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Education Office, Dunedin, 31st January, 1900.

We have the honour to present the following general report for the year 1899.

Nearly all the schools were inspected, and all but two, the Cambrians and the St. Bathans Schools, were examined. These schools had suffered and, when the Inspectors were in the district, were still suffering from the inroads of influenza, and at the request of the Committees were not examined. In July and December we examined sixty-two pupil-teachers, ninety-six candidates for pupil-teacherships, and 139 competitors for scholarships; and from the beginning of June to the middle of December over twenty thousand pupils in from seven to sixteen subjects. Only those familiar with the work of examination can realise the extent of the labour implied by this brief statement.

TABLE A, SHOWING EFFICIENCY IN TERMS OF STANDARD PASSES.

Classes.			Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes.	Average Age of those that Passed.	
							Yrs.	mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	565	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	1,508	1,462	1,291	88.3	13	7
" V.	...	...	2,167	2,105	1,688	80.2	12	5
" IV.	...	...	2,562	2,470	2,000	80.9	12	0
" III.	...	...	2,784	2,676	2,241	83.7	10	3
" II.	...	...	2,492	2,443	2,367	96.9	9	6
" I.	...	...	2,336	2,266	2,252	99.4	8	6
Preparatory	...	...	6,279	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	20,693	13,422	11,839	88.2	11	0.5*

* Mean average age.

It is remarkable that for the last three years the mean percentage of passes in standards should have varied not more than 1 per cent. It was 89 in 1897, 88 in 1898, and 88 in 1899.

As we have said in previous reports, we attach little value to this table as an index of efficiency; and we are glad to know that the system which imposed upon us the duty of determining the "passes" is now practically no more. It has undoubtedly done good work, but it has long survived its usefulness. We have for some years recognised this, and have judged the character of the instruction by a method that is almost identical with that now adopted by the Education Department. To comply with the regulations we have "passed" or "failed" according as individual pupils seemed to us to merit the one mark or the other; but we have so examined as to discover not so much the attainments of individuals as the general character of the instruction given in the classes. Henceforth we shall be almost entirely concerned with general efficiency, and hardly at all with the passing of individuals. There will still be examinations for promotion; but they will be conducted by the teachers, than whom none should be better able to judge of a child's fitness or unfitness for removal to a higher class. This arrangement undoubtedly adds greatly to the responsibility of teachers; but the responsibility is inherent in their position, for the possibility of efficient class instruction is entirely dependent on good classification, which is dependent on the classifier's knowledge of the attainments and capacities, mental and physical, of the children who are to be grouped together as a working unit. From year's end to year's end the teacher is in almost daily contact with his pupils; he should know them through and through, and be better able than an Inspector, however competent the latter may be, to place them where they can work with most advantage to themselves and without hindrance to others.

Under the new system there will probably be at first some, perhaps much, friction, for not a few parents will press for their children's promotion, no matter what judgment the teacher may have formed of their attainments. Such pressure must be resisted, and no teacher should promote a child who has failed to take a good place in his monthly, quarterly, and annual examinations. If the child is not made to feel that, to get promotion, he must win it, there will be an end to the healthy emulation that has in the past been excited by the Inspector's test. This would, we are sure, be a distinct loss, for one of the chief merits of the old system was that it stimulated the children to work eagerly for annual promotion.

Under the old system it was assumed that all the pupils of a standard were required to do the same work in the same order and at the same rate—requirements possible of fulfilment only where there are equal attainments at the beginning, equal home advantages, equal mental and physical capacity, and equal regularity of attendance. But this uniformity nowhere exists, and this is recognised more fully by the new than by the old regulations. A considerable number of children of equal mental endowment differ widely in aptitudes, some being quick in English and slow in arithmetic, and some slow in English and quick in arithmetic. Such children it is difficult to work in line for a whole year without overpressing now those who are inept in English and now those who are inept in arithmetic, and this is not only recognised but emphasised by the new regulations. Accordingly, they impose upon the teacher the duty of securing approximate equality of attainment and aptitude by adopting a separate classification in English and arithmetic, thus pro-