not unfrequently sets of books in bookkeeping were shown, and in one instance a typewriter was in use. Of the 5,266 children examined in the preparatory division 832 were eight years of age or more. The discretion exercised in not presenting these children in the First Standard was generally such as we could not question.

CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.

Class-subjects.						Additional Subjects.	
Degree of Proficiency.	Number of Schools.					Name of Subject.	Number of Schools represented.
	Grammar.	History.	Geography, Standard II. (only).	Science and Object-lessons.	Mental Arithmetic.		
Excellent ...	10	9	28	11	...	Repetition of poetry	200
Good	15	54	59	52	16	Drill	143
Satisfactory ...	36	57	58	52	23	Singing	153
Fair	50	50	27	45	59	Sewing	191
Moderate ...	13	7	9	11	28	Comprehension of reading-matter	200
Inferior ...	73	20	7	28	69		
Total schools included in estimate	197	197	188	199	195		

NOTE.—The above terms expressing degrees of proficiency are used in the sense in which they are directed to be used in Departmental Form No. 24.

To bring our returns more closely into accordance with the wishes of the Education Department and the practice of other Inspectors, we have this year abandoned numerical estimates for class-subjects in the general report and appendix, while retaining them in preference to verbal judgments in the individual reports on schools. For the preference a word or two of explanation may be necessary. In individual reports the numerical estimates have this merit: that they compel the Inspector to be as definite as possible where definiteness at the best can only be approximate; but their chief recommendation lies in the fact that they enable him to accept an indifferent or poor result in one or two of the subjects concerned (as the letter and the spirit of the regulations quite justify him in doing) without having to use any term implying reproach to the teacher. If mental arithmetic, for instance, in a small, single-handed school is poorly done, as it might well be under the best of teachers, a numerical estimate without comment is less likely to attract invidious attention than the appearance of the word "inferior" opposite the name of the subject. In the supposed

instance a poor result might be fair enough, but it would be destructive of all basis of comparison if it were classed as "fair." Probably the best plan of dealing with these subjects would be found in a union of the two practices, by which the numerical estimate should be accompanied or not, at the Inspector's discretion, by some brief remark by way of supplement. In a summarised return the difficulty does not occur, though it is not entirely absent from a summary such as is contained in Appendix I. (Departmental Form No. 24). In regard to the latter, we should also like to point out that we express with a good deal of diffidence a separate judgment of the "manners" of the children, for the simple reason that our opportunities for observation are in many cases too limited.

From the tabular summary of class-subjects given above it will at once be seen that in respect of geography (Standard II.), history, science, and object-lessons, a majority of the schools are included in the three upper grades, while in grammar and mental arithmetic the positions are reversed. The actual proportions in order of merit are: Geography, in 77 out of every hundred of schools; history, 61; science and object-lessons, 58; grammar, 31; and mental arithmetic, 20.

The relations of the subjects to each other are not materially different from those of the previous year, but an improvement in history is to be noted. In grammar more attention has been given in the upper classes to analysis and less to parsing, with, we consider, some advantage to the schools; but the whole subject still occupies an unsatisfactory position. If in this subject, as in others of the class group, the teacher were free to adopt an abridged programme—such as his time and opportunities would enable him to carry out with some degree of efficiency—the concession would be of moral and mental benefit to the district. In the English code the teacher has the option of drawing up his own scheme of grammar, and for his guidance several alternative schemes are presented to his choice, together with an abridged scheme for adoption in smaller schools. With the different examination conditions in New Zealand it would scarcely be practicable to go quite so far in the liberty accorded; but we do not see why a full scheme and an abridged scheme (not necessarily following in all respects the same lines) should not be presented to the teacher's choice, according to the opportunities he enjoys, or the direction in which his tastes and requirements lead him in specialisation. We quite appreciate the attitude of the Education Department in its reluctance to accept the programme proposed by us a little over a year ago, as any abridgment necessarily leaves out some desirable features which a number of schools might, and a few happily do, secure; but without something of the kind suggested there can be little satisfaction in the vast majority of cases to teacher, examiner, or pupil in connection with the subject.

STATISTICS OF CLASSIFICATION.

—	Standard IV. and upwards.	Standards I., II., and III.	Preparatory Division.	Mean of Average Age, Standards VI. to I.
				Yrs. mos.
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
1897	33·0	39·0	28·0	11 3
1898	33·7	37·9	28·3	11 3

It is a common subject of remark that the children in our schools now complete their standard course at too early an age, and men's minds are exercised over the question whether this is a matter requiring remedy; or, if not, what further provision is to be made for young people after quitting the elementary school. In this connection the above table of classification is significant in the evidence it presents of a gradual and sustained increase in the proportion of pupils included in the upper classes, the almost equally striking decrease in the preparatory division, and the gradual lowering of the mean average age. The amiable, if somewhat hasty, inference generally made is that as teachers have become more skilful in their school routine their efficiency has increased, and the pupils in consequence pass their standards more readily. There is, however, another very important fact which must not be overlooked—the fact that the standards themselves have changed. The upper grades have been made easier, so that, while the mental equipment of a successful Sixth Standard pupil may at the present time be a little better adjusted to the general needs than it was a few years ago, the application and general capacity essential to success stand on a somewhat lower plane. The schoolmaster would have the grades easier still, and proposes the introduction of a seventh standard, which would permit of a redistribution of the work included in the present programme, and more thorough preparation at the several stages. We think he is wrong. A needless subdivision would only be an embarrassment to the smaller schools, where the classes are already numerous enough, and more thorough preparation could just as readily be secured by recognising the advantage to many children of remaining in one or more of the standard classes for two years in succession. It is, no doubt, very difficult to get parents to see the advantage where their own children are concerned, and the teacher at present can scarcely afford to act upon a different view; but there really seems to be no other way of fitting a standard scheme to the varying capacities of the pupils, and an official recognition of the fact would help the teacher much.

Whatever improvement, however, may be effected in the standard of attainment within the limits of the elementary school course, the need of further instruction on the lines of the continuation school, which now forms so prominent a feature in the English educational system, is evident; and the provision would best be made, we need scarcely add, in close connection with a scheme of technical instruction.

We have, &c.,
L. B. Wood, M.A.,
W. J. Anderson, LL.D.,
Thomas Ritchie, B.A.,
Inspectors.

The Chairman, Board of Education, North Canterbury.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,— Education Office, Timaru, 28th February, 1899.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1898.

At the close of the year there were sixty-seven public schools in South Canterbury, being two more than at the end of last year. The number of public schools examined during the year was sixty-five, and these, with the five Roman Catholic schools, brought up the number examined to seventy. In the Roman Catholic schools 721 children were presented, 448 were examined in standards, and 402 passed. Further details of the examinations of the Catholic schools are given in the appendix; and a comparison of these details with those of former years shows that the schools have made a distinct advance in efficiency. It may not be out of place here to remind the managers and teachers of the Catholic schools that the Timaru High School Board offers exhibitions entitling the winners to free education for two years at the Timaru High Schools, and that children from "any private primary institution" are eligible as candidates, the conditions as to subjects and age being the same as for children from the public schools. This year no candidates from private schools availed themselves of the opportunity of competing, but this may have been due to the fact that it was late in the year before the High School Board issued its new regulations with regard to the granting of exhibitions.

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.	120	...	...	...
Standard VI.	336	328	290	13 10
" V.	523	499	408	12 9
" IV.	730	704	591	11 11
" III.	763	741	643	10 8
" II.	609	599	587	9 7
" I.	619	596	591	8 6
Preparatory	1,394	...	...	...
Totals for 1898	5,094	3,467	3,110	11 2*
Totals for 1897	5,239	3,568	3,055	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

These figures show for the year a decrease of 145 in the number of pupils presented, but, as the Hakateramea School, with about forty children on the roll, is not included, the actual decrease is just over a hundred. The falling-off in roll-number, which commenced last year with a decrease of fifty from the previous year, is likely to continue, as it is almost altogether in the classes under Standard III. that the numbers have fallen. From all accounts North Canterbury and Otago are having a similar experience. I leave it to others to explain the causes of this decrease; but I wish particularly to draw attention to the fact that with a falling attendance we are increasing the number of our schools.

The number of pupils present and examined in Standards I. to VI. is 3,467, as against 3,568 last year; and the number of pupils that passed in one or other of the standards is 3,110, as against 3,055 last year. The percentage of those that passed is 89·7; it was 85·6 last year. In Standards III., IV., V., and VI. the percentages of passes are 86, 83, 81, and 88; the corresponding figures for last year were 83, 72, 79, and 84. While every class thus shows a substantial advance, the rise in Standard IV. from 72 to 83 is very marked indeed, and is to be accounted for in a great measure by the character of the test sums for the standard set by the Education Department, which were simpler than those of past years. The passes in Standards I. and II. as determined by the head-teachers are 99 and 98 per cent. respectively; and on examining these classes I found very few pupils whose promotion was undeserved.

Of the 1,394 children in the preparatory classes, 184 were over eight years of age when the schools in which they were taught were examined. Last year we had 185 out of 1,475. The reasons assigned for not presenting them in Standard I. appeared to me to be in most cases sufficient.

I have prepared the following table, which shows the number of pupils examined in Standards III., IV., V., and VI., and the number of passes gained in each of the pass-subjects by these standards, the percentage of passes being also stated in the following subjects, viz., spelling and dictation, arithmetic, composition, and geography :—

TABLE II.

—	Number examined.	Passes in										
		Reading.	Writing.	Drawing.	Spelling and Dictation.		Arithmetic.		Composition.		Geography.	
						P. cent.		P. cent.		P. cent.		P. cent.
Standard VI.	328	318	327	327	310	94	224	68	307	93	305	93
" V.	499	452	498	487	412	82	367	73	451	90	446	89
" IV.	704	650	691	684	611	86	582	82	583	82	609	86
" III.	741	680	710	713	609	82	588	79	680	91	667	90
	2,272	2,100	2,226	2,211	1,942	...	1,761	...	2,021	...	2,027	...

If our teachers will be good enough to compare the results for their schools with the general result for the district as set forth in this table, they will be able to see in what subjects their pupils have been instrumental either in raising or in lowering the general average.

Two children out of every hundred examined in writing, and three out of every hundred in drawing, failed to meet the requirements for a pass. At first glance this looks exceedingly satisfactory, and it would be entirely so if mere passing always indicated a considerable degree of merit. But much of the writing and drawing that earns a pass is very little removed in quality from that which entails failure. On the whole, however, both subjects have been efficiently taught in the majority of the schools. In the matter of writing I think it necessary, however absurd it may seem, to warn some teachers that copybooks do not teach writing. Whatever the style of writing, whether it is upright or sloping, the teacher must drill his scholars in the proper position of the body and in the right way of holding the pen, and he must make constant use of the blackboard in showing the slope, heights, turns, and joinings of the letters. It is only when these points are carefully attended to, and the supervision and correction of all written work are thorough and systematic, that the best results will be obtained. I had one very striking instance of what the best teaching can do in writing when a Third Standard class of over eighty pupils handed up an exercise in dictation, the writing of which was excellent, and so even in style and quality that at first glance it might have been supposed that the whole set of papers had been written by one person. Such uniformity in writing is a sure guarantee of good teaching; individuality will come soon enough when school-days are over.

The really bad readers are not very many ; indeed, they are few compared with the children that read well. Between the good readers and the bad there is a great intermediate class, whose reading is of the kind that one feels might easily have been so much better. Had there been a little more of force and clearness, a little more attention to phrasing and expression, a touch of sympathy in tone, then their reading would have been altogether pleasing; but some little thing is wanting, and the reading of the great bulk of the pupils just escapes commendation without incurring condemnation. I wish teachers would always remember how great an aid to good reading it is for the pupil to stand well, with his feet firmly placed, and his body well braced for effort. One does not expect crispness of utterance from a reader standing with bent knees and head drooping low over his book. A slovenly attitude and a nerveless style go together.

A reference to Table II. will show that Standard VI. has the best record—and it is a very good one—in spelling and dictation, Standard IV. coming next, with Standards III. and V. on the same mark, but some points below Standard IV. Our scholars have dictation and spelling on paper for the first time in their school course on reaching Standard III., but notwithstanding this the class might have made a better appearance. On passing out of Standard IV. the scholars find themselves face to face with a reading-book presenting difficulties of a much greater kind than they experienced on passing from Standard III. to Standard IV. ; and allowance being made for this, their spelling and dictation may very well be considered satisfactory. In the lowest standards and in the preparatory classes spelling is often excellent.

It will be noticed that in arithmetic Standard IV. comes out best with a percentage of passes of 82, Standard III. coming next with 79, then Standard V. with 73, and last Standard VI. with 68. A boy passes with three sums right, and a girl with two and a half sums right, out of five sums set. Many of those that failed had two sums right, some had only one, and here and there a pupil failed outright ; and of those that passed many had four or five sums right. Considering the nature of the subject itself and the kind of test to which the children are subjected to obtain a pass, I think the results over all speak well for the way in which arithmetic is taught in our district. As a general rule, the pupils set down the steps of the working in a style which shows that they have been accustomed to bring their intelligence to bear on the problems, and that they have not worked mechanically. During the past few years there has been a very noticeable improvement in most schools in the teaching of the first stages of arithmetic. The pupils of the lower standards are learning to be speedy in their calculations, and there is no ground for fear that this speed is gained at a sacrifice of accuracy; for it generally holds good in arithmetic that the fast workers are the

most accurate. It is in the matter of slowness of working that some reproach attaches to the classes in arithmetic in the higher standards of the large schools. All the year there is too much "marking time" on their own ground by the better pupils; the pace of the laggards becomes the pace of the class. Of course this is a real danger in every subject where pupils are taught in very large classes, but in arithmetic the remedy, as I have often pointed out to head-teachers, is not difficult of application. Let the good pupils go ahead without losing their time listening to the frequently recurring explanations that are necessary before the dull ones can be made to grasp some principle and put it into practice.

Both in the teaching of composition and in the quality of work presented by the pupils improvement is made from year to year. So far as simple passing is concerned, Standards III., V., and VI. come close together with a very creditable return, while Standard IV. lags considerably behind. I am not always satisfied that the scholars have received sufficient instruction as to the proper forms to be observed at the beginning and at the end of the letters they write, and as to the mode of addressing envelopes. A little more care in this direction would greatly add to the school-value of the exercises in letter-writing; and the utility of the instruction for the affairs of every-day life demands that it should not in any case suffer from neglect. In Standards V. and VI. great weakness is shown in the correction of sentences that are glaringly faulty in grammar or in construction, and in the punctuation of sentences involving the right use of inverted commas.

Geography still keeps its place as a pass-subject in spite of valid reasons put forth from time to time for its displacement and for its inclusion in the group of class-subjects. I prefer to examine the subject orally, because under oral examination one covers much ground in a short space of time, and quickly and fairly decides whether the subject has been taught with intelligence and fullness, and whether the class as a whole is well prepared; and surely this is enough for an examiner to find out in a subject like geography. Except in very small classes I require to supplement the oral examination by a certain amount of answering on slates, being compelled to do so by the necessity of marking "Pass" or "Fail" against the name of every pupil. This makes the work of examining a large class a laborious process, and one that is irksome in an extreme degree, because it is carried out under strong conviction that this marking of passes and failures in geography, though necessary under the existing regulations, is not only useless, but positively harmful. It is pandering to "cram," which fosters in the children a distaste for a subject that should be one of the most delightful and instructive of all their lessons. In this subject, as in others, it is true that every well-taught class gains a high percentage of passes; it is also true that a high percentage is sometimes gained without our being able to compliment the teacher on the quality of his teaching. But, putting aside the cases where the acquisition of a sufficient amount of geography to pass the standard is the goal aimed at, I am pleased to say that most of our teachers give evidence of skill, diligence, and resource in their treatment of the geography lessons. The stirring events of the year brought into prominence places in the Far East, in India, in Africa, and in the West; and there are not many pupils of the highest classes that have not had their attention directed to the scheming of the European Powers in Northern China, to the brilliant sea-fights of their American cousins at Manila and Santiago, to the heroic episode of Dargai, and to Kitchener's splendid victory at Omdurman; while Fashoda would be "spotted" on the map as readily as Waterloo.

The class-subjects—grammar, history, geography (Standard II.), science, object-lessons, mental arithmetic—were examined in every school, and a brief statement of their quality was given in every report. In one of the columns of the appendix will be found against the name of every school a word that roughly indicates the proficiency in the class-subjects as a whole, and in the next column the same thing is done for the additional subjects, the latter including recitation, drill, singing, sewing, and comprehension of the language of the reading-lessons. In class-subjects six schools are marked "good," thirty-two "satisfactory," twenty-one "fair," and six "moderate." In additional subjects eleven schools are marked "good," thirty-eight "satisfactory," fourteen "fair," and two "moderate." In this report I do not intend to take up these subjects in detail, but I cannot let this opportunity pass without expressing my appreciation of the marked improvement that is being made in the giving of object-lessons.

Although we have no special institution for the training of our pupil-teachers, their success in the department's annual examinations for certificates has for years been of the most satisfactory kind, and creditable in the highest degree to themselves and the head-teachers who have trained them; indeed, their success compares most favourably with that of the candidates from any other education district. That some of our young teachers are not content to make the attainment of an E or a D certificate their final goal is proved by the fact that, of those that have served their pupil-teachership during my own term of office, two have won the M.A. degree with first- and second-class honours respectively, four have gained the B.A. degree, and many are now studying with a view to graduation.

In only a small minority of our schools have I found it necessary to award a mark lower than "good" for discipline, tone, and manners. Conspicuously displayed in every schoolroom is the "Good Manners" chart, which "sets forth in short, terse sentences what courteous boys and girls should be careful to observe respecting their conduct at home, at school, at play, in the street, at table, and everywhere." The chart was issued by the Board not simply as a wall-adornment, but for use; and I have had frequent testimony of its value from teachers who deem it the highest privilege of their office to mould the characters of the boys and girls intrusted to their charge.

I have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, South Canterbury Board of Education.

APPENDIX.

EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	8	...	...	...
Standard VI.	33	31	30	14 4
" V.	56	53	43	13 7
" IV.	89	84	78	12 6
" III.	108	102	78	11 4
" II.	99	94	90	10 8
" I.	88	84	83	8 11
Preparatory	240	...	...	...
Totals	721	448	402	11 11*

* Mean of average age.

OTAGO.

SIR,— Education Office, Dunedin, 1st March, 1899.

We have the honour to submit the following general report for the year 1898.

All the schools were examined, and all but a few were also inspected. In addition to the public schools, nine Catholic schools were examined and three inspected. In July and December we examined 171 scholarship competitors, fifty-three pupil-teachers, and 122 pupil-teacher candidates.

The first of the following tables contains a summary of the results of the examination of the public schools of the district, so far as standard passes are concerned. It is a summary of our annual report to the department on each school examined; but it is not presented as our judgment on the efficiency of the schools, or even on the condition of the pass-subjects. It shows how many pupils had qualified for promotion in the standards, and how many passed Standard IV., the compulsory standard, and Standard VI., the standard qualifying for employment in several branches of the public service. Comparison of this table with those of 1896 and 1897 will show that the number of pupils in Standard VI. and the class above Standard VI. has considerably increased, that the number of pupils in the preparatory class has seriously decreased, and that the mean of the average ages of the pupils who passed the standards has decreased. The average ages of the pupils in Standards I. and II., for the passes of whom head-teachers are responsible, have not altered for the last two years; but the mean of the average ages of the pupils from Standard III. to Standard VI., for the passes of whom Inspectors are responsible, has, since 1897, decreased by nearly three months.

TABLE A.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	665	...	...	...
Standard VI.	1,601	1,559	1,420	13 6
" V.	2,198	2,126	1,700	12 9
" IV.	2,778	2,657	2,117	11 11
" III.	2,773	2,689	2,235	10 9
" II.	2,639	2,580	2,480	9 9
" I.	2,422	2,381	2,363	8 8
Preparatory	6,340	...	...	...
Totals	21,416	13,992	12,315	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

TABLE B.—SHOWING EFFICIENCY-MARKS IN SUBJECTS.

Pass-subjects.

Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.
Satisfactory.	Good.	Satisfactory.	Satisfactory.	Satisfactory.	Fair.	Satisfactory.

Class and Additional Subjects.

Grammar.	History.	Object-lessons and Science.	Mental Arithmetic.	Recitation.	Drill and Exercises.	Singing.	Needlework.	Comprehension.
Fair.	Fair.	Fair.	Weak.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Fair.	Very good.	Satisfactory.

Under normal conditions we should have been disappointed with the examination results shown in Tables A and B, especially with the efficiency-marks in Table B. We know that the standard of efficiency has been fully maintained, and in some subjects even raised; but Table B shows a fall instead of the rise we anticipated before beginning the examinations. We attribute this apparent falling-off to prevailing sickness, both before and during the examination of a considerable number of schools. Throughout the whole examination period the schools were more or less affected by German measles. Under examination we had children who had recently recovered, children in various stages of convalescence, children showing the first symptoms of the sickness—all more or less physically unfit to do justice to themselves or their teachers. For hygienic reasons, as well as for the sake of the standard passes, especially in Standards IV. and VI., we arranged for the examination of children in whatever schools they presented themselves, and by this and other measures endeavoured, as far as possible, to minimise the bad results of the sickness; but notwithstanding all that was done, the children affected were examined at a disadvantage. The head-teachers' examination of Standards I. and II. gave the same result as in 1897—viz., 97·6 per cent. of passes; but the examination of Standard III. to Standard VI. gave only 82·7 per cent. of passes, a drop of 2 per cent.; and the efficiency-marks on which Table B is based show in pass-subjects a drop of 4·3 per cent., in class-subjects a drop of 3·3 per cent., and in additional subjects a drop of 1·2 per cent.

The once popular idea that a "good pass" is the end and aim of school life and work is dying, but dying hard; and once more we protest against a high percentage of passes being accepted as evidence of a high standard of efficiency. The pupil who gains from 50 to 60 per cent. in each of six of the pass-subjects, but does poorly in the remaining ten subjects of the school course, receives a standard pass; the pupil who does very good work—say, gains 76 per cent. in all the subjects of the school course—receives a standard pass: in calculating the percentage of passes no distinction is made; and so it is with schools. Under Table A two schools, each passing all the pupils, would be classed as excellent; while under Table B one might be classed as very weak and the other as very good. The majority of the pupils of the first school will close their school life with an already relaxing grasp of the mechanically acquired modicum of information that enabled them to touch the minimum standard of a pass, and with little taste and less capacity for self-improvement; the majority of the pupils of the second school will complete the school course with a fair stock of varied information well assimilated—a permanent possession—with a taste for one or more of their studies, and a conciousness of capacity for self-improvement. Advantage has been taken of our attitude towards the percentage craze to enter, on our authority, the plea that a poor pass should give parents and Committees little concern. We cannot for a moment allow this. Children of average capacity and in fairly good attendance have a right to expect passes, and should have no difficulty in securing them; and to those in Standard IV. and Standard VI. success in the pass-examination may be of life-long importance. We repeat what we have already said in this connection, and we consider it worthy of note by all concerned: "Every well-taught school gains a high standard pass; but not every school that gains a high standard pass is a well-taught school."

On the 31st July, 1894, amended regulations for the inspection and examination of schools came into force. Under section 6 of these regulations it became the duty of the head-teacher of each school to examine classes Standard I. and Standard II., and ascertain what pupils are fit to pass Standards I. and II. respectively. This has been done, and the pupils whom the head-teacher deemed fit to pass have, if present in class during the Inspector's examination in class-subjects, been passed in their respective standards. Under section 3 it became the duty of the Inspector to report on the degree of discretion displayed by the head-teacher in the determining of the passes in Standards I. and II. In discharge of this duty we have examined these standards, with greater or less minuteness according to circumstances, and we have almost invariably reported that the passes were "satisfactory," or "justified by the results of our examination." This experiment has been on its trial for four years. We cannot but commend the wisdom that designed it, and have no hesitation in saying that the power placed in the hands of the head-teachers has been used with great discretion and with good results.

For two years we have had under consideration and discussion the total abolition of the standard pass. We have endeavoured to exclude from our counsels all outside influences, and to confine ourselves to the operation of the standard pass on school life and work, to the professional character of our teaching staff, to the condition of our schools, and to our own relations with them. When we wrote our report for 1897 there was still a difference of opinion among us. We are now at one; and we think that, so far as the Otago District is concerned, the standard pass might, with great advantage to real education, be abolished.

The re-examination of Standard I. and Standard II. by Inspectors may seem to some a work of supererogation. We know that it is not. As frankly as we have asserted that head-teachers have used their power with great discretion, we assert that much of the smoothness and success with which the experiment has worked is due to this re-examination. Frequently the head-teacher suspends judgment till after the Inspector's examination; frequently a decision is altered during the examination, and a pupil receives the benefit of a better performance; differences of opinion between head-master and assistant disappear during examination; sometimes in small country schools the mistress needs the support of the Inspector's judgment on the failures. We make the examination as minute as time permits, but we do not feel bound to make it, in all cases, as complete as that of the higher standards. Sufficient ground, however, is covered to enable us to place on record in the examination reports our estimate of the work done by assistants in charge of these classes, and thus to place them on the same platform as the teachers of the higher classes.

The following is an illustration of the examination reports placed during the year before the Board and the respective School Committees:—

To be copied into the Examination Register, and submitted to the Committee as the report on the school.

[Form No. 2.

Otago Education Board.

Examination Report on the School, , 189 .

No.	Teacher.	Standards.	Number presented.	Number present.	Number passed.	Average Age of those who passed.	Pass-subjects.							Class-subjects.				Additional Subjects.					Order.	Attention.	Manners.	Attendance Percentage since Last Examination.	General Results.
							Reading.	Spelling and Dictation.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.	Grammar.	History.	Science and Object-lessons.	Mental Arithmetic.	Recitation.	Drill and Exercises.	Singing.	Needlework.	Comprehension.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1	Mistress and P.Ts.	P.	170	—	—	—	G.	E.	V.G.	V.G.	E.	—	—	—	—	V.G.	—	S.	V.G.	V.G.	E.[1]	—	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	76	Very good.
2	6th Assistant (F)	S1.	91	91	91	8 10	S.	E.	V.G.	V.G.	E.	—	—	—	—	G.	—	G.	V.G.	V.G.		V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	78	Good.
3	5th „ (F)	S2.	100	98	97	9 10	S.	E.	V.G.	V.G.	G.	—	V.G.	—	—	V.G.[8]	V.G.	G.	V.G.	V.G.	E.[3]	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	81	Good.
4	3rd „ (F)	S3.	90	90	87	10 11	V.G.	G.	G.	V.G.	V.G.	S.	G.	F.	G.	V.G.[8]	G.	G.	V.G.			S.	G.	G.	V.G.	80	Good.
5	4th „ (M)	S4.	90	89	86	12 0	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	G.	S.	G.	S.	G.	G.	S.	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.[7]	E.[2]	S.	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	79	Good.
6	2nd „ (M)	S5.	80	79	65	13 2	S.	V.G.	S.	S.	F.	W.	S.	W.	F.	S.	V.W.	S.	V.G.		E.[1]	F.	G.	G.	V.G.	67	Satisfactory.
7	1st „ (M)	S6.	50	50	48	13 8	G.	V.G.	G.	S.	G.	F.	V.G.	F.	V.G.	G.[8]	F.	G.	V.G.			G.	V.G.	V.G.	V.G.	76	Good.
8	Head-teacher and P.T.	X.	30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
	Total ..	..	701	497	474	Average: S.	V.G.	G.	G.	G.	F.	G.	F.	S.	G.	F.	S.	V.G.	V.G.	E.	S.	G.	G.	V.G.	..	Good.

The small numeral indicates the teacher by whom the subject was taught.

Geography of S. 2 is a class-subject.

Relative value of descriptive words, ranging from V.W. (30 per cent.) to E. (over 80 per cent.)—

V.W. = Very weak.
W. = Weak.
F. = Fair.
S. = Satisfactory.
G. = Good.
V.G. = Very good.
E. = Excellent.

Note on the Head-teacher's Passes in Standards I. and II.

Fully justified by the results of our examination.

Instruction of Class X.

Euclid and algebra, satisfactory; Latin and English, fair; arithmetic, very good.

Inspector.

29. Number of school-days since last examination	254
30. Number of school days on which school was closed	65
31. Number of failed who attended less than half of school-days ..	10

Our desire to lay before the Board and School Committees reports as full and at the same time as concise as possible led us to adopt the above form of report. The preparation of these reports entails a large amount of labour; but we believe that to those who take an intelligent interest in the welfare of the schools they have given general satisfaction, and we know that in schools in which reproof, stimulation, or encouragement was necessary they are already beginning to tell effectively.

Information which in the past was sent to School Committees on the departmental form No. 22 is embodied in the new reports. It is our duty to record the number of children who pass the various standards, and the record has its own value; but columns 4 to 6, which contain this record, should be read in the light of the efficiency report contained in columns 8 to 23. For a full explanation of the relative bearings of these columns we refer you to our report for 1897; but, for the sake of those who may read this and cannot readily refer to that report, we repeat the concluding paragraph of the explanation: "With us the standard pass is a mere by-product of the examination; we judge the quality of the teaching by the efficiency marks gained in the subjects. Our test is a laborious one to Inspectors, but it is exact and fair. All the pupils taught by one teacher are regarded as constituting a working unit; they are credited with every mark they earn, and their efficiency mark is determined by the ratio of the mark attained to the total attainable. There is no question of pass or of failure, all the pupils being regarded as contributing to the general result—the strong according to their strength, and the weak according to theirs." Teachers sometimes direct our attention to pupils presented for examination under exceptional circumstances: pupils with mental weakness approaching imbecility; pupils neglected in their youth, and too old to be classed with little ones, their equals in attainments; pupils recently admitted, but unprepared for the standard work in which they must be presented. Those of them who have already passed a standard must be reckoned in columns 5 and 6, but we exclude, and feel fully justified in excluding, their exceptional results from the efficiency marks.

In this report every department of school life and work finds acknowledgment to a greater or less extent. The aim of our national system of education is development—intellectual, moral, and physical; and in estimating the total efficiency of a school we acknowledge this. The intellectual necessarily demands from us the lion's share of efficiency marks; but to the moral and the physical, under "order," "attention," "manners," "drill and exercises," we have assigned rather more than 20 per cent. of the total marks. In the departmental report form the actual efficiency of the classes in the pass-subjects was practically ignored, and no provision was made for the expression of the efficiency of each class severally in the class and additional subjects. From the information given on the departmental report form it was impossible to ascertain the efficiency of the work done by individual teachers in these important subjects. The term that expressed the average efficiency of all the classes gave to the efficient teacher undeserved discredit, and to the inefficient teacher undeserved credit. We could cite schools in which a weak spot has for years existed, apparently unsuspected by the members of the School Committees. The standard passes made by the pupils of the inefficient teachers were sufficient to allay suspicion; but the efficient teachers of higher standards knew well the amount of worry and extra labour the promotion of these defectively taught pupils caused them. The new form of report shows in every subject the efficiency mark of each teacher's class or group of classes. We must here say that a low general result is not necessarily an indication of weakness in the teacher. An accumulation of weaklings will occasionally form in the lower classes of a school, and, as it passes upwards through the school, it will prove almost a heartbreak to each teacher in succession. It is right that such weaklings should sooner or later be passed upwards; but, in fairness to the teacher, the efficiency mark of his weak class should be read in the light of the marks made by it in the previous examination. The repetition of a low general result is probably an indication of weakness in the teacher, and might suggest his being employed elsewhere in the school. The information given under Nos. 7, 27, 29, 30, and 31 shows conditions under which the work of the year has been done, and the modifying influence of these conditions on the efficiency marks should have full consideration from members of School Committees.

At the end of the year we were requested by the department to add to the usual report on passes a report on the class and additional subjects. We gladly received this request, regarding it as a step in the right direction. The descriptive terms adopted by the department differed slightly from those used in our reports to the Board and School Committess, and no indication was given of their values. The recasting of our results would have taken more time than we had at our disposal: we therefore reported in our own terms.

We have classified the schools according to the means of their general results. Fractions neglected, 5 per cent. of the schools were weak, 11 per cent. fair, 52 per cent. satisfactory, 29 per cent. good, and three schools were very good. A number of schools were within a fraction of a higher classification; but, as we had given the benefit of the fraction to the standard and to the average efficiency marks, we could not well give it again in estimating the general results. Under the circumstances we have already detailed, we consider that the condition of our schools is satisfactory; still, with a teaching staff such as Otago possesses, and with schools so conveniently located and so well equipped, a larger proportion of our schools should, we think, reach the level of "good."

The greatest of all hindrances is irregularity of attendance. We have again and again shown the evil effects of this on the pupil: loss during his absence of partially completed work, continued loss after return to school till the working habit is re-formed and the breaches in the continuity of the various subjects are repaired, paralysis of discouragement following the child's realisation that he has been left behind. Many parents deny themselves in order that their children may attend school regularly; but, since the teacher, to minimise the evil effects of irregular attendance, must give extra time and special attention to the irregulars, their self-denial is largely nugatory.

The following facts are given for the consideration of parents and School Committees. We find that the "weak" and "fair" groups report for the year preceding the examination an average attendance of 70 per cent. of the roll-number, the "satisfactory" an average attendance of 80 per cent., the "good" an average attendance of 84 per cent., and the three "very good" an average attendance of 90 per cent. There is another aspect of the irregular-attendance evil that parents and School Committees should consider—the loss of teaching-power. A few more children in regular attendance would entitle several of our schools to an additional teacher—a sewing-mistress, a pupil-teacher, or even an assistant teacher. Two schools within six miles of each other presented at their last examination the same number of pupils: the pupils of one had had the services of two certificated teachers; those of the other, owing to irregular attendance, the services of only one. The average attendance for the district has fallen from 87·4 in 1897, the highest in the colony for the year, to 81·6, lower than the colonial average of last year.

Since the adoption of a syllabus of work for the class above Standard VI. the efficiency of the class has steadily improved, and the number in attendance has increased. The syllabus was only tentative, and might now with advantage be revised.

In reading there is less difficulty in connecting sound with symbol and sense with sound, and reading has gained in fluency and expression. Pupils who on leaving school cease to be readers we must reckon amongst our failures, passes notwithstanding. A pupil who has even slight difficulty in recognising newly presented printed words more readily ceases to read than one who has occasional difficulty in comprehending the force of passages. For this reason, as well as for the sake of comprehension in the later school course, we have urged that as early as possible strenuous endeavours be made to overcome the mechanical difficulty. Pupils should have, and should realise that they have, a practical acquaintance with the principles that govern the pronunciation of words. This practical acquaintance can best be made by constant discipline in word-building and word-analysis, and by abundant practice on new reading matter. The mental distraction caused by difficulties in pronunciation is fatal to expression, and in the middle and upper sections of the school full justice can be done to comprehension and expression. The new test applied to spelling brought down the efficiency mark of that subject from the lower margin of "excellent" to the upper margin of "satisfactory." The word-building and word-analysis which we recommend as aids to reading will prove helpful to spelling; and, as the governing principles are disclosed by the analysis, spelling rules should be formulated by the teacher and memorised by the pupils: reading and spelling should be made mutually helpful. The following extract from the *Educational Times* of the 1st January, 1898, embodies much of what we have been urging for years:—

"A circular to Her Majesty's Inspectors, issued by the Education Department, states that the teaching of reading aloud in elementary schools is often unsatisfactory. The reasons are probably—(1) the largeness of classes, and the presence of many classes in one room; (2) a premature and ill-judged regard for expression; (3) neglect to insist on careful articulation at all times; and (4) confusion of an expository or informative lesson with practice in reading aloud. The department holds that it is impossible to give sufficient individual practice in classes consisting of forty or a greater number of children, or, indeed, any practice worthy of the name 'in the midst of confusion and clatter.' With ordinary care, children can be made to read with all due attention to the precise rendering of final consonants—'of the highest importance in a language which throws its accents back and persistently slurs its final vowels'—and they can also be made to produce their vowels *ore rotundo*. Short 'pattern reading' is declared to be of doubtful value; and, with respect to careful articulation at all times, it is urged that in no circumstances should truncated or 'woolly' enunciation be permitted. 'No answer to a question should be accepted from a child (unless he is conspicuously lacking in self-confidence) which is not clearly heard by every member of the class.' Variation in procedure is valuable in the reading exercises, perhaps more than in any other part of the school curriculum, and a practice full of profit to every member of a class, including the teacher, is 'to make each in turn read exclusively to the ears of his comrades, and not, as is usually the case, to their eyes alone.' A copy of the circular has been sent to every training-college and pupil-teachers' centre."

The writing of most of our schools may be characterized as good. The written spelling and dictation exercises were examined for pass and efficiency marks; seldom, except in the case of impending failure, were the copybooks examined. In legibility writing is distinctly improving, but the rate of production by Standard V. and Standard VI. is too slow. Two styles of writing are competing for favour—the vertical and the forward-sloping. It is generally conceded that the vertical style has the better claim to legibility, but with regard to speed and beauty public opinion is still undecided. We accept without prejudice either the one style or the other, but backward slope or excessive forward slope we emphatically condemn. They are the results of imperfect discipline, and, along with all irregularities, militate against legibility. The writing-lesson, like the drawing-lesson, must afford discipline in observation as well as in manual dexterity; hand and eye controlled by will must act in unison in the effort to reproduce exactly the model placed before the pupil, and until freed from models pupils must be compelled to attempt exact copies. We are not satisfied with the manner in which the writing-lesson is usually conducted. We consider that the teacher is hampered and the pupil's progress retarded by the exclusive use of copybooks with engraved headlines. In the model at the head of each page there is usually material for several practice-lessons, and the page does not afford sufficient scope for them. The teaching is mainly individual teaching, and individuals, after writing a prescribed amount, usually a line, have to cease writing and wait their turn for criticism and direction by the teacher. Were blank copybooks, ruled like the engraved books, used for abundant preliminary exercises on the model at the head of a page of the engraved book, and finally the page of the engraved book written without pause, we believe that a distinct advance would be made in this important subject. The use of the blank copybook would make effective class-teaching practicable, and the pupils could receive the needed

individual criticism and direction without waste of time. The engraved copybook should be retained. If the teacher has made a wise choice the models will be excellent; they will be of the exact size for reproduction, and they will be immediately before the pupil's eye. We believe that the amount of writing done during the writing interval should be at least doubled, and under this system it would be doubled. Teachers need not be afraid of the pupil's blunders in the blank copybook. The blank copybook will show method, the engraved book results. Whatever style of writing is practised in a school, the teachers should insist on the writers maintaining the attitude of body and position of hand and pen proper to the style: apart from its bearing on the acquisition of the art of writing, a habitual good attitude may prove of life-long importance to the writer.

In spite of adverse circumstances, written arithmetic earned the efficiency mark that was earned last year. This indicates that advance was made in the subject. Some schools and some pupils lost heavily from inattention to rational working methods and methodical setting-out of their work. Except in purely mechanical sums half-value was given for good method, even where the answers were wrong. A pupil, nervous under examination, may blunder in addition or subtraction; but, if he has been habitually methodical throughout the year, his method will almost certainly be good in examination, and half-value may give him the reward of his year's good work. Slovenly work, even on the slate, should never be tolerated. The mental arithmetic results do not indicate advance. During inspection we had frequently to disapprove of the teaching, if teaching it might be called. In much of the work we saw there was evident want of preparation for the lesson, of design in the lesson, and of discipline in the work. To dictate half a dozen sums, to ask the pupils to read their half-dozen answers, to count the number of pupils with one sum right, two right, three right, &c., and to express approval and disapproval, is not teaching mental arithmetic—it is not even testing reliably what has been taught. There should be some well-defined purpose to serve by the lesson, some principle to elucidate and put into practice, some working method to practise till accuracy and facility are attained.

The teaching of composition is improving. Owing to circumstances already detailed, there was naturally a good deal of poor work; but, on the other hand, there was a considerable quantity of good work. Glaring mistakes were fewer in number; concord and government were more accurately observed; evidence was given that analysis of sentences had been turned to practical account. Oral composition, in the form of conversation-lessons and of answering in sentences, receives in the lower classes increasing attention. Benefit has been derived from the improved treatment of comprehension of the subject-matter of the reading-books, especially from the formation by the pupils of sentences embodying the new words of the reading-lesson, and from the expression of meanings by phrases or sentences rather than by synonyms. It has been said that the New Zealand system of education has killed imagination in the children. We supplied the subjects for the composition by placing before the children previously unseen suggestive pictures. The children's task was to write stories appropriate to the pictures, and many good and highly original stories were written for us. The children drew freely on their personal experiences, on their stores of natural history, political history, geography, &c., and used in some cases with considerable skill the mechanism of the fairy tale. Their compositions proved conclusively that the imagination, reproductive and constructive, is in tolerable working order.

The efficiency mark for geography stands on the margin of "fair." Political and commercial geography were good; mathematical and physical geography were unsatisfactory, and brought down the average mark.

Grammar continues to improve, and the number of schools in which it is made an effective aid to reading and composition is increasing.

Improvement is being made in the method of science-teaching. The teacher's programme of science-lessons, previously approved by an Inspector, defines the scope of the science examination. A list of the objects observed and of the experiments performed during the course of the year would be a valuable addition to the programme. If sufficient in number and variety these experiments and objects would still further define the scope of the examination, and tend to produce results satisfactory to all concerned. When the elements of agricultural knowledge are chosen instead of elementary science, we expect to find the children interested in the agricultural and horticultural work of the neighbourhood.

Needlework maintains its high standard of efficiency. In January last the needlework schedule of 1894 was cancelled, and another brought into force. In the examinations of this year the needlework presented may be as prescribed in either schedule. If the work presented is in accordance with the new schedule, the efficiency of the pupils may be tested by work done during the examinations, and materials must be at hand for the purpose. According to the cancelled schedule knitting was optional, and many of our schools presented not only the full tale of excellent needlework, but a large amount of creditable knitting. We regret that knitting is not even mentioned in the new schedule.

Drill and exercises, including gymnastics in schools provided with apparatus, are regarded as equal in value to any literary subject of the syllabus. To obtain such value, evidence must be given of their effective bearing on class movements, and on the physical development and the carriage of the pupils, both boys and girls; during the exercises the movements must be prompt, exact, and vigorous, whether following the word of command or keeping time to a musical accompaniment; during the drill military discipline must be observed, and the movements must be made without preliminary instructions. The circular of the 9th August, 1898, defining drill and exercises is now in operation. A gymnasium is a class-room of the school to which it belongs; and, as in other class-rooms, there must be affixed to the wall a time-table showing the work done in the gymnasium, the teachers in charge of the work, and the times at which the work is done.

It may be observed that values comparatively high have been given to order, attention, and manners. We are dealing with formation of character, the most important of all school functions,

and the values we have placed under these heads are the results of wide and at the same time minute observation. We know that there is such a thing as examination-day manners, which, put on for the day, sit awkwardly on the unaccustomed wearer, and are of little value. Orderly class movements are good things, but they are not all that order implies: attitudes while at work and at rest; the management of books, slates, and papers; the character of the movements of individuals in the class-room; the arrangement of and care for furniture and apparatus,—these and such as these affect the mark for order. Attention has a wider scope than listening to the oral work of the day and properly answering questions. We look for evidence of self-control, of capacity for continuous concentration of mental power, of habitual patient, self-reliant grappling with difficulties. We attach little importance to the simultaneous salute we sometimes receive as we enter the class-room, or to such answering as, "London is on the Thames, miss" and "Three and four make seven, sir." We prefer prompt obedience to the teacher, especially the female teacher. A salute in the street to the Inspector goes for little if the teachers, male and female, are not habitually saluted. We should hold dear the many little kindnesses and courtesies between pupil and pupil, and between teacher and pupil, for which the school gives ample opportunity, and which go so far to make school life sweet and attractive.

We cannot close our report without expressing our sense of the loss the colony has sustained by the death of Mr. Habens, late Inspector-General of Schools. When, at the most critical period of the educational history of the colony, it was found necessary to evolve from a chaos of provincial systems an orderly and efficient national system of education, the Government of the day found in Dr. Hislop and Mr. Habens men admirably fitted by capacity and experience to perform the task. It should ever stand to their credit that, while educational doctrinaires, Home and colonial, were lauding to the skies payment by results as the panacea for all educational ills, they saved our schools from its blighting influence. Educationists may differ as to details in Mr. Habens's classification of teachers and standard syllabus; but all must acknowledge that they were well designed, and that, on the whole, they have well fulfilled their purpose. We deeply deplore his death.

We have, &c.,

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

The Chairman, Education Board, Otago.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Invercargill, 16th March, 1899.

We have the honour to present our report on the primary schools of this district for the year ended 31st December, 1898.

The following table gives the summary of results for the whole district:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	187	...	...	...
Standard VI.	593	580	516	13 9
„ V.	967	939	718	12 11
„ IV.	1,209	1,162	938	11 11
„ III.	1,308	1,263	1,024	10 11
„ II.	1,202	1,152	1,101	9 10
„ I.	1,122	1,091	1,069	8 10
Preparatory	2,906	...	...	...
Totals	9,494	6,187	5,366	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

A few notes may be made on the information contained in this table.

The number of pupils in the class above Standard VI. shows an increase as substantial as it is continuous. This we believe to be matter for congratulation. It is sometimes said that teachers should give themselves entirely to the standard work, and refrain from trenching upon the domain of the secondary school. But, in the first place, the presence of this class does not interfere with the progress of the lower classes; on the contrary, it appears to add zest to the teacher's work; and it is, as a rule, only in the best schools that the class is found. In the second place, if primary-school teachers were denied the privilege of imparting any instruction beyond the elements many promising children would, at the critical period of their mental history, be debarred entirely from

making any acquaintance with such studies as algebra, Euclid, book-keeping, or shorthand. In the third place, some of our most experienced teachers delight in having their best pupils at school for a year or so after they have passed their standards. The teachers say that during the period indicated they can, in addition to supplementing and consolidating the standard work, influence to a greater extent than was previously possible their pupils' character.

The numbers presented in Standards V. and VI. touch the highest point yet reached by these classes.

Since the beginning of the present decade the mean of average age has fallen by about a month annually. This implies that in each successive year pupils are being more rapidly pushed through their respective standards. The circumstance may, no doubt, be partly explained by a gradual increase in the efficiency of the teaching-power during the ten years. To this diminution of the age at which pupils pass their standards there will, of course, be a limit by-and-by. Meanwhile, we do not regard it as altogether an unmixed good. It may, perhaps, be a crude generalisation, but we believe it corresponds pretty closely with experience to say that a pupil's capacity to assimilate knowledge and turn it to profitable account increases in a twofold ratio each successive year. How precious, then, every additional year that a child can spend at school!

The Health and Physique of the Pupils.—A visitor dropping unexpectedly into any of our schools would, without hesitation, pronounce the children clean, well clad, well fed, and robust. If he were to visit all our schools in succession his eyes might perchance alight at long intervals on a child in whose face he could read signs of neglect or overwork. Such a child is happily so rare an exception that it might almost be said that, so far as appearances go, our children come from model homes. Nor do the conditions of the school impair the beneficent influences of the home. If certain lessons—drawing, slate-work, and writing, for example—imply a posture not exactly natural, these lessons never come consecutively, but are relieved by oral lessons, physical exercises, or singing, during which the pupil's position is free and unconstrained. If the air at times tends to become surcharged with carbonic acid, there are mid-forenoon, mid-day, and mid-afternoon recesses, during which a current of fresh air is sent through the room, and all feelings of constraint and restraint are lost in the gambols of the playground. To improve the carriage of the pupils, military drill is taught more or less efficiently in all the larger schools. In the matter of health and physique several forward steps yet remain to be taken. (1.) Our suggestion that all the pupils in the upper classes of the town schools should muster periodically for collective drill, though favourably received by the Board, and subsequently, we believe, by the Defence Department, has not yet been carried into practice. (2.) We have now in our town public swimming-baths. Surely it would be possible to make arrangements whereby those members of the two highest classes that cannot swim could receive a course of lessons in the art of swimming. (3.) We cannot regard our school course as entirely satisfactory so long as the pupils leave without receiving adequate instruction in first aid—until, in a word, such instruction is made an integral part of the syllabus.

The Teachers and the Teaching.—The teachers of the district comprise a body of men and women entirely devoted to their work. The influence of many of them is not bounded by the four walls of the schoolroom, but extends throughout their entire district. Many are students, to the great advantage of the schools in which they labour. It would be a great gain to education in Southland if more of the teachers were to take to field-work—to the study of the botany, the zoology, or the geology of their respective localities. The indirect effects of such studies on themselves and on their pupils would be immensely beneficial—beneficial to themselves, because, in their pursuit of the branch selected, their minds would be recalled from the harassing cares and petty annoyances of the class-room; and to their pupils, because, by the teacher's example, they would be led to observe, question, and record the ways of nature. The teachers would, further, have the satisfaction of knowing that they were rendering a real service to the cause of science and to their country. In their active teaching, the teachers, for the most part, take an enlightened and comprehensive view of their work. One of the chief dangers of our modern education—a danger that teachers should constantly guard against—is the splitting-up of the whole subject, and the viewing of each part as if it were the whole. The subject of English, for example, is divided and subdivided into a number of parts, each of which has to be separately appraised by an examiner. The division of pupils into standards, again, tends to make teachers regard each standard as a separate entity. Such a way of looking at education is not merely fallacious—it is pernicious. Teachers should know and feel that when they are handling the parts they are at the same time modifying and moulding the whole. Hence the need for the teacher of a single class in large schools being in touch with the teachers of the classes immediately above and below. The connecting links, in the case of large schools, are, of course, the headmaster and the weekly conference of teachers. There is one habit that still lies like a dead-weight on some of our teachers—the habit, we mean, of blinding themselves to their subject and to the needs of their pupils through the obstruction of a sixpenny text-book. Were they to discard entirely the geography, history, or science text-book while lessons are proceeding something might, perhaps, be lost in mechanical accuracy, but much would be gained in life, completeness, and variety.

School Buildings and Grounds.—We nearly always find the interior of the school buildings clean and tidy, and the furniture and apparatus carefully conserved. Much is quietly being done in the way of embellishing the windows with flowers and the walls with pictures. We cannot say that many school gardens have been laid off during the year, nor can we say that those already formed have in all cases received quite so much attention as they did in previous years. This is matter for regret, for the school garden, to mention two only of its advantages, may be made the means of teaching the cardinal virtues, and, in country schools—in most of which the principles of agriculture are taught—a means of illustration and a storehouse of specimens. Many of the gardens attached to the residences are splendidly kept; those of bachelors may be mentioned by way of exception and contrast. Referring to the grounds, we note that every year adds to some of

the schools such means of recreation as the swing and horizontal bar. In some cases we have noticed that the playground is somewhat small for the number of children—a state of affairs that should be studiously avoided in future by the Board's securing large sections for school sites.

Tone of the Schools.—During the year we had but rarely to comment adversely on the tone of any of the schools. In several instances we have noticed a distinct improvement. Whether the tone of a school is good, bad, or indifferent depends almost entirely on the vigilance of the teacher, who should accordingly make it a matter of conscience to be unremitting in his endeavours to prevent, and steadfast in his determination to check, any conduct that would tend to bring discredit upon himself or his pupils. In this connection we may be permitted to refer to the question of corporal punishment, which has been much agitated of late. We have hitherto avoided any reference to the subject, not from want of interest in its bearings, or from a failure to appreciate the grave issues that hang on a correct understanding of the principles of punishment, but partly because it has not come prominently under our notice; and partly, we suppose, on the convenient maxim *Quieta non movere*. We had recently the honour to submit to the Board a memorandum on the subject, which we hope may be of some service to young and inexperienced teachers.

Subjects of Instruction.—Taking the standard subjects first, we note, with respect to reading, that the pressing difficulty is to get the pupils to take an interest in the subject sufficiently great to result in their acquiring a habit of reading. The difficulty, we think, is due partly to the subdivisions of time at the teacher's disposal, resulting from a multiplicity of subjects, and partly to the character of the reading-books, which is necessarily determined by the provisions of the syllabus. The earlier stages of a pupil's progress in reading must, of course, be largely occupied with the overcoming of mechanical difficulties—a sorry business if it is not accompanied by an occasional interesting story read by the teacher. The earlier and the better the mechanical difficulties are overcome in the lower classes the more time will, of course, be available to get behind the language to the train of ideas in the upper. The chief objections to our modern reading-books are that they are largely made up of extracts, and contain but little or nothing of current literature. It follows that the reading-lesson frequently consists in nothing but a scrap of a scrap, and too seldom in anything that stirs the minds of men at the present day. We do not seek to disparage the reading-books—in their way they are excellent; but they are incomplete, and must remain so until they are to a less extent made up of extracts, and until they to a greater extent incorporate such matter as will bring the children's minds into contact with the events, questions, and points of progress of to-day.

The upright system of handwriting has not taken root in this district. Success in the teaching of writing does not depend on the merits of any particular system; it depends on the manner in which the principles of the system chosen are treated. If these are carefully and consistently taught throughout the school the results may safely be left to take care of themselves. At the annual examination our first impression of a pupil's writing is gained from an examination of his copybook, but our final judgment as to his fitness for a pass is reserved until we have seen how he has written his dictation and composition exercises.

The department's tests in arithmetic were, on the whole, fairly and squarely met by the various schools. At the beginning of the examination period a slight flutter was created among the teachers when it became known that sums were being set in decimal money. The decimal system of reckoning, we may note in passing, notwithstanding its immense advantages, does not appear to be making rapid progress towards universal acceptance. We were glad to notice that in a number of schools the teachers had posted on the walls of the class-room, for the benefit of their older pupils, various commercial documents, such as cheques, bills of exchange, promissory notes, share and price lists, and quotations from the London money and produce markets. We should like to see in every school examples of various measures made by the pupils themselves—*e.g.*, lineal measure in thread, square measure (as far as the square yard) in paper, cubic inch and cubic foot in wood, and so on. Speaking generally, the subject of arithmetic is well taught throughout the district. There is, however, especially on the part of young teachers, a tendency to hurry through the various rules, regardless of method. It should be ever borne in mind that, in the long-run, neatness makes for accuracy and good order for speed.

We sometimes find that too much time is given to spelling, occasionally indeed as much as is given to reading. When it is remembered that there are important indirect aids to a knowledge of the subject—transcription and composition, for example—and when one further remembers that though of great practical it is of low educative value, one can account for the large amount of time devoted to it only on the supposition that a determined effort is being made to secure a standard pass. Here, as in much else in school work, what appears to be the longest road is really the shortest; the teacher should rely on the blackboard, the pupil on his eyes.

Geography continues to be handled in an increasingly intelligent manner, and in many schools it is taught by methods that leave little to be desired. We have noticed on the walls of some of our schools maps or charts of places presently engaging public attention. These, we are told, are brought to school along with explanatory paragraphs by the children. In some schools physical geography does not receive the attention that the interest and importance of the subject warrant. It takes the pupil away from the beaten track; but, if the truth must be told, some of the teachers are but blind guides.

At the annual examinations we gave a practical test in drawing, chiefly freehand, to each pupil in the standard classes. The results were, on the whole, good beyond expectation. During the coming examination period we propose to extend this mode of examination to the other parts of the subject. Many parents, and some teachers too, regard this subject as being somewhat of the nature of a burden laid on their shoulders by an inconsiderate State. It has, however, become a *sine quâ non* in modern primary education, lying as it does at the root of all progress in the acquisition of a knowledge of the manual and mechanical arts.

The Class-subjects.—The class-subjects are grammar, history, geography (Standard II.,) elementary science and object-lessons, and mental arithmetic. The following table shows the results of the examinations in these subjects: —

Standard attained.	Number of Schools.
Excellent ...	2
Good ...	55
Satisfactory	42
Fair ...	29
Moderate ...	11
Inferior ...	2

The class-subjects make a somewhat formidable list, and we are of opinion that, in small schools at any rate, much time that should be given to the three Rs is spent by pupils in trifling over them. The list might be reduced in one of two ways—either (1) by the incorporation of history and science in the reading-books, and grammar in composition; or (2) by allowing teachers to choose, at their option, one of the three subjects—history, grammar, or science. Mental arithmetic might be taken along with arithmetic, and allowed to count towards a pass in doubtful cases. Elementary science—physics, chemistry, and agriculture—continues to be taught in many schools without either material or apparatus, the net result being the loading of the pupils' memories with a mass of undigested and undigestible verbiage. The only science-subject that receives anything like adequate treatment without apparatus is physiology, for here the subject-matter is at hand.

The Additional Subjects.—We may record the results of the year thus :—

Standard attained.	Number of Schools.
Excellent ...	7
Good ...	61
Satisfactory	46
Fair ...	25
Moderate ...	1
Inferior ...	1

If it may be said with some reason that the class-subjects should not find a separate place in the syllabus, it may be said, without qualification, that three at least of the additional subjects should. Drill, singing, and needlework are a distinct but entirely necessary addition to the standard subjects. Poetry and comprehension of language might very well be taken in connection with reading; indeed, we think there is a distinct disadvantage in not so taking them. A boy may read fluently and not understand what he reads, while another may read haltingly and understand every word he reads; and yet the latter may be in a worse position with respect to a standard pass than the former. The department recently issued what is practically a new sewing syllabus, which corresponds very closely with the syllabus recommended some time ago by the ladies of the local Institute and accepted by us as an alternative course.

A recent regulation requires that a special certificate, signed by the Inspector or the Secretary, be granted to each pupil that passes Standard VI. It is evidently intended that the certificate shall be something of the nature of what is known in Scotland as the "leaving certificate." Accordingly, we shall feel it incumbent upon us hereafter not to pass any pupil whose qualifications are in any degree doubtful. Young people who prepare privately for this certificate must sit for examination at a public school, and must be thoroughly well grounded in reading (including explanation), arithmetic (including mental, especially commercial sums and mensuration), composition (including spelling and writing), geography, and drawing.

Technical Education.—At the present time the question of technical education greatly exercises the public mind. It may accordingly not be inopportune to offer some remarks on what we believe to be its place in our primary schools. The foundation of all progress in the industrial arts is, without doubt, a sound general education; or, to speak more specifically, a thorough grounding in the three Rs. Whatever would tend to retard the advancement of the children in these subjects would, in the long-run, be detrimental to the material well-being of the community. But, at this time of the day, it goes without saying that a place should be found in our primary-school course for the training of hand and eye. If the senses of sight and touch are not developed in early youth they cannot be fully developed at all. But the training in question cannot be given by means of technical instruction, properly so called. The hand-and-eye training suitable to primary schools is not directed to specific ends. The position is finely put in a report on the subject by a Scotch Inspector of Schools, a copy of which was sent by the department to the teachers and Boards of the colony. "The hand-and-eye training suited to primary schools," says this Inspector, "should contribute to the general education of the pupils, developing the qualities of intelligence, practical judgment, exactness, perseverance, taste, power of initiative, individuality. It is to be valued not so much for its direct result as for the contribution it makes towards the development of character and intelligence." He goes on to state that a natural course of hand-and-eye training would be—first, kindergarten exercises; next, modelling in clay; then cardboard-work, and finally wood-work. Now, we have in this district, during the past few years, made marked progress in the introductory course, and we have further made a beginning in the final stage. The problem is to fill in the intermediate steps, and to organize the available talent for the final step. The training in contemplation is exactly what is known in Sweden as "sloyd," and, were all our pupils to undergo it, they would be able to use their hands as well as their heads—or, more correctly, to use them concurrently. We may point out that the demand for technical instruction in England is accompanied by a demand for commercial education—that is, for instruction in modern languages, in commercial geography, and in business principles. In view of the recent disturbance of the industrial centre

of gravity, the need of such instruction is evident, and in New Zealand, of all countries, should be supplied.

From what has preceded the Board will gather that we take up the position that the primary school has no mission to impart technical instruction strictly so called, while we firmly believe that our school course is incomplete and one-sided, owing to the partial exclusion of such training of hand and eye as will fit our pupils for whichever of the manual arts they may choose as a means of livelihood.

It remains to add that before anything new can reasonably be added to the syllabus, much should be taken away.

We are, &c.,

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

The Secretary, Education Board, Southland.

APPENDIX.

ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

School.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.
Invercargill Boys' School	96	88	86
Invercargill Convent	128	75	71
East Gore "	63	40	38
Queenstown "	60	35	34
Arrowtown "	26	19	19
Winton "	35	26	16

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