

Mr. Dickinson notes that the "attention is much improved," and I think this is true of the large majority of the schools I have seen during the year. But teachers need to be very vigilant, and to show less reluctance in challenging pupils who are inattentive. In certain schools in which recent inspection reports noted more or less inattention and laxity of discipline, these matters have been greatly improved.

During the year a new set of reading-books for use in the schools of this district has been in preparation, and as the Board directed that I should approve of them before they were sent to press, a great deal of delicate and difficult work has fallen on me. The editors of these books met my suggestions in a most obliging spirit. They are now completed, and, both in the selections of poetry and in the explanations of language, I consider them vastly superior to the books now in use. I am hopeful that they will in all respects efficiently serve the objects for which they were prepared.

I have pleasure in recording the purchase of fairly complete sets of science apparatus by a considerable number of School Committees. It is cheering to find the local authorities showing so much zeal in improving the equipment of their schools in this direction.

The illness of one of the Inspectors imposed a heavy burden of extra work on his colleagues and myself during the later part of the year. For the readiness with which the severe demands on their exertions—demands the extent of which I could not foresee—were responded to I cannot but express my sincere and hearty thanks.

I think all the Inspectors can agree with the following extract from Mr. Grierson's report to me: "I have found the order, discipline, and manners almost always satisfactory, and very often good. A very large majority of the teachers are earnest, conscientious, and industrious."

I have, &c.,

D. PETRIE, M.A.,

Chief Inspector.

The Secretary, Auckland Education Board.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 18th March, 1900.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ending 31st December, 1899.

At the close of the year sixty-three schools were open, and all 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.	...	...	...	29	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	135	128	90	14	8
" V.	...	...	...	274	259	173	13	10
" IV.	...	...	...	495	470	317	12	10
" III.	...	...	...	660	630	484	11	9
" II.	...	...	...	581	562	478	10	7
" I.	...	...	...	591	574	515	9	3
Preparatory	...	...	...	1,300	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	4,065	2,623	2,057	12	1*

* Mean of average age.

The above figures show an increase for the year of 112 in the number presented. The class above Standard VI. shows an increase of nine, and Standards I. to VI. show an increase of 128. In Standards I. to VI. the number present at examination and examined shows an increase of 109, and the number of passes an increase of 194. In Standards I. to VI. the number absent in standards shows an increase of twenty-nine, due no doubt to the prevalence of sickness during the year.

The above figures are very satisfactory. The steady increase in the number of pupils in the upper classes indicates a desire on the part of parents to give their children the benefits of more advanced education, instead of taking them away as soon as they reach either the age or the standard of exemption.

Owing to various causes only a small percentage of the schools were inspected. Though unavoidable this is to be regretted, for there are many teachers in outlying schools whose only chance of seeing methods other than those they are adopting is on the occasion of an Inspector's visit.

In reading, though the instruction continues to improve, the subject is not on a satisfactory footing; far too little practice is obtainable. Except in the two highest standards only one book is used during the year, and frequent repetition makes the lessons most uninteresting. Indeed, as I have pointed out in previous reports, the pupils frequently know the lessons by heart. If it be remembered what a small percentage of our pupils in the country can obtain access to any books other than those read in school the importance of a wider course of reading will be recognised.