

Summing up my judgment of the whole 136 schools, there are eighty-one satisfactory, forty less satisfactory, and fifteen positively weak.

The condition of the schools thus broadly sketched leaves much to be desired. It will be necessary, however, before making conclusions from these statements, to inquire into the quality of the work in standard pass, class, and extra subjects, and into the opportunities which have been seized or lost for making solid progress in any section of the work.

Referring first to pass subjects, attention has been called by the Inspectors in many schools to defective enunciation in reading. Some teachers, and more especially those complained of, speak so badly as to be quite disqualified on that ground alone. Those who say "toe" or "tew" for "two," "foive" for "five," "systum" for "system," are manifestly unfit to teach reading. Bad enunciation also bears upon spelling, for if "possible" be pronounced "possabul," and "regular" like "regler," the probabilities are that the pupil will spell phonetically. There is also some falling-off in the expression of the reading in the lower classes of large schools and in small schools, also more pattern reading is asked for. The attention of the teachers has also been directed to the stages by which they teach the style of writing which they adopt, for it is found that in some cases the children's work does not approach the pattern; and, in other cases, a form of upright handwriting is produced with very pinched letters and sprawling words.

In arithmetical teaching there is too much use of the test questions, too little use of the black-board, and a wide field is open for teaching better and readier methods; but some of these shortcomings are pardonable until we get an amended arithmetic syllabus in which obsolete and useless rules are discarded and ingenious ready methods encouraged.

Drawing is a satisfactory pass subject; but there is some falling-off in geometry. The following table shows the passes in the first-grade examination held throughout the schools on the first Wednesday in September, as compared with those of the year before:—

				Freehand.	Scale.	Geometry.	Model.
1898	...	...	...	889	839	1,455	501
1899	...	...	...	902	840	1,231	512

This South Kensington work of examining in specific drawing subjects, begun by me in the seventies, has now become a heavy charge upon the Technical School, and it is a question whether the whole work or its equivalent could not be done by the head teachers on a simpler plan. This is said in the interests of the Technical School, the work undertaken by that department being most useful to the Inspectors, who accept the first-grade certificate as evidence of satisfactory work in drawing for a standard pass.

Turning our attention next to the class-subjects, it is noticeable that science earns the most and grammar the least commendation. Cookery forms a section of the science subject domestic economy. During the past year the cookery classes, begun in the previous year, have made good progress. In the city each school sends to the Technical School about twenty girls from Standards V. and VI. for instruction one half-day in the week. In the Wairarapa the larger schools are visited *seriatim* at regular intervals of time. The arrangement has its drawbacks, because the rest of the work of the upper classes is considerably disturbed one-half day in the week. It is now desirable that the teaching of cookery should be extended to other schools, and that, if possible, improved arrangements should be made whereby the ordinary work is less disturbed.

Mental arithmetic receives due attention in all good schools, but neglect of regular teaching is a frequent cause of failure in the standard work of small schools. Geography, if intelligently taught, is an interesting and popular subject with children; and, provided judgment is exercised as to its scope, there is no difficulty in meeting the requirements of a considerate examiner. This year we asked the teachers to prepare outline maps of their own selection to be filled up with the names of a limited number of noted places; and we examined particularly in the maps prepared, obtaining satisfactory results. It is admitted that there is danger of examination in history in primary schools being delusive, for the preparation is either memory work in facts and dates, or it consists of the use of historical reading-books supplemented by explanation on the part of the teachers. The latter is much preferred, for if the pupils have formed anything of a real impression of a few historical incidents or of the manners and customs of a period, or if they have acquired a taste for reading history, they have done better from an educational point of view than they would have done by the mere acquisition of a great number of isolated facts.

In reporting on the additional subjects it is noted that every good teacher sets due value on recitation, which should be confined to one or two suitable pieces of either poetry or prose. The teaching of natural recitation brings out some of the best qualities of a teacher—clear expression and good taste. Good recitation is taught in most of the classes of large schools and in a fair proportion of the smaller ones. Questions on the comprehension of the subject-matter during a reading-lesson should be put more frequently in many schools, and the exercises are well suited for drawing out the intelligence of the children, and in the hands of a good teacher the matter becomes a subject of great interest and of considerable educational value. Less thoughtful teachers overlook this, and with them reading drifts into a mere mechanical process. Year by year the teaching of singing is extended to more schools and classes; but it is a matter of regret that the supervision of it is not in the hands of a musical expert. In the early part of the year the instructor of the teachers' class, Mr. Robert Parker, accompanied me on a visit to several of the city schools, and expressed his satisfaction with much that came under his notice. Moreover, he threw out a few hints and suggestions which only such an expert can give.

There are not many teachers who are excellent needlewomen, as is shown by the quality of the work done at the E certificate examination. Under the circumstances the needlework of the schools is as good as can be expected. Nevertheless in several schools most commendable work is done. In many of the schools of Class B good work is presented. Knitting, darning, patching,