1900.

NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:
REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.-1B, 1899.]

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

AUCKLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Auckland, 6th March, 1900.

I have the honour to submit the usual annual report for the year 1899.

At the close of the year 378 schools were in operation, being nine more than at the close of last year. Of this number 372 were examined. In two cases schools taught and examined on distinct days are reckoned as single schools in the above total. Six schools were not examined. Five of these were opened after the examinations of the neighbouring schools were completed, while one—Broadwood School—was closed when the Inspector was examining the schools of the Hokianga district, and its examination could not be overtaken later in the year. The highest standard class at Broadwood School is Standard II.

Owing to the illness of one of the Inspectors during the latter part of the year the inspection of twenty-seven schools, all of them small rural schools, had to be omitted. Of the number included in this total, eight were opened in the course of the year (nearly all of these in the second half of the year when the main work of inspection was completed). Besides this, one was temporarily closed at the time of inspection. To complete the examinations the help of an Acting Inspector had to be called in for a few days in the middle of December. Mr. Alfred Taylor, head master of the Northcote School, undertook this service, and examined the Coromandel and Driving Creek Schools. To the Northcote School Committee, as well as to Mr. Taylor, thanks are due for their courteous and prompt compliance with the request for his assistance.

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

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	440	...	...	...
Standard VI.	1,608	1,569	1,235	13 11
" V.	2,713	2,585	1,839	13 2
" IV.	3,579	3,407	2,340	12 3
" III.	3,778	3,583	2,873	11 2
" II.	3,598	3,444	3,169	10 2
" I.	3,291	3,148	3,040	8 11
Preparatory	9,564	...	...	...
Totals	28,571	17,736	14,496	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

This table shows for the year an increase of 446 in the number of pupils presented, a decrease of 138 in the number present, and a decrease of 813 in the number of pupils who passed in one or other of the standards.

Approximately 82 per cent. of the pupils examined in standards passed, a perfectly satisfactory result considering the exceptional circumstances of the year, though somewhat below that reached in the last two years.

A marked reduction is to be noted in the average age at which Standard VI. was passed. In this class the younger pupils have evidently passed more readily than their older class-mates, a fact which speaks well for their preparation in the lower standards. In Standard IV. the average age of passing is two months lower, while in Standard II. this age has gone up one month. In the other standard classes there is no change.

The percentage of pupils passed in Standards I. and II. by head teachers is slightly below that for last year. In nearly every case these passes have been determined with satisfactory care.

The pupils in preparatory classes who were over eight years of age and were not presented for Standard I. numbered 2,115, a total still higher than might be expected. The main reasons given for the backwardness of these older primer pupils are lateness in entering as pupils, and dullness. The latter reason figures very prominently in the statements submitted in some of the larger schools.

In view of the radical changes made by the new standard regulations, I have not thought it necessary to compile a statement of the passes in the several pass subjects of the various standards.

The past year has been singularly unfavourable to efficient work in the public schools of this district, and indeed of the whole colony. A succession of epidemics—now measles, now whooping cough, now influenza—swept over nearly the whole of the district, and caused an amount of broken and irregular attendance that has greatly retarded progress, and aggravated the difficulties that teachers have to battle with. I need not dwell on this unfortunate experience, as the Board has had its effects brought forcibly under its notice by reason of its grave consequences from a financial point of view. After making allowance for the unusually unfavourable conditions of the year, and the fact that great numbers of pupils underwent the ordeal of examination when they were more fit for the nursery than the schoolroom, the results of the year's work are quite as encouraging as they have been in recent years, and indeed they are better than I had looked for.

The examination of eleven schools in the Raglan district was altered from early spring to the end of autumn, that being a much more favourable season for this event. The pupils of these schools had only about six months' instruction in the programme of examination for the year, and naturally only a small proportion managed to pass. I should like to see the dates of examination in a large part of the northern peninsula changed from the wet spring season to the drier time that we experience in the autumn and early winter, but as yet I have not been able to arrange for it. In many rural districts I recognise it as a great disadvantage that school examinations should take place during or soon after a protracted spell of wet weather, with its accompaniments of almost impassable roads and very broken attendance.

As the past year proves to be the last of the old educational *régime*, I may take a cursory glance at its merits and defects. The standard-pass system as heretofore organized certainly secured a very considerable measure of accuracy and thoroughness of instruction all round. It encouraged teachers to do their best to advance the duller scholars, and kept up a very fair average of attainments throughout every class of every school. These are all good ends in their way. The system had, however, grave inherent defects. It tended to foster a mechanical spirit in the teaching, by making teachers and pupils think more of passing an examination, of attaining a medium average of proficiency, than of the mental training and discipline to be gained by the teaching processes applied. It tended to concentrate effort and attention in the backward or irregular pupils, to the comparative neglect of the brighter spirits, whose training might easily have reached a higher pitch under more genial conditions. It also created a period of forced study, of stress and strain, during the few months preceding the examinations, that was at once hurtful to true education, and undoubtedly lent colour to the outcry against "cram." To pupils the system was in some respects unfair, for it gave an importance and finality to a single examination that could not be warranted, and above all created a grossly exaggerated distinction between the merits of pupils who passed and those who failed. For it should be clearly understood that the great majority of those who failed at the standard examinations were not greatly inferior in attainments to many of those who passed. I am glad that the standard-pass system has now been so greatly curtailed, and may take to myself some credit for having been the first to advocate this change. When the Hon. T. W. Hislop was Minister of Education I brought the objections to the standard-pass system under his notice as forcibly as I could, and at the first conference of Inspectors I took ineffective action in the direction of a change. In recent years I said little on the subject because I felt it to be discourteous for Inspectors to be continually opposing the settled, though (as I believed) the mistaken, policy of the Education Department. The battle had to be fought out by others, whose action was less open to misunderstanding.

Time and experience will tell how far the new arrangements are suitable, and likely to foster a true spirit of education in the public schools. Their success will depend more than ever on the ability, skill, and fidelity of head teachers, and I trust they will as a body rise to the height of their enhanced responsibilities. It is, however, clear that the evils of the old standard-pass system have not been removed, they have only been mitigated. So long as the passing of the standards depended on an Inspector's examination, it had to depend on the application of a single test with all its uncertain issues, for he could not possibly examine each school two or three times a year. But as soon as the determination of passes in Standards I. to V. is intrusted to head teachers, there is no longer any reason why the passing of these standards should depend on the issue of a single examination. It would surely have been wiser to make all promotions depend on the results of a series of periodical—say, quarterly—examinations. This course would get rid of all the objectionable features of the old standard-pass system. The element of accident or chance would be eliminated as far as practicable, the period of stress and strain and the encouragement to cramming would be removed, and both pupils and teachers would be encouraged to show equal

application and steady earnest work throughout the year. It may be against the letter of the new regulations for head teachers to take account of their periodic examinations in determining passes in standards and promotions, but it seems in accordance with their spirit, and I hope head teachers will not fail to take account in this connection of the year's work, as far as it is available.

The safeguards for securing efficient teaching under the new *régime* seem to me sufficient, and the future of elementary education in the colony need not wear any other aspect than a hopeful one.

Looking broadly at the state of education in the public schools of this district, I think it shows very noticeable improvement in several directions in the course of the last few years. Reading has become more fluent, distinct, and accurate, as well as more spontaneously intelligent, since the use of two reading-books has been made compulsory in all the standard classes. It is chiefly in elegance and expression that defects are now noted. Spelling has improved, not only in the special tests, but in the written answers generally. The harder words are worked up with great accuracy, and mistakes are mostly confined to mis-spellings in the dictation exercises. In arithmetic and writing there has been little progress, except in the former, in Standards I., II., and III., and in the Preparatory Classes. Drawing in all the larger schools is done with greater freedom and correctness, though this is much less apparent from book exercises than from the special exercises on slates that have been given, as far as practicable, in recent years. In composition there has been decided improvement in grammatical accuracy and in the division of sentences. The common faults in this subject—a very limited vocabulary, poverty of matter and thought, and a lack of logical sequence in the arrangement and development of the exercises—are largely unavoidable owing to the limited reading and the mental immaturity of the children. Where these faults are least in evidence, the fact seems due as much to family and social surroundings as to superior teaching in school. The teaching of science and object-lessons has also improved, though progress is slow and unequal, for thoughtful preparation of these lessons is by no means universal. Satisfactory progress has been made, too, in the study of the meaning of the language of the reading lessons; indeed, this is now a creditable feature in the instruction of a large and growing proportion of the Board's schools. The junior scholarship examinations afford additional evidence of the substantial progress in this direction, as well as of creditable advances in composition among the brighter of our younger pupils. The progress indicated shows, I think, that the teaching is growing in intelligence, and on the whole in breadth and thoroughness as well. There is less reason to feel satisfied that general improvement is being made in the care and neatness with which written exercises are done, though in many schools these are highly creditable.

A great deal of the improvement to be noted in the smaller schools must be credited to the earnest and energetic body of younger teachers who have in recent years taken service as head teachers. Their schools are usually superior, and often markedly superior, to those taught by teachers of much longer service, and, in spite of their rank as juniors, they will no doubt rapidly and deservedly secure promotions at the expense of their more somnolent seniors. As Mr. Dickinson says, "Steady progress is being made in our schools—improved methods of instruction are gradually coming into use. The future of our schools is assured, for an improved type of teacher is growing up amongst us, better educated, and more anxious to work on good models."

What are the chief causes that are acting here and now to retard progress?

In the first place, many of our older teachers have a low ideal of education. Their chief aim is to get pupils to pass, not to train their intelligence and their powers of observation, reasoning, and expression in the highest degree they can. The system, too, has constantly tended to make them value evident and tangible results more highly than the subtle growth of mental habits and aptitudes that educative methods well applied produce. Then there is considerable indifference to good methods of teaching; an evil fostered by the want of a practical test in teaching in connection with the teachers' certificate examination, and by the slight theoretical knowledge of the art which that examination demands, for the gate to the teaching profession is not sufficiently guarded by a strict and thorough examination in school method. The want of means of improving the practical training of pupil-teachers tells in the same direction. Teachers are not as a rule watchful enough to avoid falling into ruts; the fullest and latest works on school method in vogue in other progressive communities are possessed by very few; and visits to efficiently conducted neighbouring schools, to compare methods of teaching and the habits of study formed among pupils, are hardly ever made. The latter is a laudable practice, for which teachers might be granted two or three special holidays each year. It is quite a feature in the management of German elementary schools.

The want of adequate preparation for the smart, economical, and skilful teaching of lessons also does much to retard progress. For really efficient and rapid work habitual preparation of lessons is indispensable. The Inspectors would be glad to find more general evidence of its being made.

Again, the regular and rapid use of the blackboard for explaining difficulties, for enforcing illustrations and explanations, and for facilitating the revision of important points at the close of lessons, is practised less than is needful. This practice has indeed come into more general use, but its use should be universal, as it is of the greatest value as an aid to recapitulation and to thoroughness.

Greater smartness in dealing with all lessons that do not make great demands on the reasoning powers would do much to further progress. Occasional visits to smartly and efficiently conducted schools would do more to impress teachers with the importance of this desideratum than much criticism and well-meant advice. Most of the listlessness to be noticed during reading-lessons is directly due to want of life and spirit in their conduct. Mistake-hunting is often carried to a stupid excess, that bores the pupils, and wastes much time that should be turned to better account.

In some directions want of thoroughness is still a serious hindrance to progress. This is seen in the learning of addition in some schools. It is more noticeable in the teaching of the grammar of Standards V. and VI. in the majority of our schools, and of the arithmetic of the higher classes in a considerable number. The work of the brighter pupils affords ample proof that these subjects are taught with satisfactory care and skill, but the average work shows as conclusively that the teaching is not thorough enough, and does not call forth serious interest and steady mental application on the part of a large body of the pupils. Considerable want of thoroughness, and of accuracy too, frequently marks the work done in science. The inaccuracy is directly due to ill-formed teaching, and is much less excusable than the superficiality just noted, for there is but little time available for teaching this subject, even in the largest schools.

If vivid and realistic teaching were more generally used no small benefit would ensue. Its absence is to be specially noted in the geography of Standard II. in a good many schools, and in the study of geometrical figures in Standards I. to III. I have found cases not a few, in which pupils in Standard II. could not point to the cardinal points, and in one instance a pupil (not an imbecile) could not show where the sun rose. I agree with Mr. Dickinson in desiring to see "a rough plan of the immediate neighbourhood of the school made the foundation of instruction in geography." Cutting out the geometrical figures studied in Standards I. to III. can be easily carried out, and this should be done everywhere. In several schools models of these figures were not to be found when they were needed for illustration; they had been made once, but had been lost! Mr. Mulgan pertinently says, "What a much better grasp of fractions pupils would have were they taught to represent them diagramatically!" "Pictures," he adds, "might be made of great use in illustrating lessons in geography." Mr. Dickinson also notes that "those teachers who have gathered together a collection of pictures to illustrate the geography lessons find them very helpful. They make the lessons vivid and interesting." In this connection Mr. Mulgan draws attention to the great value of diagrams and blank maps drawn on a sufficiently large scale, and always ready for use. "Many teachers do not take the trouble to make these drawings, or draw them on the blackboard as they are required. Blackboard illustrations can never be altogether dispensed with; but in the case of maps and diagrams which are constantly wanted, much time might be saved by having the charts or drawings on paper. The trouble involved is slight and the expense trifling; brown paper and coloured chalks answer admirably for preparing them. With a blank map or a drawing the teacher brings out just what he wants, and so impresses his teaching with thoroughness."

An intemperate and almost unceasing use, or rather abuse, of oral teaching under the guise of explanation and exposition is a grievous failing of many able and intelligent teachers that works steadily against the realisation of a high type of teaching. This weakness is most noticeable in the handling of large classes, but it is not confined to the teachers of these. If some benign power would grant to the victims of this habit the power of hearing themselves at work for a few hours, they would for ever after be on their guard against the loquacity that so easily and sorely besets them. Receptive pupils are no doubt more or less entertained by this stream of talk, but it bores the great majority, who need continuous active employment to maintain their interest and attention. Moreover, it altogether fails in giving to pupils that constant exercise in thinking, and in expressing what they think and know, that alone ministers to the growth of faculty and understanding. For the educative part of school-work is mainly done by the pupil himself and not by the teacher, who, if he is skilful, avoids all unnecessary explanation and prompting as sure to defeat the main objects he has in view.

The readiness and excellence of the oral answering form one of the surest tests of intelligent and educative teaching. Judged by this test the majority of our schools fail to impart such a training as might fairly be expected of them. In most schools an effort is being made to cultivate the power of oral expression, and in a number of cases it has been very successful, but on the whole the results are disappointing. Frequently, indeed, the performance has the look of being perfunctory, of being adopted for the day to humour the Inspector's crotchet, as it is called, for hearing full, connected, and clearly stated oral answers. I hope for better things in this direction. A progressive training in good oral answering should be one of the teacher's most constant aims, and the pupils of the higher classes should be trained to give not only complete single sentences, but a continuous statement, narrative, or description, in reply to suitable questioning. The need and importance of this training are being more and more recognised by all thoughtful writers on elementary education. In this connection Mr. Mulgan writes, "Whilst in many of the schools [of his district] satisfactory results in oral answering were obtained, much yet remains to be done. Short incomplete or even meaningless answers are too often accepted, and children instead of being trained to reproduce in their own words where possible an exact equivalent of the question asked, are allowed to answer wide of the mark. More attention should be directed to fulness of expression, to accuracy and point, and, in the case of comprehension of reading-lessons, to training pupils to give the general meaning of whole sentences in their own words. As it is, many of them too frequently ignore the sentence, and singling out some particular word, give the meaning of that alone." Mr. Grierson also says, "A large number of teachers are apparently not fully alive to the obvious advantage of systematic and progressive training in good oral answering as a means of teaching composition. Even in schools where Standard I. and Standard II. are carefully trained to give statement-answers, the practice is very often discontinued in the higher classes, instead of being carried on step by step as it should be."

Frequent changing of teachers, unavoidable as this evil to a large extent is, must still be reckoned a serious hindrance to progress. The reports of teachers taking charge of fresh schools show that outgoing teachers frequently relax their exertions for some time before removal, and particularly before retirement from the Board's service. Several instances of this have been noted during the past year.

Undoubtedly the relatively slow growth of intelligence, of educative power, and of thoroughness in the teaching of the public schools is in chief measure due to a cause which teachers and Inspectors alike are impotent to remedy—to the overburdened course of instruction that is imposed by the Education Department. It is indisputable that our course of study is much heavier than that required in the elementary schools of Great Britain, France, and Germany, and in my judgment a substantial curtailment of it is one of our crying needs. To me it was a great disappointment to find that the new arrangements had made no provision in this direction. It is one of the chief misfortunes of our system of public education that the officers of the Education Department are not in closer contact with the practical working of the great machine they direct. Such defects as the overweighting of the prescribed syllabus cannot easily be brought home to them without a more intimate acquaintance with its practical working. To demand too wide a course of study inevitably works against thoroughness and intelligence of teaching, by preventing pupils and teachers from giving to the more indispensable subjects the time and attention needful for their sound study and real mastery. Any expert who carefully examines a school time-table cannot fail to recognise that we are frittering away our energies by attempting too much.

Now what is the scope of the curtailment that can be approved by those who desire to see the evil of an overburdened syllabus removed?

In the first place, history might cease to be a subject of examination and take rank as a reading subject. This means that a suitable reading-book in history would be read through in addition to the other Readers now in use, by each class that now receives special instruction in history, and that the language and matter would be questioned on and explained as in other reading-lessons. This change I would heartily recommend, and I believe the suggested treatment would do more to foster patriotism and a real interest in the story of our country than is possible under present conditions.

In the second place, the higher parts of the arithmetic course might be greatly curtailed without any disadvantage. I would recommend the entire omission of compound interest, present worth and true discount, stocks, the metric system, and the proposed decimal system of coinage. All these rules except the last two are applications of the principle of proportion, with which and its applications the curtailed course would make pupils perfectly familiar, for they would still study simple and compound proportion, simple interest, percentages, and proportional parts. Young persons familiar with these rules should have no difficulty in learning the rules omitted, if they should afterwards have occasion to do so. Then, the treatment of decimal fractions should be greatly curtailed. The addition, substraction, multiplication, and division of easy finite decimals, the reduction of vulgar fractions to decimals correctly expressed, and the meaning of the notation used in writing infinite decimals—that is all that seems to me needful or useful to teach. The briefer course just indicated would afford great relief in the higher standards, and yet leave a curriculum of the highest utility and completeness for the needs of practical life and the ends of mental discipline. The curtailment recommended would make it possible to teach the elements of book-keeping in Standards V. and VI. without making the whole course more onerous than it is now.

In any rearrangement of the syllabus the courses of instruction in grammar and geography need to be carefully revised. Nothing more arbitrary and pedantic than the present geography course in Standard III., and, in part, in Standard IV., can be conceived. A wider and more connected, but not a more minute, treatment of the whole subject is needful. Our pupils are taught about the Apennine Mountains, but need never hear of the great and rich plain of Lombardy; of the Carpathians, but need never hear of the plain of Hungary; and so on. They learn the names of a few rivers and mountains of the several continents in one class, of their great seaports in another, and of their countries and larger towns in another. We may well ask how such a course of study can forward intelligent training. A full syllabus of the work in each class should be issued by the Department to all schools, and it would be well if an official text-book were prepared.

In grammar, the topics that are helpful in connection with composition should receive earlier and greater prominence. The recognition, and the classification according to use, of phrases and later of clauses, the easier principles of sentence structure, and the arrangement of phrases and clauses, should form a clearly graduated part of the course. Parsing, especially of the verb, should be simplified.

I have written on these topics because there are indications that the Minister of Education may undertake a revision of the syllabus at an early date, and a knowledge of the opinions of Inspectors who are in daily contact with the working of the public schools may haply have some grain of weight in determining its direction. In any case, such expressions of Inspectors' views may help to enlighten public opinion on the important questions discussed.

I need only further note a few points culled from the reports of my colleagues.

Both Mr. Mulgan and Mr. Grierson draw attention to the careless supervision and direction of the slate-writing of the primer classes in the country districts. I quote Mr. Mulgan's words: "In very many cases too little is demanded from the children in the primer classes in the matter of figuring and writing, especially in the lower divisions. The teacher sets a copy on the blackboard, the time allowed for the reproduction of which is, say, twenty minutes. At the end of six or eight minutes several of the pupils have finished. On examining their slates, however, it is found that the work is done in such a way as to leave no room for doubt that hardly any effort has been made either to understand or to carry out what is required. The figures or letters are written anywhere on the slate, regardless of lines, slope, or the space the copy should occupy." In small infant classes, I may remark, the copy for writing and figuring is best put on the pupils' slates. They can imitate a letter written on a slate side by side with their own copies of it much more successfully than one written on a distant blackboard.

Mr. Grierson notes insufficient oral drill in tables in the preparatory class as one of the chief faults in his district, and I have found the same defect in several of the smaller schools. It is the easiest thing in the world to ascertain if pupils have mastered the addition of simple numbers, and, if it is not sufficiently known, the routine needful for learning it should be diligently practised. The objectionable practice of teaching multiplication tables side by side with addition is still to be met with in a good many schools in the north.

The change of copy-books during the year has been attended by a disturbing period of transition, but the Inspectors are all impressed by the improvement noted in the writing since the change was made. Mr. Mulgan remarks on this subject: "Further improvement cannot be hoped from the copy-book alone. The writing is best in those schools where pains are taken to secure the pupils' best effort in all written work." This is a truth of cardinal importance.

An indifferent handling of composition in Standard IV. is noted by several of the Inspectors. In this class very brief heads, one or two words under each, were supplied during the year to suggest material for writing about. These heads were purposely made full that pupils might select what they knew best, and develop these topics at some length. This they were not very prompt to do, and a very prevalent fault was dealing with the heads seriatim, giving a short sentence about each. The method used is, I think, a suitable one, but it is evidently handled with little skill and success by a good many teachers. I agree with Mr. Mulgan's remark, that the notes or heads used in the habitual teaching of the Standard IV. class give the pupils too much help, and leave but a subordinate and comparatively mechanical part of the exercise to be done at first hand by the pupils. Mr. Grierson observes that composition is taught with very varying skill, and that in a few of his schools the exercises of Standard III. were absolutely better than those of Standard IV. in others. I give Mr. Dickinson's observations on this subject in full. "Composition is steadily improving. In most of our schools the exercises are free from gross blunders. It has been my opinion—growing for some years—that what is needed is: (1) More practice in oral composition in the lower classes; and (2) more real instruction in the higher. This is shown by want of continuity and coherence in many of the exercises, and the limited stock of particles and minor phrases possessed by our children. How few of our teachers keep a note-book for recording the most important and instructive errors. In a fortnight, what fine material might be collected for a real lesson in composition or sentence-structure."

The answering in geography has this year improved in accuracy, and in many cases in fulness, but physical and especially mathematical geography shows little and often no improvement. In not a few of the smaller schools it looks as if these branches of the instruction were deliberately neglected, at least by the pupils who expect to gain marks enough on the other questions to earn a pass. I am glad to see geography now ranking as a class subject in Standards II. to V. In these classes the examination will for the future be taken orally, and the time allowed for teaching the subject should be reduced to an hour and a half weekly at most.

In the arithmetic of Standard IV. Mr. Crowe notes "a general improvement." Mr. Goodwin has "found some improvement in the large schools, but this subject is still in an unsatisfactory state in many of the small schools, particularly in the higher classes.* Questions involving thought and not readily answered by rules were but poorly dealt with." Mr. Dickinson observes, "Arithmetic is still a weak subject in Standard V. and Standard VI. It is taught in too many schools merely as the 'Art of Computation.' It is an exercise in getting so many sums right, instead of an exercise in reasoning. We need more 'demonstrative' and less 'commercial' arithmetic. The pupil should be required to give clear and accurate reasons for all he does, and the mere working of examples should not be accepted as sufficient. In schools where Standard V. and Standard VI. have been trained to give plenty of written statement before working their exercises I have invariably found the most accurate arithmetic."

The inequality in the arithmetical work of the same classes in the majority of our schools is very noticeable. To get rid of it we need more oral drill at the blackboard of small sections in large classes, and of the more backward pupils in all. Three-quarters of the teacher's time during this lesson should be devoted to giving this blackboard drill and practice. By drill and practice I do not mean the teaching of new rules—teaching which will be directed to the whole class—but the doing of a series of examples at the blackboard by a suitable section of the class, the work and reasoning being contributed by the pupils as selected, and being recorded on the board by one of their number under the teacher's direction. When such examples are finished every pupil in the section should be able to describe shortly how the sum has been done, giving the steps clearly and in proper order. The mere marking of answers in the larger schools takes up far too much of the teacher's time. It should be done quickly at the close of the lesson by mutual correction or on some such plan. This applies especially to the work of Standards III. to VI.

Throughout the year the pupils in Standard VI. have been tested in reading passages of fair difficulty which they had not before seen. Mr. Goodwin alone refers to the result of this test, and he says: "The pupils of Standard VI. were able to deal satisfactorily with the unseen passages from strange books presented to them." I cannot report of this test in such favourable terms. In the large schools not more than three-fourths of the Standard VI. pupils read the previously unseen test satisfactorily, and in most of the smaller schools not more than a half of the pupils did so. The great majority of those who dealt poorly with this test gave a very satisfactory rendering of the lessons in the class reading-books. It was with great difficulty that numbers of these pupils attempted the pronunciation of words they had not met with before, and the art of splitting such words up into syllables and correctly sounding these in combination evidently needs to be more carefully cultivated in teaching the higher classes.

* Mr. Goodwin here refers mainly to the Hokianga and Bay of Islands group of schools. He was not able to undertake the examination of the other small schools of his district.

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.
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Above Standard VI.	29	...	...	...
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" 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 those read in school the importance of a wider course of reading will be recognised.

The reading is generally fairly accurate and fluent, but is often marred by indistinct articulation and by inattention to proper phrasing. The latter is the more serious defect, as it indicates a lack of an intelligent appreciation of the passage read, and until such be obtained the reading must of necessity be dull and without expression.

An idea contained in last year's report of the Inspector for Hawke's Bay took my fancy, and, as it might meet with the approval of the teachers in the larger schools and be adopted in the higher standards, either in its present form or in a modified form, I quote it in full. It will be noted that the necessity for combining reading aloud with reading silently has not been overlooked:—

"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.

"'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.'"

Spelling in the special tests is on the whole satisfactory, and the spelling on the general papers shows steady improvement. In some districts marks are taken from spelling as a subject if the spelling in the other work is unsatisfactory. This plan I do not follow, but deduct marks for the geography, composition, &c., if the spelling in these subjects is inferior. Indeed, in composition, at least fairly accurate spelling is insisted upon, as I consider that an essay or letter that is marred by inferior spelling is almost valueless. In grammar and history, also, poor spelling is highly censurable, as it points to defective methods of teaching and to lack of thoroughness in instruction.

Writing continues to be very satisfactory in most schools, and the examination-papers are marked by neatness and generally satisfactory penmanship. Insisting upon a high standard in this respect, as I consider a training in habits of neatness, care, and tidy and clear arrangement of work to be of the greatest value to the pupils in after-life, I allow somewhat more time to arithmetic and other paper work than is often allowed, and I am more and more convinced that the extra time is well spent. Indeed, I have seldom grounds for serious complaint; on the contrary, the neatness of the pupils' papers is often commended in the examination reports.

Freehand drawing is satisfactory. The tests in scale drawing are well done, and those in geometry fairly well done. Model drawing and solid geometry, however, are very inferior. As these two subjects are taken in Standard VI. only, and as some latitude is allowed to teachers in the choice of subjects, it is only the increasing number of pupils in Standard VI. that gives one an opportunity for judging the quality of the work throughout the district, and I have found it very disappointing. Indeed, I have been surprised to find so many cases in which the teachers themselves did not understand the principles, with the result that their pupils in Standard VI. failed utterly in drawing. Nor is the weakness in this drawing confined to standard pupils. As supervisor at the examination of teachers I have been amazed at the attempts of our pupil-teachers and ex-pupil-teachers to draw simple models. With a view to bringing about an improvement I should recommend teachers who feel a deficiency in this respect to take advantage of any opportunity for receiving instruction; and as the number of pupils in Standard VI. is increasing year by year, the schools should be more fully supplied with models.

In arithmetic there is much room for improvement in the way in which the text-books are used. Teachers too often unreasoningly follow the order of the exercises in a text-book, instead of using it as a collection of examples intended to facilitate class-work and to save the teacher trouble in making up his own. In Standard IV., for instance, pupils are taken through avoir-

dupois weight, working all the rules (addition, subtraction, &c.), and all the examples in each rule. In the same way they work through the other tables, one after another. Now, the principle of addition is the same whatever table be used, and as the pupils know the addition of money they should be taught addition of avoirdupois, troy, &c., together, and led to recognise the principle underlying the differences of denomination. Subtraction, multiplication, and division should be taught in the same way. Again, practice comes at the end of the book, and is therefore taught last, instead of being taken as another means of working multiplication and taught early in the year. Reasoning from what I have pointed out, teachers will readily see for themselves other ways in which the present use of the text-books can be improved upon; but, as I cannot enter fully into the subject in such a report as this, I propose to take an early opportunity for sending out a circular dealing with arithmetic. To all those who have anything to do with the instruction of children it will be a day of rejoicing when a decimal system of computing is introduced, and the unreasonable complexity in the subdivision of denominations swept away.

Composition has on the whole shown satisfactory progress, though in many of our schools much still remains to be done. It is, I think, the most important, yet the most difficult, subject in the syllabus, difficult to examine and difficult to teach: difficult to examine because there are so many points to be considered in estimating its value, and it is by no means easy to say how much incorrect spelling or punctuation, how much poor matter or bad arrangement, should cause failure; and difficult to teach owing to the pupils' limited vocabulary, limited experience and observation, limited training of the imagination, and to habits of loosely expressing their thoughts that children acquire in early years. In the best of the schools where systematic instruction and thorough correction are found the work is very satisfactory. The best work as regards matter is met with where teachers appeal to the imagination in the subjects they choose for essays and letters. Such subjects as "Thoughts of a School Pen," "What a Horse thinks of his Master," "Experiences of an old Hat," &c., do this, and bring into play the higher faculties and give scope for originality or a sense of humour. Indeed, I have often been struck by the originality and keen sense of humour even younger pupils display in writing such essays, which they enjoy much more than the dry subjects often set. The mere filling-in of outlines such as are found in some of the text-books in use results in stiff, stilted, and inelegant sentences, tiresome for a pupil to compose, tiresome for a reader to peruse, and, for training in sentence forming, quite valueless.

In only a few schools is grammatical inaccuracy a very serious defect, the practice of requiring the pupils to answer fully in oral work having proved a most efficient remedy. In a large percentage of the schools the arrangement of the clauses and phrases is often faulty, and loose ambiguous sentences take the place of well-constructed periods.

Political geography is on the whole well known, and the memory maps are often very good, accurate in detail, drawn in proportion, and neatly executed. Physical geography, on the other hand, still continues unsatisfactory.

Of the class-subjects I can only repeat what I have previously reported. They are seldom well taught as a whole, and grammar in Standards V. and VI. is often very unsatisfactory.

The additional subjects show somewhat better results than do the class-subjects.

The discipline and manners are very satisfactory. For the former not fewer that fifty-one out of the sixty-three schools received from "good" to "excellent," and as a rule bad manners are found only where the discipline and control are bad. Of the teachers I have little to add to what I have previously written. There are in the service earnest, skilful, and enthusiastic teachers, whose work is beyond praise, for such teachers do more good educationally than can appear in examination-papers or can be indicated by words in a report. Though shown in some measure by the tone of the work, it is intangible and subtle; and yet an examiner feels strongly and appreciates keenly its presence. Such teachers teach a great deal more than the syllabus (while bad teachers teach a great deal less), and they endeavour to keep pace with the educational progress of the day, and their pupils get the advantage of every advance that intelligence and experience can suggest. There are some, however, who, from lack of ability, and sometimes, I am afraid, from lack of interest, perform their duties but very indifferently.

Of the pupil-teachers and ex-pupil-teachers I can speak very highly. Nor is it only their teaching which occupies their attention. They are assiduous in their studies beyond what is required by the pupil-teachers' regulations, as is shown by the fact that eight have exemptions from examination under the pupil-teachers' regulations, owing to their having passed the matriculation examination or the teachers' certificate examination. All our ex-pupil-teachers have full certificates—either D or E.

Before concluding I should like to refer to one or two points to which I think attention should be directed. School libraries are seldom established, but if the Board could see its way to grant a small sum annually to supplement what teachers or Committees might locally collect, a stimulus might be given. £1 to £3 would, I think, be sufficient inducement for the local authorities to stir themselves to give the children better facilities for reading than at present. Supplementary Readers and drawing models I have referred to. Science is taught under very great disadvantages owing to the lack of apparatus, and I should very much like to see the larger schools, at any rate, supplied with the simple appliances necessary to illustrate the lessons which are required by the syllabus. At present the book and the blackboard are used, but a great deal of the knowledge must of necessity be empirical until suitable demonstrations can be given.

I have, &c.,

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc.,
Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

WANGANUI.

SIR,— Board of Education Office, Wanganui, 1st March, 1900.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending 31st December, 1899.

Number of Schools.—At the close of the school year 134 schools, including two half-time schools in the Ngamatapouri Block, were in active operation. During the year new schools were opened at Fraser Road, Riverton, Rangitoto, Kakariki, Bluff Road, Pukerua, and Coal Creek; while the schools at Komako, Maungahoe, Paiaka, Papanui, and Parapara were closed. The increase in the number for the year is therefore only two. During the year several buildings were enlarged, and a fine building on the most up-to-date principles was erected at Feilding, to replace the old structure destroyed by fire in December, 1898.

Pupil-teachers.—The examination of pupil-teachers was held in Wanganui during the mid-winter holidays. The following is a summary of the results: First class (third year)—examined, 30; passed, 28; failed, 2. Second class (second year)—examined, 30; passed, 16; failed, 14. Third class (first year)—examined, 21; passed, 17; failed, 4.

The limit percentages for a pass were—in the individual subjects, 25 per cent.; in the total marks in all subjects, 55 per cent. In the first class the limit percentage of total possible marks was reached in every case, and it ranged from 55 per cent. to 88 per cent. The two unsuccessful candidates failed in only one subject, viz., algebra. In arithmetic the class as a whole reached the high percentage of 80·1. Four candidates obtained full marks, five others over 90 per cent. of possible marks, five others over 80 per cent., eleven others over 70 per cent., two others over 60 per cent., two others over 50 per cent., while the weakest candidate reached 47 per cent. As the paper was quite equal to the requirements for the E certificate, results like this plainly point to very sound teaching on the part of our principal teachers in this very important subject. The second class showed a high number of unsuccessful candidates, but in five cases failure was in only one subject, viz.: three in algebra, one in arithmetic, and one in history. Nine candidates failed to reach the requisite total percentage. In arithmetic four candidates obtained full marks, and eight others over 80 per cent. of the possible. Dictation and algebra each brought five utterly to grief. The total percentages ranged from 41·3 to 85·2, and seven candidates obtained over 75 per cent. In geography and history the work might well have been better. In the third class the total percentages ranged from 42·5 to 81 per cent. The four unsuccessful candidates failed badly. Arithmetic, while seldom really strong, fell below 60 per cent. in only five cases. Algebra was very creditable. History, as usual in this class, was a very poor subject.

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.	Examined in Standards.	Failed in Standards.	Passed in Standards.
Marist Brothers', Wanganui	66	64	60	11	49
St. Joseph's, Wanganui ...	90	47	45	8	37
Hawera	90	54	48	7	41
Palmerston North ...	87	67	65	22	43
Totals	333	232	218	48	170

The work in these schools showed steady improvement. It should be mentioned that the arithmetic in the highest standards at the Hawera School was amongst the best received during the year.

Inspection.—In all, 110 schools were inspected. We are sorry to say that hitherto it has been found impossible to visit some of the schools (chiefly those in the interior) twice a year. Perhaps the new regulations will give us time for this in future. A few schools were temporarily closed when we were in their neighbourhood, but we could not on this account pay a second visit to their portion of the district.

At our inspection visits we almost invariably found the work going on satisfactorily according to time-tables. At the majority of the schools very good methods are employed, and they are well carried out; consequently the interest of the pupils is aroused, and their attention sustained.

At a few schools the instruction is rather aimless in character, showing a lack of method: there appears to be no definite plan of work, so there is much haphazard teaching. At schools where such faults obtain the teachers evidently do not know what form a lesson is to take until they go to the blackboard to give it. Lessons are not prepared and arranged so as to form part of a scheme which will give a complete and thorough knowledge of the subject. We are pleased to be able to state that such schools are yearly on the decrease, and that ex-pupil-teachers are seldom found amongst this class of sole teachers.

Some teachers might remember that, while a certain amount of rote learning is necessary, as, for instance, in the various tables, definitions, and rules in arithmetic, grammar, and other subjects, there are two ways of obtaining it. Thus, one teacher will rely on pure repetition, while another will see that each step is understood before being committed to memory. In the former case the tabulated facts are merely mechanically suspended in the mind; in the latter they are mentally assimilated. For pass purposes the former is, perhaps, as good as the latter, and involves less trouble to the teacher, but no educationalist can have any doubt as to which is of the more lasting advantage to the pupil.

One important matter often struck us on our visits to small schools with two on the staff: the principal teacher confined his attention to Standards III. to VI., while the pupil-teacher was kept exclusively with the Preparatory Class, Standard I., and Standard II., and left pretty well to herself. Indeed sometimes we were informed, when complaining of the backwardness of the lower classes, that "the pupil-teacher was responsible for them." Now, this kind of principal teacher evidently thinks that he has done his duty if he has taught what he calls "my own classes," being apparently unmindful of the fact that every class is his, and that it is as necessary for him to give his pupil-teacher opportunities of teaching the higher classes as it is for himself to teach the lower. Again, a principal teacher with one pupil-teacher in the same room should not "lose himself" in his own particular lessons, but should be all eyes and ears for any irregularity in any class in the room: hence the lower classes should always be seated to the left of the teacher as he faces the pupils.

Collective, indiscriminate answering is still too much in vogue at some schools. As a means of testing the effectiveness of the instruction, it is nearly if not quite useless, while it is certainly very misleading in its results, for one or two smart pupils supply the answer, at the first suggestion of which the rest of the class join in.

At several schools we were much pleased with the excellent manner in which the "top pupils" of classes carried out their monitorial duties.

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:—

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. ...	154	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	506	487	19	164	323	65·8	66·3	14 2
" V.	997	951	46	314	637	63·9	66·9	13 5
" IV.	1,335	1,259	76	300	959	71·8	76·2	12 5
" III.	1,434	1,380	54	285	1,095	76·4	79·3	11 5
" II.	1,409	1,356	53	76	1,280	90·8	94·4	10 1
" I.	1,360	1,316	44	77	1,239	91·1	94·1	9 1
Preparatory	3,135	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	10,330	6,749	292	1,216	5,533	78·6	81·9	11 9 (Mean.)

All the schools open for the full twelve months, with the exception of the two half-time schools, Marohema and Kaimoko, in the Ngamatapouri Block, were examined in standards in the usual course. These half-time schools will be visited early this year. The total number of schools examined was 129, or four more than in 1898.

On the days appointed for examination in standards there were 10,330 pupils (5,339 boys and 4,991 girls) on the rolls. Of these, 7,041, or 68·2 per cent., were in Standards I. to VI.; 3,135, or 30·3 per cent., were in the preparatory classes below Standard I.; and 154, or 1·5 per cent., had already passed Standard VI. The total number presented in the six standards is 138 higher than in 1898. Standards VI., V., and II. show increases of 34, 174, and 56 respectively; and Standards IV., III., and I. decreases of 35, 75, and 6 pupils respectively. The class above Standard VI. has the comparatively large increase of forty pupils. It is pleasing to see that the number in Standard IV. is only ninety-nine below the number in Standard III. From Standard IV. to Standard V. there is a drop of 338, and from Standard V. to Standard VI. a drop of 491: these figures clearly show that many parents are unable to spare their children to attend school after the passing of the compulsory Fourth Standard.

Of the 3,135 pupils in the preparatory classes, 595 were over eight years of age. Of these fifty-five were Maoris, and 359 had been under two years at school, or had attended irregularly.

Of the 7,041 pupils presented in Standards I. to VI., 6,749, or 95·9 per cent., attended and were examined, 292 were absent, 1,216 failed, and 5,553 passed. Measles, which was prevalent throughout the greater part of the examination tour, was responsible for many of the absentees, and, no doubt, for many failures also.

The mean of the average ages shows a decrease of two months.

Instruction.—Although percentages of passes are not much guide to the efficiency of individual schools, they must, when calculated for a whole district with 129 schools, indicate the general quality of the work being done. Granting this to be so, to a casual observer the instruction would appear to have very much deteriorated during the past year, for, on comparing the tables of 1898 and 1899, we find that in the latter year, with ninety-one more examined in standards, there are 238 fewer passes and 329 more failures, and the percentage of passes has dropped from 86·7 to 81·9, or 4·8 per cent. decrease. For the results in Standards I. and II. the principal teachers are responsible, for those in Standards III., IV., V., and VI. the Inspectors. In these four highest standards 3,041 passed out of 4,077 examined, or 73·9 per cent., a drop of 6·9 on the previous year's result. In all classes except Standard II. (in which there was an increase of 0·3) there was a decrease in the percentages of passes, viz.: in Standard VI., 22·8; in

Standard V., 7·6; in Standard IV., 3·7; in Standard III., 3·1; and in Standard I., 2·8. But, notwithstanding the great falling-off as shown by these percentages, we do not think that the teachers have at all relaxed their efforts, or that the instruction has in any way deteriorated. It will then naturally be asked, How do we account for the great drop in the percentages? In reply, we say that, as regards all standards, sickness was more or less prevalent throughout the year, and more particularly throughout the examination portion of it; while as regards the higher standards there is no doubt in our minds that the increased difficulty in the questions set on the arithmetic cards was responsible for the downfall. In Standards VI. and V. the cards were quite 25 per cent. more difficult than those issued in 1898, and in consequence, in school after school (some of them our very best), it was quite a common thing to find these standards breaking down badly in arithmetic. We certainly think that some of the questions were above a fair interpretation of the syllabus requirements, though in fairness we must say there were on every card three plain, direct sums. But the pupils are only children after all; and, as every teacher knows, children, when confronted with some questions quite beyond them, are liable to become nervous and lose heart, and so break down even on other questions which they quite understand. Again, in 1898, the percentages were abnormally high, reaching 97 per cent. in Standard I., 89 per cent. in Standard VI., and 87 per cent. in all standards. Taking everything with consideration, we do not think, as we said before, that there are any grounds for thinking that there is any falling-off in the quality of the instruction.

With regard to the quality of the work done in each subject, and methods of teaching such subjects, we wrote very fully in our last report, so we do not think that anything would be gained by now going over the same ground again this year.

Preparatory Classes.—The work in these classes varied very much, but on the whole it might be described as satisfactory. Differences in attainments were most marked amongst the smaller schools. Teachers unaided, and with all the standards, cannot be expected to give much undivided attention to these classes; still many teachers contrive, by snatching odd moments, to keep the little ones busily and interestedly engaged. On the other hand, however, in some schools the pupils are in a great measure left to themselves: they "go on" writing and figuring, with little or no attention from the teacher, and the work becomes so monotonous and irksome that the greater part of their time is spent in idling.

Reading was generally good. In a few of the large schools, and in some of the smaller, the pupils not only knew the words well, but also read with such expression as showed true appreciation of the sense and spirit of the little sentences. Reading by rote, due to the children knowing the lessons by heart, should be guarded against. Pointed attention to the words should be very frequent, and in this connection printing them on the blackboard is essential. We still had to complain at many schools that the reading was too low in tone. Spelling was invariably good in the schools where it had been taught in accordance with the method set forth in the systematically arranged lists of words in the Queen Infant Reader. Writing generally was good, and not infrequently excellent. There were the usual number of small schools where scribbling was in vogue, no attention being paid to the copy on the blackboard. In arithmetic the slate-work was at many schools very nicely put down and accurately worked, while at others quite the reverse was the case. Oral work at the blackboard is fast improving. We have had frequently in former years to complain of the neglect of thorough drill in the addition tables: more attention has of late been given to these, and with very satisfactory results.

Discipline, &c.—The order and discipline are generally very satisfactory in the majority of the schools. Attention, especially in large classes, is not always what it should be. Teachers are too easily satisfied in this respect; they are content if their pupils sit or stand fairly steadily in a state of mental torpor, and behave in a more or less decorous manner; they bury their faces in a text-book, and confine their attention to the book and to the pupil answering, and thus they teach the other members inattention by being themselves inattentive to them. But every intelligent teacher should keep all his pupils in focus; and he should know, by merely scanning their faces, who are mentally active, who are sleepy and apathetic, who are given to silly tricks. For just as it is difficult to restrain the outward look of anger, if angry, of sorrow, if sorrowful, and so on through the whole range of feeling; so if the pupil is eagerly attentive, or apathetically indifferent, his face will betray him to the observant teacher. Any reality within comes out of necessity in a corresponding bodily expression; while bodily expression shows the absence of any real feeling as well as the presence. It should be remembered that if pupils are inattentive there must be something wrong with either the lesson or the operator. Attention rises or falls in the educational barometer in proportion to the teacher's ability; inattention is the teacher's fault.

Slouching and lolling, when pupils are standing in line, or when sitting in desks, are in evidence in far too many schools. But bad attitudes betray false work; though there may be true outward observance in some degree without inward truth, the converse is not possible.

The manner and general bearing of the pupils are, at the majority of schools, most pleasing.

In conclusion, Sir, we may say that the teachers as a body continue to perform their duties in a careful and zealous manner.

I have, &c.,

W. H. Vereker-Bindon, M.A.,
James Milne, M.A.,
Inspectors.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,— Wellington, 28th February, 1900.

I have the honour to present the annual report on the working condition of the primary State schools of the Wellington Education District for the year 1899.

By the appointment of a second Assistant Inspector early in the past year I have been in a position to overtake the work of inspection, to examine thoroughly all the schools in operation, and for the first time to examine and inspect all the Roman Catholic schools. The Board schools examined numbered 136, and those inspected 117, the latter number including all in operation whose attendance warranted a second visit of inspection.

There is a nominal increase of four schools on the previous year's return, caused by the opening of small ones at Parkville, Mangatiti, and Huia Road, in the Forty-mile Bush, at Matahiwi, near Masterton, and at South Featherston, the school at Te Mai being closed. Although a few children were examined in a settler's woolshed at Maungapakeha, the new school-building there is serving no purpose. Also a new building at Wharau, seventeen miles from Gladstone, was opened for a short time with very few children, and closed for the remainder of the year. These and one or two other cases, which may come into notice, point to apparent undue haste in erecting buildings. I do not think any new school-building should be put up by the Board until the Inspector reports that a temporary school has been carried on to his satisfaction, and that the attendance justifies the erection of a permanent building. For some time past the multiplication of very small schools has been going on, until we have now thirty-two with less than twenty-five children on the roll, although in former years twenty-five was the minimum roll allowed.

At present there does not appear to be any pressing need for increased accommodation. In the city some of the schools are fairly full, and the Rintoul Street School is overcrowded, but the recent erection at Island Bay was intended to relieve it, and the Newtown School is capable of accommodating over a hundred children. The old part of the Newtown building and the Mount Cook Girls' building are dilapidated, out of date in construction, and inconvenient, and they should be replaced with new structures as soon as funds are available. These remarks apply also to the Lower Hutt School buildings, for which a new site is already selected.

The total number of children on the rolls for the past year was 14,973, showing a small increase of 289. There is evidence to show that many children leave school at an early age, and it is hoped that the much needed amendment of the exemption clause of the Education Act will have a salutary effect on the school attendance. The average attendance is good in some localities and very poor in others.

In the Board schools 9,629 children were examined in the standards, of whom 8,296 passed, the average age of those who passed being eleven years four months. These results show a falling-off for the year of 3 per cent. in the number of passes as compared with those for 1898. The following table displays the number of standard passes compared with those of the previous year:—

	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
1898 ...	1,651	1,731	1,688	1,539	1,072	819
1899 ...	1,609	1,675	1,560	1,544	1,177	731

The number of pupils who had previously passed Standard VI. and were examined in the class above Standard VI. was 516, as compared with 420 for the year before. These results show a falling-off in Standards I., II., III., and VI., steadiness in Standard IV., and increase in Standard V. and the class above Standard VI. In some instances the school year was shortened by the Inspectors' rearrangement of their itinerary. Before drawing any inferences from these numerical results and from the Inspectors' reports on the work it will be well to consider each school in its work as a separate unit, taking it according to its class in the appendix to this report. Beginning with the eleven schools in Class A*, it is again found that the efficiency of these schools is the mainstay of the whole. With one exception, they may be pronounced distinctly satisfactory, and they are mostly managed by head teachers of high standing and great experience. It is only in the lower classes of some of them, where recently selected pupil-teachers are much on their trial, that any falling-off is apparent; but the energies of the head teachers have been more than ordinarily taxed in the amount of assistance they have been called upon to give to these weaker teachers. The number of passes in the same eleven schools in Class A has fallen from 4,827 in 1898 to 4,593 in 1899. I attribute this falling-off and that in the several standards almost entirely to the unsatisfactory selection of pupil-teachers.

Taking now into consideration the twenty-three important schools of Class B,† I find, after very carefully going into each case, that fifteen may be looked upon as really satisfactory, that five of them have weak classes or weak subjects, and on the whole are less satisfactory, and that three of them are deplorably weak. Of twenty-eight schools in Class C,‡ eleven are satisfactory, fourteen are less satisfactory, and three are weak.

Examining closely the schedules and reports of fifty-eight schools in Class D,§ each taught by one teacher, I look upon thirty as quite satisfactory, nineteen as less satisfactory, and nine as weak. Among the teachers of these unsatisfactory schools some had no qualifications, some had been removed for incompetence from other schools, and others had made no successful record. The tendency of the administration is to retain weak teachers—some sympathy always arising in the personal favour of the teacher as against the educational interests of the suffering children.

Of the thirteen aided schools nine are promising, and four are in doubtful hands. The three large infant schools are all satisfactory.

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* Schools presenting over 300 children each.
† Schools presenting from 100 to 300 children each.
‡ Schools with less than 100 children, taught by more than one teacher.
§ Schools under sole teachers.

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 blackboard, 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,

and the making of frocks are often well taught in the upper classes, and the sewing generally includes a greater variety of useful and neat needlework than was presented in former years.

In the early part of the past year I submitted to the Board a scheme for a cadet service on military lines similar to that so successfully adopted in New South Wales. The proposed service, which received the approval of experts and was for the most part prompted by a military officer, included the formation of companies (one for each of the large schools), the appointment of officers of various rank, the wearing of a simple and inexpensive uniform, the use of a small Martini rifle, the training of a band, and field or camp exercises. As events have happened, if this scheme had been adopted, it would have been the pride of the district, and its utility would have been unquestioned. After many strange objections, much difference of opinion, and long delay, a drill-instructor was appointed, companies formed, and a drum and bugle band is in the course of training; and, further, the Government have entertained the scheme and supplied about four hundred so-called "model rifles" which shoot not. The Government has, however, intimated that the model rifle will be superseded by a real miniature rifle, when the cadet corps have made such progress as to justify their existence. And this we look upon hopefully as a very saving clause, for in these warlike times one of the first duties of a citizen is to be able to shoot. There are at present seven cadet companies in the City schools, with an average strength of fifty each, one at Petone forty-five strong, and one at the Hutt with forty. In the country there are companies formed at Masterton and Carterton, each fifty strong, whilst detachments exist at Fernridge, Greytown, Upper Hutt, Otaki, Levin, Eketahuna, Pahiatua, Maungatainoka, Karori, and Kilbirnie. In the small schools squad and physical drill are taught. Model rifles are served out to the City schools, Fernridge, Kilbirnie, and Petone. The drill-instructor (Mr. McDonald), who is doing satisfactory work, has compiled a handy drill manual for the use of teachers, and a set of rules for the organization of public-school cadets and instruction in drill generally. The rules have been published by the Education Department and freely circulated.

Head teachers inform me that the formation of companies is having a direct salutary effect on the discipline; and this was taken to be a strong reason for the introduction of the system. I am pleased to note that few schools are weak in discipline, though in many the awarded mark is not higher than satisfactory.

The infant-school kindergarten system is always an important factor is estimating the year's results. Mrs. Francis, of the Mount Cook Infant School, and Miss Page, of the Thorndon Infant School, continue to take the lead in this work, and are mainly instrumental in introducing new occupations, which now include paper-flower making and the elements of brush-work. The large Mount Cook Infant School is practically made a training-ground for newly appointed City pupil-teachers, but the mistress reports that the quality of the material supplied is deteriorating.

Kindergarten work, which for twenty years past appears as a characteristic feature of our school work, is the basis of manual instruction, which has made of late years such marvellous progress in several advanced countries. Mr. A. D. Riley, Director of the Technical School, on his return from England, presented a valuable report to the Board, which fully treated on this subject in its relation to primary work. The report and the consideration of the subject have not met with the thoughtful attention they deserve, except from a section of the Press; and it yet remains to discuss the possibilities of giving, either in our schools or in special buildings, an excellent hand and eye training to boys, without pretending to teach trades, which will correspond to the cookery instruction for girls, and will be invaluable in fitting boys for their future bread-winning days by training them in the principles of skilled handicraft, and in that necessary manipulation and practical dexterity which fit a lad for any industrial work.

In the upper classes of the schools there was a satisfactory increase in the numbers previously passed in Standard VI., who form the classes in which scholarship preparation goes on. This work is referred to in our scholarship report. Many of the best pupils in the class above Standard VI. do not compete for scholarships, and many of those who do compete go up because their parents wish them to do so, and not because their teachers consider them suitable candidates. For these and other reasons it is misleading to judge of the whole of the upper class work by scholarship answers, even when the questions of a competitive test are reasonable. Nevertheless the scholarship results are satisfactory under the conditions pervading this report.

This is the first time that the Inspectors have been instructed to report on the working of six Roman Catholic schools, although a seventh, St. Joseph's Orphanage, has been twice previously examined. The Inspectors were very cordially received by the managers and teachers, the latter being Marist Brothers in one boys' school, and Sisters of Mercy in the others—all devoted to their work and exercising excellent control over their pupils. In some cases the buildings were hardly suitable, and were particularly defective in lighting. The schools were all twice visited, once for preliminary inspection, and once for classification in standards (pass-subjects only). In all of them good work was done in some subjects, and in most of them there was promise of a good record next year. It is not thought necessary to publish details, the appendix merely showing the numbers, totalling 1,038, presented by the teachers, who made their own presentment, and the numbers promoted to a higher standard.

I particularly call attention to the very good and most helpful work done by many School Committees during the past year. Some head teachers have expressed themselves very decidedly on this point in words such as these: "I have an excellent School Committee who would do anything for me in reason." I have only to point to such work as the Masterton playground to verify this statement; and there is evidence in many places of School Committees taking a living interest in the upkeep and in the general success of their schools.

It now remains for me to sum up what I know to be a faithful statement of the condition of the schools as seen from several standpoints. As already stated they consist of eighty-one in a satisfactory condition (including eight very small ones newly opened which cannot be otherwise

classed), forty in a less satisfactory state, and fifteen in a depressed condition. The weakness of the fifteen depressed schools can be traced to unsatisfactory appointments in eight of them, changes of teachers in six, and bad methods of teaching in one. In the less satisfactory schools the defects are traceable to poor appointments, to the retention of teachers who have been reported unsatisfactory, or to the class-work of inapt pupil-teachers. The general falling-off in the standard pass work, and many of the defects in class and additional subjects, are due to the same causes. It was stated in last year's report "That there is danger of the smaller schools falling away in efficiency, and the best remedy for this is the most careful and discriminate selection of teachers to fill vacancies." I must again forcibly emphasize this statement.

This district enjoys the best opportunities in the colony for selecting teachers, because it is central, because its services are fairly paid, and because it is in favour with good teachers in smaller districts; but the policy of passing over really good candidates for common-place local ones militates against the efficiency of the staff and discourages good competition. Recommendations lately made for examining and reporting on the qualifications of pupil-teachers before appointment were approved by the Board; and, if due effect is given to these recommendations, the service will soon feel the benefit of them. At present there is no great disaster to record, the bulk of the work is intact, and the service is a loyal one; but there are not wanting evidences of the need of that improved administration which in a year or two would remedy existing defects, and it is my duty to give a note of warning in time, lest year by year the efficiency of the system is seriously impaired.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Wellington Education Board. ROBERT LEE.

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.	516	...	...	...
Standard VI.	922	903	731	13 10
" V.	1,516	1,471	1,177	12 9
" IV.	1,890	1,839	1,544	11 10
" III.	1,989	1,939	1,560	10 9
" II.	1,868	1,822	1,675	9 11
" I.	1,681	1,655	1,609	8 8
Preparatory	4,591	...	...	...
Totals	14,973	9,629	8,296	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR SEVEN ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined.	Passed.
Class above Standard VI.	11	...	...
Standard VI.	43	43	35
" V.	88	87	75
" IV.	109	101	90
" III.	144	133	119
" II.	160	154	142
" I.	134	121	115
Preparatory	349	...	...
Totals	1,038	639	576

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,— Inspector's Office, Napier, 8th February, 1900.

I have the honour to submit a summary report to the Board on the progress of education in the district schools of Hawke's Bay for the year ended the 31st December last.

Seventy-five schools are now in active operation. Five new schools have been opened during the year, as follows: Port Awanui, near East Cape; Whakarau, half-time school in the Motu Bush; Morere, near Nuhaka; Omahu, near Taradale; and Ti-tree Point, midway between Weber and Wimbledon. In neither of the places named has there been a building supplied by the Board,

nor is there a playground provided, and the work is carried on at present under very primitive conditions. With reference to the opening of new schools, it would be found a great convenience were arrangements made for their opening at specified periods of the school year, as, for example, at the reopening of the schools at the end of the midsummer or midwinter holidays. The present plan leads to many irregularities owing to the non-arrival of desks and other appliances.

Last year attention was drawn to the improved external appearance of many of the school buildings that belong to the Board, but, although the outside is attractive, I have noticed in a number of them the increasing depredations of the beetle-borer, and rapid destruction is taking place in several of the schools. Coal-tar water washed into the match-lining is a specific, and this might easily be undertaken at almost nominal cost. In populous places like Napier, Gisborne, and Hastings it might be deemed advisable, when additions have to be supplied, to substitute brick for wood, as is being done in the larger educational districts of the colony. The same plan has been found necessary in New South Wales and Victoria, and although the cost of brick buildings is, perhaps, one-fourth greater than that of wood, the life of the buildings and the attendant conveniences amply compensate for the additional cost.

Fourteen districts where schools have been established have buildings that do not belong to the Board. It is true that the majority of these schools are small, and may, perhaps, be termed subsidised schools; but places like Waipiro, Mohaka, and Omahu, not to mention several others, are in need of suitable buildings and playgrounds. The attendance at each of these schools warrants provision being made for improved conditions for teaching and physical training, and although the children mainly belong to the Native race the schools have been established by the Board, and ought to be maintained with some semblance of efficiency. A curious anomaly prevails along the whole of the East Coast where Native and Board schools are working, in a measure, side by side. The Native schools, which are under the control of the central Department of Education, have good buildings and residences, with well arranged school-grounds, and even illustrated papers are supplied for the benefit of the pupils; whilst the Board schools at Omahu, Mohaka, Nuhaka, Tokomaru, Waipiro, and Port Awanui are conducted in hired and unsuitable buildings, without recreation-ground for the children or accommodation for teachers, and illustrated papers constitute a luxury that would be much appreciated even by the teachers. Nor would I for a moment have it imagined that the Native schools of the central department are too well provided for. This is by no means the case, but my purpose in making the comparison is to show how much attention is necessary to bring up the administrative efficiency of a number of the Board schools that are now established in places where no educational advantages are available but such as the public school provides.

The year that has just closed will be long remembered by many of the teachers for the havoc that has taken place in the school attendance. Bad weather, impassable roads, sickness such as measles, whooping-cough, diphtheria, and influenza have followed in regular succession, and as a consequence the regularity of the children shows a falling off when compared with previous years. The case of the Woodville School will serve to illustrate the difficulties of the majority of the teachers during the year. At the time of my inspection in November, 136 pupils out of a roll of 381 were absent through sickness, and, although the school had been compulsorily closed fourteen weeks out of twenty-six that had elapsed from the time of my previous visit, the twelve weeks of actual schooling had been of little or no use to the children, as from a fourth to two-thirds of the pupils were absent on the average. I do not think that much compulsion has been attempted in any of the districts; indeed to have attempted such would have ended in trouble under the unusual conditions that have existed in so many places.

The school attendance, as shown by the numbers on the school rolls at the time of my examination, gives an increase of 101 pupils for the year. This is exclusive of two schools which have not yet been examined. The total number of pupils on the rolls at the time of examination was 7,683. The quarterly returns as sent to the Board give much higher results, the total number being 7,955 for the year, with a working average attendance of 6,640. This represents a regularity of 83·4 per cent., whilst it was 85·8 per cent. during the year 1898. Owing to various causes I was unable to examine Omahu and Ti-tree Point before the termination of the school year, but they will be visited as soon as possible after the reopening in February.

Portland Island School has at last been examined. I had the good fortune to visit it early this year in company with his Lordship the Bishop of Waiapu in one of the local steamers. The isolated condition of this school impels me to ask, on behalf of the children, for special consideration. Away from means of intercourse, the children are sadly in need of pictorial illustrations, and I cannot but think that the Education Department, if appealed to, would place such a school on the list for free copies of papers like the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*, and such other pictorial papers as may be supplied to Native schools. All other schools have been duly visited and examined except Tiniroto, which was closed at the time of my inspection, and the examination was in consequence deferred till March.

Reference was made last year to the unusually large number of pupils in the preparatory classes over the age of eight years, but the past year shows a steady improvement in this direction. The diminution in the number of children in the classes below Standard I. is quite marked, and it is commendable to the teachers to find that heed has been given to the remark made in a former report to the effect "that an extra effort might be made in certain schools to lower the high proportion of children over eight years of age in the preparatory classes." This has certainly been done, as the figures in the accompanying table will show.

Of the 7,683 pupils who were presented for examination, 5,182 were in standards, and 2,501 were in the preparatory classes. The passes for the year, excluding the fifty-one pupils who were in the class above Standard VI., was 4,321, or 86·5 per cent. of the total number who were examined.

The following table gives in summary form the complete returns of presentations, &c., for the year; and for comparison the results of the previous year are also added:—

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Absent.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of passes to examined.	Average Age of those that passed.	Remarks.
							Yrs. mos.	
Above Standard VI.	51	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	337	334	3	100	234	72·1	14 0	Fallen.
" V. ...	633	614	19	138	476	77·3	13 2	Improved.
" IV. ...	875	832	43	143	689	82·3	12 4	Fallen.*
" III. ...	1,081	1,050	31	138	912	87·2	11 3	Improved.
" II. ...	1,090	1,070	20	77	993	92·7	10 1	Improved.
" I. ...	1,115	1,109	6	92	1,017	92·2	8 11	Fallen.*
Preparatory ...	2,501	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Totals for 1899	7,683	5,009	122	688	4,321	86·5	11 11	
Totals for 1898	7,582	4,818	84	664	4,154	...	...	
Catholic Schools ...	686	481	7	75	396	...	...	...

* In these cases slightly.

It will be noticed from this table that the increase in the number of presentations in standards has more than kept pace with the increase in the attendance. Taken as percentages, the 5,182 pupils above the preparatory classes represent 67·4 per cent. of the pupils on the rolls. This, it appears to me, represents a strong average condition for the schools throughout the district, and the time is coming when the percentage of pupils in the standards will be further increased. But the best aspect of the tabulation is the fact that 24·6 per cent. of the children are above the Third Standard, and are therefore supposed to be capable of reading with good intelligence an ordinary reading-book, of working questions involving practice and weights and measures, and of writing a letter in a clear bold hand and with a fair power of expression.

The improving standard of attainments is the outcome of the better control and more skilful processes on the part of the teachers. A wide distinction, however, is apparent in the government of the schools; there is the discipline of force that controls in some schools, and in others there is the discipline of duty. The former certainly presents a finer appearance than the latter, but I doubt the permanency of this form of discipline in the moulding of character and the unfolding of the mind. It may be that both forms of discipline have their value, but in the training such as school life requires the discipline of duty presents the highest type of school control; and I am always pleased to find the growing tendency in a school to create tone by means of high aims and ideals, rather than by severe forms of punishment such as were so common a few years ago.

In my last report reference was made to the fact that the schools had reached a stage in their progress when an advance might easily be taken into other channels of preparation. The year that has gone by since then has brought with it some changes of importance touching the work of the schools. The Board's amended regulations for the management of the schools require that much more attention be paid to young teachers in their technical training than formerly. The quarterly criticism lesson and the compulsory meeting of the teaching staff for the discussion of matters bearing on the work of the schools are already beginning to be felt in the improved relations among the teachers themselves, and the greater attention that is paid to the methods of instruction. None other than those who visit the schools at intervals for purposes of inquiry and criticism can be aware of the natural tendency in the case of many teachers to "rest and be thankful" in school processes and management. More than once the suggestion has been thrown out in the public Press that Inspectors ought to be removed from district to district; but were this proposal made with respect to teachers I make bold to say that it would be highly beneficial both to the teachers themselves and to education generally. Isolated as so many teachers are, the tendency among them is to become "educationally hidebound," and they dislike change, even though the Inspector's "fads" should come as a saviour to lead them from danger's way. Isolation is the cause of all the trouble, and were it possible to remove teachers from school to school and from district to district without the intervention of School Committees, I am satisfied that great public good would ensue.

The adoption of new regulations for the training and instruction of the pupil-teachers, and the establishment of a school for the special training of ex-pupil-teachers, are events of great moment in the educational history of the district. The isolation referred to above as affecting principal teachers is even more pronounced in the case of pupil-teachers, for, except during their annual examinations, these young people, or the majority of them, are never brought under competitive conditions, and they too often lack those qualities in bearing, speech, and deportment such as are of high importance as attributes of teachers, who are called upon to exert an influence —moral, physical, and mental—upon a whole community of people. It is for this reason that I rejoice to think that the Board has wisely made a start to influence the training of those among the ex-pupil-teachers who have completed their term of service under the regulations.

The training school is separate and distinct from what is known as a "training college." In the latter, special means are provided for the preparation of young teachers both in their studies and training, but mainly in the former. A school such as the Board has established cannot embrace both purposes, but it can fulfil the end for which it is established. The young teachers, fresh from their isolation, can be placed under new and modified conditions, and trained in the art of school-keeping; and so soon as this aspect of the training school is fully understood, it will be recognised as forming an important adjunct to the public system of technical training.

With the changes that the administrative work of the Board has been able to introduce during the year, it is interesting to observe that the year under notice closes the system of examination that has been in force since the passing of the Education Act. In future the Inspectors and teachers will occupy widely different positions in relation to standard examinations. The needless detail will disappear from the Inspector's purview, and up to and including Standard V. the principal teacher will have the right to pass his own pupils, subject to a controlling veto by an Inspector. It would be premature to remark upon this new system of examination. Some four or five years have gone by since the privilege was conceded for the examination of Standards I. and II. by principal teachers. Under careful regulation the plan has worked satisfactorily, and, so long as care is taken to maintain the same average standard in the schools throughout each educational district, there is no reason why the same plan should not be observed for the higher standards. I am fully convinced that the mote has been the end of our past examinations, whilst the beam has been left unheeded; by this I mean that more heed has been paid to a defect in the case of separate pupils, whilst the methods of instruction and the dovetailing of plan throughout the standard course have been almost wholly neglected. Considering that the schools are subject to so much supervision, it is surprising to find such a variety of plans and methods of instruction even in the same school where more than one teacher is engaged, and children passing from class to class, not to mention from school to school, are placed under quite different methods in the preparation of school work. One often hears remarks about the backwardness of children when admitted from other schools, but the fault rests more with the differences of system under which the pupils have been instructed. Even in subjects like arithmetic and history the methods in schools are so diverse that pupils are too often blamed on account of defects of plan which are permitted by principal teachers, who fail to realise that they themselves are responsible by their omitting to see that plans and methods are dovetailed from class to class and from standard to standard. The modified regulations will enable much more attention to be paid to the higher aspects of school training and preparation than has been possible hitherto, and if they lead teachers to take a wider view of their duties in relation to school life and its effect upon the future of the country a great good will have been accomplished. It is assumed that those who are entrusted with so much responsibility have acquired the art of their profession, and are capable of carrying that art into the work of a school. I have no intention of naming schools by preference, but there are teachers under the Board who take the widest view of training and give as much heed to manners, forms of courtesy, and right conduct among the pupils as they do to the preparation of school subjects. There character comes to the front, and teachers who aim to bring the several aspects of school training into one harmonious whole, by making character the end of education, fulfil the highest duties as teachers of the young.

It is hardly necessary to refer, except in brief outline, to the standard subjects of instruction. My various reports on the schools have dealt with these in detail. Although much time is spent in the preparation of reading it cannot be said that the average standard is a high one. The habit of quiet reading is acquired at an early age, and pupils prefer to read "to themselves" rather than to others. Most of the schools use three Readers, and latterly a bright little newspaper, called "Schoolmates," has made its appearance in many of the schools, and has become quite a favourite. It is not on the list of "official books," but one can hardly object to such a paper when it is purchased by the voluntary efforts of the children and is so well adapted to their tastes.

Attention has already been drawn to the absence of dovetailing in subjects like writing and arithmetic, and even in composition and grammar the same defects are apparent. The defects arise from the fact that principal teachers fail to direct the class teachers as to the plan of instruction that should be followed. One of the highest duties of a principal teacher is to regulate and direct the machinery of his school in the work of the several classes, so that each step taken in the preparation of a pupil will be continuous and harmonious. Increased attention to methods of instruction are very necessary. An old plan is followed simply because it is an old plan and was adopted when the teachers themselves were pupils. Take, for example, the simple case of the giving out and correction of a dictation exercise. The children, in many instances, are really taught to be inattentive by the teacher repeating a few words at a time, two, three, and even four times over. Conversation would become intolerable were the parties concerned to repeat themselves in the same manner. Inattention and bad memories are the outcome of such a plan, but the method of correction is equally imperfect and unsatisfactory.

Geography and drawing are usually well taught, and in a number of schools the average results are excellent. Class and additional subjects are taken in all schools, and in the larger ones they receive the same attention as is given to the pass subjects.

Advanced drawing is being taught in several of the schools, and for the first time a number of the pupils from the Napier School passed the second-grade art test of the Science and Art Department, South Kensington, London. Were increased facilities provided, all the larger schools would take up an advanced course, as drawing is, perhaps, the most popular among the school subjects. The Art School that has been opened lately in Napier is proving of considerable help to the teachers, and the teachers' Saturday classes are certain to have an influence on the future work of the schools.

Of the preparatory classes a few words must be said. Considering the conditions under which the younger children are instructed, it is a pleasure to congratulate the lady teachers who have

charge of them upon the real progress that is made. Without departmental regulation, and freed from every restraint, the infant classes present an example of progress, variety, and even adaptation such as cannot be found in the standard classes. Tact and method are essential for the successful infants' school. It is Comenius who remarks that the order of education is first by means of the senses, then the memory, and then the intellect and critical faculty. The skilful training of the senses is one of the highest functions of an infant teacher, and the forms of instruction that one finds being carried out in quite a number of departments show the aptitude of the lady teachers to carry out this special form of training. Of kindergarten instruction comparatively little is done, but there are certain schools, as named by me last year, where it is well done, and it would be better done were suitable appliances provided and some encouragement given by the Board. What is specially of interest just now is the fact that many of the lady teachers are attending the Saturday classes at the Art School in Napier for brush-painting, clay-modelling, and designing, and no doubt these subjects will be introduced into a number of schools during the coming year.

Science classes, outside what is attempted in the Board schools, make headway but slowly. Such classes have been carried on in Napier and Gisborne for instruction in chemistry, physiology, and architectural drawing, but the attendance has gradually dwindled so that it is doubtful whether further attempts will be made for the present.

The senior division of the Gisborne District High School continues to be taught with considerable success. An assistant has lately been added to this portion of the school, and although the number of pupils does not show any appreciable increase, the extra help will enable the course of instruction to be further widened and strengthened.

Concerning the schools as a whole, I would add that, as far as I have been able to judge, the moral tone of them is very satisfactory.

Catholic Schools.

In addition to the ordinary work connected with the Board schools, I also examined six Catholic schools, containing a roll of 686 children. Four hundred and eighty-one of these were examined in standards, and the passes numbered 396, 191 being in standards higher than the second. The progress made during the year is good, and altogether the schools are in a fair condition of working efficiency.

I have, &c.,
W. HILL,
Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,— Blenheim, 20th January, 1900.

I have the honour to submit my ninth annual report on the state of primary education in this district.

At the end of the year 1899 there were sixty-one schools open, or three more than appeared in my last report. Two others were open at the beginning, but were closed before the end of the year; so that sixty-three schools have been at work in this district during the year. Although the number of schools has (with slight fluctuations) remained about the same during the past few years there is a small falling-off in the roll-number this year as compared with the last and previous years. The strict average attendance for the year is about 1·22 per cent below the average for the whole colony for the year 1898, as given in the Minister's annual report. The average weekly roll-number, which for the year 1897 was 2,182, has steadily decreased from 2,200 in June, 1897, to 2,129 at December, 1899. The strict average daily attendance for the year has fallen from 1,803·5 in 1897 to 1,750·5 for the year 1899; and the working average for the year, from 1,819 to 1,771·75. This falling off in the number of children appears to be general throughout the colony, and is referred to in the Minister's last annual report.

The number of scholars on the school-rolls at the dates of the examinations was 2,099, and of this number 570 were in the preparatory classes, and sixty in the class above Standard VI. The number therefore classed in Standards I. to VI. was 1,469, being one more than last year. Of this number fifty-six were absent from the examinations, leaving 1,413 who were actually examined in standards, or sixteen more than in 1898. The scholars who satisfied the requirements for a pass numbered 1,189 as against 1,190; so that taking all the standard classes together the results do not differ materially from those of 1898, being about 1 per cent. less, and as compared with the whole colony last year about 1·78 per cent. less. Leaving out the First and Second Standards, which are examined by the teachers, the numbers examined in Standands III., IV., V., and VI. was 912; and the number who passed, 695; or a decrease of about 3·2 per cent. upon last year's results. The failures in the Sixth Standard amounted to nearly 16 per cent., those in the Fifth to 24 per cent., in the Fourth to 29 per cent., and in the Third to 22 per cent. The number of scholars re-presented in a standard in which they had previously failed appears to be about 4 per cent. less than last year, but some of the smaller schools failed to supply the information because it was not specially asked for in the circular notifying dates of examination. The fifty-eight schools examined this year may be divided into two groups—those having ten scholars and upwards on the roll, and those having fewer than ten.

In the first group there are thirty-one, and in these the results may be called very good in nine cases, good in twelve, fair in five, poor in four, bad in one. In this estimate I assume that, in this district and under the system of examination pursued, a result of 90 per cent. and over is a very good result; 80 and below 90, good; 70 and below 80, fair; 60 and below 70, poor; and below 60, bad.

In the second group, consisting of twenty-seven schools, fourteen passed all the scholars presented, three others were good, three were fair, two were poor, and five were bad. It must be remembered, however, that these figures refer solely to the pass subjects, and do not in all cases give a fair idea of the relative or absolute efficiency of the schools; for, besides the class and additional subjects (which are referred to below), there are more important though far less obvious factors which have to be taken into account in estimating the true value of the teaching and training received by the scholars who are attending our primary schools. In after years much of the mere book-learning will be forgotten, and whether the scholar has passed through the Standard "mill" in six or eight years will have very little effect upon his moral or material welfare; and I am disposed to regard with much leniency the literary failures in a school if it show evidence of good training and influence in many directions not specified (or, indeed, capable of specification) in the syllabus, but which are sometimes collectively alluded to as the "tone" of the school. This does not necessarily consist with severity of discipline; on the contrary, an apparent lax discipline sometimes conceals an influence far more powerful for good than that of the sternest and strictest disciplinarian; and when this is the case the apparent laxity disappears at the slightest word or even look of the teacher. And, after all, what does this so-called failure really mean? This merely: that on one day in the year a scholar has not answered correctly three out of five questions in two subjects, upon each of which perhaps fifty questions could be put, all within the limit prescribed by the syllabus. He might have been able to answer many of the forty questions that were not put to him, but that cannot avail him, and he must submit to an implied reproof of which he may be most undeserving. On the other hand, Fortune, who has frowned upon him, may favour a (comparative) dunce by suiting three out of the five questions to his more limited acquirements. It is a common experience at most schools for teachers to tell me that A and B, who have passed, are far inferior scholars to C and D, who have failed.

In fact, the whole system of passing by standards as formerly understood and practised is obnoxious to the principles of true education, and as a test of the efficiency of the teaching, most delusive. Notwithstanding all that has been said and written about the futility of a judgment based upon the percentage of passes, the opinion still largely prevails amongst the general public that the gaining of a large percentage is a reliable criterion of the merits of teachers. An influential northern paper published a leading article criticising the last report of the Inspector for that district, in which this passage occurred: "Of the total number of children examined, 86 per cent. passed. No doubt, from the teacher's point of view, this is gratifying enough. But it is, in reality, the least pleasing feature of our education system. It means that our public schools are becoming mere cramming institutions, and that a sound and solid education is being sacrificed for the sake of rushing the pupils through cursory and superficial examinations, and obtaining the largest number of passes. Such a system must of necessity be inimical to all real education." And further on: "In almost every branch of instruction he (the Inspector) complains of want of thoroughness and of clear comprehension. What other results can be possible when the clear object of the majority of teachers is not to ground the children in a sound knowledge of the subjects taught, but merely to cram them enough to pass the kind of examination they know by experience and an acquaintance with inspectorial methods they will have to undergo?" Although there is doubtless much exaggeration of the evil referred to in the article quoted, yet assuming the writer to be in touch with the opinions of his readers, and consequently to voice their sentiments, it is evident that in the northern part of the colony the public mind is awakening, though somewhat late in the day, to the demerits of the system, and is endeavouring to escape from the thraldom of the percentage craze. Probably the same feeling prevails more or less generally throughout the colony. For these and other reasons I view with much hopeful anticipation such of the recent alterations in the regulations for the inspection and examination of schools as will enable the teacher to give some consideration to the natural capabilities and requirements of his various scholars, and to classify them in accordance therewith. How far the welfare of the scholars and the comfort of the teachers will be promoted by the other important alteration—*i.e.*, the examination of their own scholars by the teachers—time alone will show. The latter change is not generally regarded by the teachers of this district as a welcome one, especially by those in charge of the smaller schools. Clause 6, however, provides a sufficient safeguard from any danger or difficulty that may arise in consequence of the change.

Pass-subjects.

On the whole, the pass-subjects, when compared with last year's work, show a slight improvement in reading, writing, drawing, and geography, and a falling off in composition, arithmetic, and dictation. In explanation of the last-named deficiency, I must explain that the pieces chosen for the dictation of the two higher standards (V. and VI.) were taken from books of the same standard, but not from the book in use in the schools. This was, of course, a much more severe test than that hitherto applied, and necessarily makes the results compare unfavourably with those of former years. But making all due allowance for this, there is no doubt in my mind that this troublesome but necessary subject was not quite up to the level of former years. Many of the mistakes in the dictation referred to were in words continually occurring in the reading-books used in the schools.

Arithmetic and geography are again the weakest subjects throughout the district, the former occupying the lowest place on the list, nearly half the scholars having failed in this subject. It is again noticeable that the smaller Board schools have been more successful in this subject than the larger. One of the larger schools stands lowest in this respect. The arithmetic tests for the four higher standards being supplied by the department, it must be assumed that they were strictly within the limits of the syllabus, though there is no doubt that they varied considerably in difficulty. The most difficult, however, should have been productive of better results than were

furnished by the school referred to, where only nineteen passed out of sixty-seven examined, whilst in Standard V. every one of the sixteen presented failed to gain half marks, and eleven of them failed to work a single sum correctly. Geography, though slightly improved, is still far from satisfactory. By the new regulations the subject is now placed amongst the class-subjects in all standards excepting the Sixth.

Composition.—The falling off in this subject is chiefly due to the Fourth and Fifth Standards. In the latter, the attempts to paraphrase a passage of poetry, taken from the reading-books in use, were frequently very disappointing, and appeared to indicate insufficient practice in this useful exercise. In view of the fact that the ability to write a good business letter, or to express their own ideas on simple subjects in a clear and concise manner, is, or should be, one of the most important ends to be aimed at in the teaching of all classes of children, it is imperative that as much time and attention as possible should be devoted to this branch of school work. A recognised authority on education says, "The true discipline in correct speech is to be found in the practice of composition, which should begin from the first." It is to the too common neglect to notice and correct grammatical errors in oral, as well as in written replies to questions put to scholars in the lower standards, that much of the prevailing weakness in the composition of the upper classes is to a great extent due.

Class-subjects.

Elementary science, as taught in this district—that is, without the aid of any apparatus or appliances whatever—is, in my opinion, little better than a waste of time, which (as the results in other subjects show) can be ill afforded. It is merely memory work, and has little or no educative value. It would be far more profitable to substitute some branch of manual or technical instruction, which in this district is at present "conspicuous by its absence."

Object-lessons without objects are relatively on about the same footing as science without experiment. A few of the schools are furnished with object-lesson cards and natural history diagrams, and some more of these last have been obtained, and are being now supplied to the schools that have hitherto been without them.

Vocal music was presented at four schools only, and drill at seven. As so many of our schools are under the charge of women teachers the latter fact cannot cause much surprise, but singing might be introduced in many more schools, and that without any loss (of consequence) to the other subjects. I cannot bring myself to condemn the teachers of small schools for the omission of these additional subjects if they produce (as many of them do) satisfactory work in most of the other subjects. Perhaps the relief afforded to teachers with regard to the classification and examination of their scholars may induce such of them as have not yet done so, and who possess the necessary ability themselves, to try the effect of this enlivening and humanising subject upon the school work generally, and they will certainly find that nothing will be lost by so doing.

In the infant department of the Blenheim School, and in several of the country schools, some very creditable kindergarten work has been accomplished, and that, too, in the face of the difficulties arising from the want of the special furniture and appliances necessary for the proper and complete development of the system. The attempt has, in my opinion, been highly beneficial, especially in country schools with only one teacher, where the dull monotony and listlessness which almost inevitably oppressed the preparatory classes have been much relieved by the introduction of interesting and amusing occupations of acknowledged educative value.

The New Regulations.

These regulations are partly the outcome of the Education Conference held last July, and seems to call for some remarks in a report of this kind. The most important change made is that which gives head teachers the power to classify their scholars, not according to a rigid rule, but so as to suit their varying capacities. In judicious hands there can be no doubt that this will prove eminently advantageous to the scholars themselves, though adding materially to the difficulties and responsibilities of the teachers. The privilege thus granted to them also removes one of the most generally recognised faults of a standard system—*i.e.*, the vain attempt to force all varieties and degrees of mental calibre through precisely the same rigid groove in the same time—a feat which, if ever accomplished, can only be by means of a process which has been stamped with the obnoxious epithet of "cram," a much misused term, however, when indiscriminately applied to the work of all our teachers. Another most important change, and one that will perhaps give rise to much trouble and annoyance to a certain class of teachers in some localities, is that which confers upon them the power of examining for a pass all the standards except the sixth. If the teacher is thoroughly conscientious in the performance of this duty he will inevitably give offence to that numerous class of parents who believe that their own geese are swans of the most resplendent plumage, and are quite impervious to any argument based on a deficiency of intellect in their offspring. I have known cases where the parents of children afflicted with a weakness of intellect amounting almost to idiocy have loudly condemned the teacher for partiality, or even for incompetency, because the said children failed when the rest of the class passed. Hitherto the teacher has possessed an invaluable panacea for such complaints in the power (not, however, very frequently exercised) of attributing the failures of his scholars to the overstrictness of the examination, and has thus shared the burthen with if he has not transferred it entirely to the shoulders of the Inspector. As regards the thoroughness of the examinations under the new conditions, if I am to judge by my experience of the examinations of Standards I. and II. by the teachers during the past few years, I can have no misgivings. The tests employed by the teachers in the examinations of these two standards have in all cases fully equalled, and in many far exceeded, in difficulty, those that I should have placed before the same classes; and, as I propose to require the tests set in all classes to be presented to me, any weakness in this direction would

be at once apparent and could be immediately rectified under clause 6 of the regulations. The effect of these alterations upon the work of the Inspector will not be very appreciable. Having still to examine Standard VI., as well as a fair proportion of the scholars in every class, there will be very little time saved inside the schools, though he will be freed from a large portion of the drudgery of examining the written work of the scholars—a business which has hitherto, at the larger schools, occupied him far into the night after the examination, and at the largest even longer. I do not think it will be advisable, either in the interests of scholars or of teachers at the household and smaller aided schools, to depart greatly from the method of examination hitherto followed, and in such cases I intend to examine the upper standards myself. In dealing with the other schools my action will be influenced by my knowledge of their past progress and efficiency, aided by the observations made during my visit of inspection.

The Syllabus.

The alterations in the syllabus consist chiefly of the transferring of drawing and geography from the pass to the class group in all standards except the Sixth; and of recitation from the additional to the class subjects, with an addition to the latter of a fresh subject—handwork. I had hopes that some relief would be afforded to the teachers of smaller schools by limiting the number of class subjects that they should be obliged to take up to some two or three, according to the size of the school and the strength of the staff; but no such relief has been given, since regulation 9 still requires that "all subjects must receive a due measure of attention, and the neglect of any one of them will be regarded as highly censurable." The additional subjects are now reduced to three, the neglect of which in the largest schools is to be regarded as a ground of reproach. There are thus fifteen subjects to be taught in twenty-five hours per week, which allows one hour and forty minutes per week for each subject. The time-tables at the various schools show that one subject alone, *i.e.*, arithmetic, occupies from seven to eight hours per week, and, judging by the results, this is by no means excessive; so that, taking the smaller of the two figures as the time devoted to arithmetic, the time available for the remaining fourteen subjects is reduced, on the average, to one hour seventeen minutes each per week. This time, for such subjects as spelling, composition, grammar, drawing, and geography, is miserably inadequate, and it cannot be a matter for surprise if the ultimate results of such hasty and superficial treatment should be so unsatisfactory as they frequently are. It is a subject of constant remark by business men that boys taken into offices, after passing through the whole of the standards and remaining at school a year or more afterwards, are miserable writers, cannot compose a simple business letter, and are utterly unreliable at figures. Surely thoroughness in a few essential subjects is worth attaining in preference to a very superficial acquaintance with—a mere smattering of—subjects which to a large proportion of the primary-school children are absolutely worthless in after life. I by no means wish to deny that every one of the subjects of the syllabus is of high educative value, and if taught thoroughly would, each in its own way, be most beneficial to the scholars; but I simply say that in my opinion thoroughness in all these subjects is quite impossible—at all events in districts where the exigencies of finance forbid the employment of strong staffs and the payment of salaries adequate to the work demanded. The scheme of education is theoretically an admirable one, but cannot be successfully reduced to practice under the circumstances prevailing in this and other poor, small, and thinly inhabited districts.

There has long been an agitation among teachers for a uniform scale of staffs and salaries, and such uniformity is no doubt highly desirable for several reasons. There are two ways of levelling a piece of land of uneven surface—*i.e.*, first, filling up the hollows by the addition of fresh soil; and secondly, by cutting down the higher places and filling up the lower with the material so obtained. This applies to the process of equalising staffs and salaries in our public schools, and it is a matter of considerable moment to the teachers generally whether the levelling in their case should be brought about by the first, or by the second method. An increase of capitation was earnestly pressed upon the notice of the Government by the July Conference, but unfortunately the representatives of the larger and more influential districts asked for too much—*i.e.*, an increase of capitation all round, as well as additional assistance to the smaller districts. If the children of all parts of the colony are to receive equal benefits from the education system, the population basis of payments must be abolished, and more liberal allowance made to the districts really needing it.

The Catholic Schools.

These schools were examined as usual on exactly the same lines as are the public schools, and it will be seen by reference to the tables that they are in every respect quite up to the standard reached by the best of our public schools, while rising considerably above the general level in nearly every subject. Great improvements in the school-buildings and grounds have been effected under the energetic superintendence of the Rev. Father Goggan, to whose fostering care and personal influence the continued success of these schools is largely due. Every suggestion with respect to the equipment of the schools has invariably been acted upon, and they are now as well furnished with the needful appliances as any of the public schools.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Blenheim. John Smith, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	60	...	...	...
Standard VI.	157	152	128	14 3
" V.	223	210	158	13 5
" IV.	301	291	207	12 6
" III.	267	259	202	11 0
" II.	246	234	230	9 11
" I.	275	267	264	8 6
Preparatory...	570	...	...	...
Totals	2,099	1,413	1,189	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined.	Passed.
Above Standard VI.	4	...	...
Standard VI.	11	11	9
" V.	21	21	19
" IV.	21	21	21
" III.	31	31	31
" II.	28	27	27
" I.	26	24	24
Preparatory	17	...	...
Totals	159	135	131

NELSON.

SIR,— February, 1900.

We have the honour to lay before you the following report on the Nelson public schools for the year 1899:—

One hundred and twenty-three schools were at work at the end of December, and all but four of these have been examined. Three of the exceptions were newly formed household schools, and one very small one was closed at the time of the Inspector's visit to that part of the district. Since last year's examination, household schools at Wairoa Gorge and Sandy Cove have been closed, the boys' and girls' schools at Wakefield have been amalgamated, and the three separate schools in Westport have been formed into one district high school. Our list would thus have been reduced by five had not ten others been added to it, viz.: Millerton, Fairdown, and eight household schools—Maitai, Rocky River, Marahau, Tukuroa, Silverstream, Berlin's, Buller Ferry, and Warwick Junction. The total number still continues to grow, although the number of children in the district has for the second year in succession decreased, the total number on the rolls at the end of the September quarter being 5,934 for the year 1899, 5,992 for 1898, and 6,069 for 1897. During the last six years this number has increased from 5,894 to 5,934, or only to the extent of fifty pupils, but the number of schools examined has increased from 101 to 119, or by eighteen. In the Nelson City schools the number on the roll for the same quarter is 1,120, or again lower by twenty-three than that recorded last year; and in Reefton it is 300, or twenty-nine lower; but in Westport (including the secondary class) it is 544, or higher by forty. Visits of inspection have been paid to all the district and most of the aided schools as well, or to a hundred in all, those unvisited, except three, being isolated household schools.

In addition to the examination of the Board's schools we have again undertaken the following: St. Mary's Industrial Schools at Stoke and at Nelson, St. Mary's Parish School, St. Canice's at Westport, Sacred Heart School at Reefton, the Whakarewa Home and the Bishop's School, Nelson; the total number of children represented being 643.

We regret to have to report in almost the same words our complaint of last year about the unsatisfactory average attendance prevailing in this district. In spite of the regular but very slow improvement the district, as a whole, has been making of late years, we still, according to the last report of the Minister of Education, that for 1898, out of the thirteen educational districts of the colony, show the worst average attendance, South Canterbury being best with 86·2 per cent. The improvement spoken of is shown by the percentage that the average attendance bears to the weekly roll-number. This percentage was 77·5 in 1894 (our first year of office), 79·4 in 1895, 80·5 in 1896, 80·5 in 1897, 80·2 in 1898, and 81·1 in 1899, the highest previously recorded being 78·7 in 1891. Last year the average attendance in common with that of several other districts suffered severely from an epidemic of measles. This year the trouble is likely to prove of a more permanent character, owing to the extension of the small-fruit growing industry, com-

bined with the regularly recurring hop-picking, which this year spread over a much longer time than usual. Though pea-picking and the industries already referred to are confined only to parts of the educational district, they are seriously affecting the attendance of the children and the progress of the scholars, so that the general condition of the schools concerned is falling distinctly behind that of the best schools on the West Coast, for example, which are not so affected. If the use of child labour in these pursuits meant merely the lengthening of the school holidays, involving the loss of a week or two more of school time, the trouble would not be so much felt, but it means more than this. In very many school districts the attendance during the weeks that the school is open before and after the holidays is lamentably poor. One school, for example, during the first quarter of this year recorded an average attendance of only about eight out of twenty-eight on the days that the school was open, in spite of the fact that the usual hop-picking holidays were given. Such a state of things is not a necessity—it is the result of indifference and neglect of duty. It shows that the parents are treating their children's education as a thing of minor importance, and betokens, in one direction at least, a weakening of moral fibre that must have an injurious effect upon the development of the children. Truant Inspectors have in one or two districts been appointed, and in Nelson City some improvement in the average attendance has apparently been effected, but, as yet, we have seen no report concerning the enforced attendance of those children, if there are any such, who were not previously on any school roll.

On the 31st December there were in the employ of the Board 154 teachers, graded as follows:—

	Certificated or Licensed.	Uncertificated.	Total.
Head teachers	41	0	41
Assistants	26	5	31
Sole teachers	45	37	82
Total	112	42	154
Total for 1898	110	41	151

The figures are almost the same as last year's, but considerable improvement is shown in the proportion of certificated teachers when they are compared with those of six years ago, as given in the Minister's report: For 1894—Certificated or licensed teachers, 87; uncertificated, 54: total, 141.

There were besides fifty-four pupil-teachers, of whom eleven had passed the E or D Certificate examination, and one had obtained the M.A. degree. In addition to the number given above, a kindergarten instructor, who is also certificated, was employed. The Board's regulation that requires uncertificated teachers of district or aided schools to sit for the pupil-teachers' examinations is having a good effect, by inducing many to study for the certificate examination.

During the year five experienced and certificated pupil-teachers have been selected for appointment either as assistants or sole teachers, and the greater willingness to take responsible positions when accompanied, as it has been in these cases, by the necessary ability, is an indication of the increased efficiency of the junior division of our teaching staff.

In twenty schools this year the examination results were unsatisfactory. In five of these cases we consider that the excuse offered was sufficient, viz.: Loss of time and break in school routine, owing to the schools being closed on account of the resignation of teachers, or from some other cause. In eight, irregularity of attendance prevails, and this, rightly or wrongly, may be urged in palliation. The teachers of five schools were newly appointed, and owing to their short tenure of office cannot themselves be held entirely responsible for the shortcomings of their scholars. In the case of the remaining two, which failed for the first time, no excuse or explanation has been offered. One important factor in producing poor results, the large proportion of very small schools in this district, should not be overlooked. There are this year thirty-six schools with an average attendance of less than fifteen scholars each, and consequently it is necessary, in many cases, to employ uncertificated and inexperienced teachers. Yet highly creditable work is done in some of even our smallest schools, and this is, in itself, a recompense for the liberality of a Board which has made it possible for many a struggling settler in isolated bay or distant valley to obtain an elementary education for his children.

As usual, we attach a general summary of results for the whole district as extracted from the annual return:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	206	...	...	...
Standard VI.	434	427	280	13 10
" V.	647	622	414	12 10
" IV.	804	778	552	11 10
" III.	785	765	549	10 10
" II.	712	697	619	9 11
" I.	605	597	566	8 5
Preparatory	1,714	...	...	...
Totals, 1899	5,907	3,886	2,980	11 3*
Totals, 1898	5,973	4,008	3,317	11 4*

* Mean of average ages.

The number of those who still remain at school after passing the Sixth Standard examination is still increasing, and the number in the preparatory class is also higher than it has been for the last four years. The number in standard classes and the proportion of those who passed are both lower than in 1898. The average age of those who passed is slightly lower, and in the mean, as well almost as in every standard class, is still below the average for the colony as recorded last year.

The number present at our examinations was 5,633, the absentees numbering only 274. At forty-nine schools every child was present. At one, out of a roll-number of 176, there were only two absentees. As a rule, very few were absent without a good cause, say, for example, sickness, and the early and regular attendance of the children is an indication of the keen and apparently healthy interest which they, at least, take in the proceedings of the fateful day.

The number of children under eight years of age, and not presented for the First Standard examination—viz., 327—is considerably larger than it was in 1898, but in most cases very satisfactory reasons were given for withholding them. They were, in 105 cases shortness of school life, in eighty-nine exceptional dullness, in 110 irregularity of attendance, and in eleven very delicate health. For twelve no reasons were given.

We submit a brief criticism upon the treatment which the different subjects in the syllabus receive.

Reading.—Two books are now regularly presented in each of the four lower standards, but as we have not insisted on it in the higher classes the practice has not yet become general in the Fifth and Sixth Standards. Next year we hope to see the use of Second Readers extended to all classes. We are glad to record an improvement in the comprehension of the language of the reading-books, which we have treated as an essential part of the reading-lesson, and not merely as an additional and optional subject.

Spelling has been worse this year in Standard IV., and very much worse in Standard III., though the proportion of failures in the two higher classes is practically unchanged. Our remarks last year showed that we were not entirely satisfied with the treatment of this subject, and to these remarks we have little further to add, but would urge teachers to re-peruse them, and in future to be more stringent in passing their scholars up from Standard II. We have repeatedly criticised adversely the judgment, or, shall we say, want of judgment, displayed by teachers on this point, and especially by sole teachers in connection with this particular subject.

Writing and Drawing.—Satisfactory work continues to be done in each of these subjects, especially in some of the small schools, in which the supervision is thorough, and the discipline efficient enough to secure the attention of each member of the class to the instructions of the teacher in every detail. The vertical style is still generally used, but for those teachers who prefer a sloping hand we have now introduced Collins's new Graphic series, in which the slope is slight and the mode of forming and joining letters very much resembles Jackson's style.

Four schools sent up candidates for either the first- or second-grade drawing examinations held by the Wellington Technical School, but, considering the facilities offered, it is strange that so few have taken advantage of their opportunities. The demonstration sheets supplied by the Board have been found very helpful in teaching freehand and scale drawing, but model is still the weakest branch.

Arithmetic.—There was in every class this year a decrease in the number who did satisfactory work in this subject. This falling off was least marked in Standard V., and most apparent in Standard VI. In the latter case the papers set seemed somewhat uneven in quality, and a little more difficult than in the previous year. It is hard to account for the general falling off in this and the other pass-subjects unless it be attributable to loss of time from the epidemic of measles at the end of 1898 and the prolonged hop-picking holidays this year. Many of the deficiencies of the scholars on the Waimea Plain may safely be attributed to these causes.

The following table show the percentage of passes in arithmetic since the Education Department took upon itself the task of setting the tests for the whole colony:—

	Standard VI. Per Cent.	Standard V. Per Cent.	Standard IV. Per Cent.	Standard III. Per Cent.
1899	48	57	69	69
1898	60	60	75	75
1897	61	55	61	72
1896	31	44	63	74
1895	49	43	60	71
1894	31	39	65	61

Too little attention is, we fear, paid to mental arithmetic and the oral working with the class of sums in the ordinary course that require a clear and logical statement of the reasons for the different steps in the process of working, as, for example, the verbal statement of the equality of the two ratios in a proportion.

Composition.—Many of the same merits and defects were apparent this year as were pointed out in last year's report. For the most part the Fourth Standard candidates showed improvement in the amalgamation of sentences, and some ability in the form of their letter-writing, but again the Sixth were weak in the correction of grammatical errors, although their attempts at reproducing a narrative read out to them were fairly successful.

Geography.—The pass tests were to the extent of 10 per cent. in the marking more difficult than hitherto, and in all classes except Standard III. more pupils than usual failed. In Standard IV. striking weakness was displayed in matters requiring general knowledge, such as the principal trade routes, great features of the different continents, and even in such questions as the Third usually answer readily enough. In this, as in the other pass-subjects, the number of satisfactory papers sent in by Standard VI. was diminished by the circumstance that we have this year been more exacting in this class by requiring a higher degree of efficiency in all subjects except arithmetic, where we consider the pass as fixed by the department sufficiently high. In accordance with this alteration we have expected for a full Standard VI. pass in any subject the same

marks as are prescribed for arithmetic, viz., 60 per cent. In effect, this change should insure a more thorough grounding in each subject, and thus, by retaining the children longer at school, secure for them a sounder training. The fact that a special certificate is now issued for this class gives the pass a higher value, and affords us another reason for insisting upon sounder scholarship at this the final stage of our present pass system.

Our estimate of the efficiency of the schools in class and additional subjects is given again in tabular form :—

	Not expected.	Not taught.	Inferior.	Moderate.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.
Grammar	8	0	38	28	34	7	4	0
History...	9	3	8	8	23	27	33	8
Geography, Standard II. ...	17	0	6	9	24	14	21	28
Object-lessons and science	0	0	1	10	16	34	43	15
Mental arithmetic ...	0	0	25	26	37	19	11	1

The first column shows those schools which have no class to take the particular subject prescribed. From this list it will be seen that the teaching of history, Standard II. geography, and science and object-lessons, is considered either satisfactory or deserving of higher praise in more than half of our schools, but that mental arithmetic and grammar are still far below what they should be. The former shows a little improvement compared with last year's figures, but the reverse would appear to be true of the latter subject, in spite of the impression we had received that better work is being done in our best-conducted schools. Analysis and parsing were, as a rule, unsatisfactory. In the former there was, too often, a tendency to set down the first important word as the subject, the next as the predicate, and so on, regardless of the obvious meaning of the sentence. In general analysis, too, the Sixth Standard pupils, with few exceptions, were unable to deal in a rational way with the subordinate clauses. In the parsing, too, mere guesswork prevailed to a great extent, and in the highest class it was exceptional to find a candidate who could recognise a participle, or an instance of the nominative absolute, or even in every case to distinguish nouns from adjectives and verbs. In the knowledge of the inflections, in which memory may often be substituted for the exercise of the reasoning powers, better results were forthcoming.

Additional Subjects.—We append a table giving results in additional subjects :—

	Not expected.	Not taught.	Inferior.	Moderate.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Excellent.
Repetition	0	1	0	3	26	36	42	11
Drill	0	77	0	1	8	16	12	5
Singing	0	88	0	2	10	8	8	3
Needlework	16	11	0	2	8	44	23	15
Comprehension	0	0	15	15	32	25	20	12

The number 16 in the first column denotes those schools in which no female teacher is employed. Of the eleven schools in which sewing is shown as not taught, nine are small household schools from which no sewing report has been received, but in most of these the subject probably receives some attention. As there are only forty-one of our schools in which more than one teacher is employed, and all the additional subjects cannot reasonably be expected to be taken up in the smaller schools (see regulations), we are very well pleased with the work done in most of these branches, and more particularly with the repetition of poetry, which as we reported last year is usually well and tastefully rendered. Several schools fell short of being recorded "excellent," because the subject was not well treated in every class, or because every individual member of the class was not ready with the text, although collectively they may have given a splendid rendering.

We cannot report any marked advance in the cultivation of vocal music, only thirty-one schools having taken up the subject at all, and in the majority of these the teachers have limited themselves to the teaching by ear of a few simple melodies. Part-singing is quite the exception, its place being often supplied by what are known as action songs. In too many instances the neglect of this subject is due to the want of a musical ear or knowledge of the subject on the part of the teacher. Care should be taken in selecting teachers that, in every large school, at least one member of the staff should have the necessary qualifications for teaching this branch of the work.

As the new regulations coming into force in 1900 will make a great change in the method of classification and inaugurate in one sense a different system, we have, where possible, compared the results obtained this year with those of six years ago when we, as Inspectors, first had knowledge of the general working of the standard system.

Throughout the year instruction in kindergarten work has been given in the three largest centres, and in some cases the teacher has been sent to certain of the country schools as well. Where the numbers in the infant classes are large the services of the instructor have been most highly appreciated. In country schools where several small classses are under the charge of one teacher it has been found difficult so to arrange the time-table as to give an opportunity for the introduction of anything in the nature of an additional task. But even here the work done may have some effect in showing young teachers how to put the subject of a lesson before the class in a striking, bright, and interesting way.

Rules for the formation of school cadet corps have been drawn up by the Board and submitted to the Education Department for approval. The adoption of these rules and a supply of dummy rifles for the boys would do much to encourage military drill, and to place it on a more efficient footing, although in at least four of our larger schools, broomsticks being used instead of rifles, the military drill of the boys has already been brought to a pitch which would do credit to many cadet corps. In the others physical drill and exercises form the main features.

A new departure has been made in technical training by the formation of a cookery class in connection with the Toi Toi Valley School. Two large classes of girls attended for one quarter, and apparently received great benefit from the demonstration and practical lessons given by a qualified teacher whose services were secured for the term by the Education Board.

One has only to read the list of successful competitors at any annual prize-giving at the local colleges to obtain evidence of the distinctions won by pupils who have been grounded in the district State schools. The abundant proof thus afforded by our best scholars of their ability to take at once a good position among those studying secondary subjects is a strong testimony to the intelligence which can only have been developed by sound elementary training. The success of a pupil from the Westport High School in attaining the highest place in the recent competition for the Victoria College Scholarship may also be fairly considered a matter of congratulation for the district.

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, 1899.

Twenty-eight schools were in actual operation at the close of the year. Each one was duly inspected and examined. I also inspected and examined the four Roman Catholic schools in the district. The number of schools under the direct control of the Board has decreased by two during the year, the result of the following operations—viz., the closing of schools (owing to scarcity of pupils) at Teremakau Settlement, Maori Gully, and Orwell Creek; whilst a new school has been opened at Kotuku.

Early in the year the Chairman of the Board visited most of the schools for the purpose of ascertaining, by personal observation, the requirements of the district with regard to buildings, general repairs, and improvements. He was thus enabled to formulate a scheme most advantageous to the district for the allocation of the building grant. This was adopted by the Board, and the works he recommended have been carried out. The chief improvements were new teachers' residences at Ahaura and Paroa, whilst a heavy item in the expenditure of the year was the painting, &c., of the Greymouth District High School. He found many of the buildings sadly in need of being painted, but this work was in most cases deferred owing to lack of funds. I might here point out that for the same reason no large sum has been expended in regard to school appliances for some years. Up-to-date maps, globes, &c., are real necessities, and no school can be considered efficient without them; so that I trust the Board will shortly be able to allocate a substantial amount for this purpose.

Inspection reports were laid before you during the year. These were for the most part of a very satisfactory description, showing our teachers as a whole to be capable and painstaking. The commonly visible parts of our schools almost invariably present a neat and tidy appearance, but the same does not always extend to cupboards, &c.

Numbers have again been used in estimating the value of every child's work, the general efficiency of a school being computed from the means of the average percentage of marks gained by the pupils of all standards in each subject. Summarising the results so obtained, I find that in the pass-subjects four schools gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—very good; thirteen schools gained between 70 and 79 per cent.—good; eight schools gained between 60 and 69 per cent.—satisfactory; and three schools gained between 50 and 59 per cent.—fair. In class and additional subjects two schools gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—very good; eleven schools gained between 70 and 79 per cent.—good; ten schools gained between 60 and 69 per cent.—satisfactory; four schools gained between 50 and 59 per cent.—fair; and one school gained between 30 and 39 per cent.—very weak.

The percentage of passes—86·2—is most satisfactory; and, although it does not quite equal that recorded for the previous year, yet the general efficiency of our schools, especially in pass-subjects, has been more than maintained.

The total number of infants is 480, and the total number of infants over eight years of age not presented for Standard I. is eighty-eight. Similar figures for the previous year are 481 and 87 respectively.

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 and class above Standard VI.	49	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	120	118	102	14 4	14 3
" V.	163	161	140	13 4	13 4
" IV.	228	221	166	12 5	12 4
" III.	194	187	151	11 0	11 5
" II.	168	164	160	10 1	10 0
" I.	157	157	150	8 9	8 11
Preparatory	480	...	...	...	...
Totals	1,559	1,008	896	11 8*	11 8*

* Mean of average age.

The fewness of pupils absent from examination is again a noteworthy feature in the above table—twenty-two absent out of 1,030 presented in standards.

Speaking generally, the work of our schools has been satisfactorily progressive: we have our strong subjects, and subjects which cannot exactly be described by any such term; still, I am thoroughly satisfied we have attained a good average standard of the whole. The work, too, is now fairly uniform throughout the district. Looking over the works from which Table 1 is compiled, I find that spelling ranks foremost, arithmetic next, with reading, writing, drawing, geography, and composition following in order of merit. Of the latter subjects, I wish to say a few words. Reading is one of the more important subjects with which we have to deal, and few pupils actually fail in it; yet I seldom listen to a really intelligent reader during the course of my examinations. The intonation and emphasis are not sufficient to impress one with the belief that the sense of the passage read is properly appreciated. The fact is our children have not sufficient matter to read, they know their reading-books by heart, and the subject of the lesson has no interest for them. I hope to see some improvement, at least for a time, after the introduction of the Imperial Readers. Of writing, previous remarks still hold good. The children appear to leave school before getting sufficiently advanced in the vertical style: the ultimate formation of a good hand is thus a matter of chance. In drawing, the pupils of several of our schools have met with much success in the examinations for first grade, conducted by the Wellington Technical School. It is a matter for some regret that more of our teachers have not entered their pupils for this examination. Plain books are now in almost general use, and I find the pupils make excellent progress in them, as compared with the work in the printed books. A supply of charts to all schools would materially assist the teaching of this subject.

Geography is thoroughly taught in but few schools. In most cases too little attention is devoted to the relative positions of places; and, although the pupils may be able to point out a place on the map, yet they signally fail when asked to describe its position. As pointed out before, all answers, whether written or oral, should be given in complete sentences. Were this done, the descriptive powers of the children would be enlarged. I have noticed the same defect, to a greater or less extent, throughout all school-work. Often a child answers in a single word—correct, it may be—but certainly not sufficient to show that the child knows really anything about the subject. In this way, pupils of Standard III. often fail to discriminate between a country and its capital: they know the two names go together, but which is which, is, so far as they are concerned, quite immaterial. It shows all the same how the children have been taught. Teachers have the remedy in their own hands, for only by sound teaching, and insisting on answers being given in complete sentences, can really intelligent work be secured. Composition would also derive considerable benefit from the above: children are often at a loss in expressing themselves in their own words when reproducing a short story. Paraphrasing is still poorly done, and although sentences are usually well corrected, the reasons given are very indifferent. Grammar does not receive the attention it deserves. I trust, however, that the new regulations will affect a vast improvement in this respect.

Recitation cannot be said to be deserving of special praise, too often it degenerates into mere repetition.

The needlework is a very satisfactory feature in our schoolwork. Scarcely a girl failed to do the prescribed work, the neatness and cleanliness of the specimens being deserving of commendation.

Drill is carried on, where male teachers are employed, in a satisfactory manner up to the present time. Mainly owing to the smallness of four schools, no school cadet corps have been formed in our districts; at the same time, physical drill is well carried out at the Cobden School.

The subject of home lessons has received some attention from the Board during the year, and a resolution was passed to the effect that only such home lessons as are consistent with efficiency are to be given in future. As in many other things, objection is not taken to their use in moderation, but to their abuse. Several of our schools have done and are still doing good work without making use of home lessons at all. In our small schools, where much individual attention can be given, I do not consider them to be at all necessary. In other schools sufficient work to occupy the attention of an average child for half an hour is, I consider, quite enough. I freely stated my views on this subject to teachers during the recent examinations, and without wishing in any way to coerce them in the matter, I still think they will find it inadvisable to give any written work whatsoever for home lessons. Teachers should always bear in mind that the chief use of home lessons should be to fix in the minds of their pupils lessons which have been already explained in school. In the future I wish every teacher to keep a record of home work.

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.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.
Above Standard VI.	19	...	...
Standard VI.	17	17	15
„ V.	20	20	19
„ IV.	35	33	28
„ III.	39	36	35
„ II.	24	23	23
„ I.	11	10	10
Preparatory	104	...	...
Totals	269	139	130

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM L. F. FETCH, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Grey Education Board, Greymouth.

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Hokitika, 22nd January, 1900.

I have the honour to present the following report on the primary schools of the district for the year 1899. All these schools have been examined and, with unimportant exceptions, inspected. Separate reports have been presented on the examinations of the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School, and of the Catholic schools at Kumara, Hokitika, Kanieri, and Ross.

The following tables state the general results of the examination of the various standard classes:—

EXAMINATION OF CLASS SUBJECTS.

Classes.	Total presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1898.
				Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary classes	26	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI.	50	...	...	..	...
Standard VI.	111	106	89	13 11	14 1
" V.	106	100	90	12 11	13 1
" IV.	168	167	146	12 0	12 3
" III.	174	169	153	10 11	11 1
" II.	152	148	143	10 0	9 11
" I.	151	148	140	8 11	8 10
Preparatory	349	...	...	...	...
Totals	1,287	838	761	11 5*	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

The distribution of the number presented for examination in the various classes is expressed in the following percentages of the total roll-number: Above Standard VI., 3·9; Standard VI., 8·8; Standard V., 8·4; Standard IV., 13·3; Standard III., 13·8; Standard II., 12·1; Standard I., 11·9; Preparatory, 27·8. The number of pupils over eight years of age in Preparatory classes is 18·9 per cent. of the class, and 5·2 per cent. of the total roll. The reasons given by the teachers for the retention in the preparatory classes of these pupils is in general satisfactory. The pupils in Standard I. and Standard II. were not examined for a pass by the teachers except in the three larger schools, where due discretion was exercised in making the promotions.

The percentages of failures compared with the total roll is 9·2. The passes in individual subjects both in number and value show considerable improvement. None of the following percentages are below those of last year, and in most there is an increase: Reading, 96; spelling, 87; writing, 98; drawing, 95; arithmetic, 77; composition, 94; geography, 88.

The comparative table relating to the results, expressed by percentages, of the tests in arithmetic issued by the Education Department is 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
1899	... 69	67	79	72

CLASS AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.

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	1	1	..	2	13	6	3	...
History	1	...	1	3	5	...	4	12	5	3	...	...
Elementary science (Stands. IV. to VI.)	1	...	...	3	6	...	8	1	2	12	1	...
Object-lessons (Preparatory, and Standards I. to III.)	...	1	1	3	5	...	1	2	15	5	1	...
Mental arithmetic...	...	1	3	3	2	1	...	5	7	8	3	1
Recitation	...	...	...	3	2	5	...	...	7	8	8	1
Drill	2	...	2	3	2	1	24	...	...	...	...	...
Singing	5	...	...	1	...	4	23	...	...	...	1	...
Needlework	...	...	...	1	3	6	8	1	3	6	5	1
Comprehension of reading-matter ...	...	...	...	5	1	...	...	1	14	6	3	..

In general, the results in the class and additional subjects compared with those of the previous year show a slight advance. The most satisfactory improvement is shown in drill. The issue of a text-book has led in several schools to the beginning of instruction in physical exercises and company drill. The wand drill for both girls and boys is found practicable and beneficial, and is suitable to the needs of both small and large schools.

Manual Instruction.

In addition to certain branches of the ordinary school course that come under the head of manual training, instruction in woodwork has been given to a class connected with the Kumara School. This class is composed of twenty-three pupils, three of these being scholars of a private school. The class is held after the ordinary school-hours. The first year's course consists of part of the exercises in woodwork set by the Education Department, and that of the second year includes instruction in the making of various articles. Good progress has been made by the various pupils, but it is a matter for regret that the number of those taking advantage of the class has decreased.

The New Regulations.

The work of the ensuing year will have special interest owing to the new conditions under which it will be carried on. In the large schools of the colony the change will be very welcome to both teachers and Inspectors. The former will possess greater control in regard to irregularity of attendance and to the effect of very backward pupils on the various classes, which will become more homogeneous. The Inspectors will be spared time and energy for more important duties. In smaller schools, too, where the responsibility of the promotions of pupils will fall to a larger extent on the Inspector, more freedom is allowed under the new regulations. It will be possible, in cases of irregular attendance and backwardness in one or more subjects, to arrange that the work of other pupils shall not be retarded by the necessity, formerly existing, of presenting every pupil in the standard succeeding the one already passed.

While these valuable benefits exist, there is no doubt that in most cases where a school is in charge of a sole teacher, and occasionally even in others, it will be necessary for the Inspector to assume the responsibility, granted by one of the regulations, of the promotion of the pupils. In such schools the danger is always present that teachers will allow parental influence to induce them to promote pupils unduly. Those in charge of the aided and other small schools have frequently had, before appointment, no training whatever, and their attainments are confined to a pass in the Sixth Standard. It is therefore very advisable to allow the passing of the scholars to remain in the hands of the Inspector. Indeed, as in this district the schools are mostly small, the system of testing individually the progress of the pupils will be modified to a very small extent.

Opportunity has been taken to introduce some improvements in the syllabus, chiefly in the classification of the branches of study, such as the removal to the class subjects of drawing and geography (Standard I. to V.) from the pass group, and of recitation from the additional group. Much can be urged in support of the opinion that the present syllabus should be retained until opportunity has been granted to test its efficiency under the new regulations. It is a matter of regret, however, that grammar has not been better defined and included with composition. The syllabus, moreover, is in some degree burdened with objects of study that impede the efforts of teachers to secure thoroughness in the instruction and efficiency in the education of the pupils.

I have, &c.,

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

NORTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,— Christchurch, 27th January, 1900.

We have the honour to submit our annual report on the schools of the district for the year ending the 31st December, 1899.

The usual routine of inspection and examination was pursued during the year, the inspections being undertaken chiefly in the earlier half, though not fully occupying that period or confined to it, while the examinations of schools, pupil-teachers, and scholarship candidates supplied the main body of our work from June to December, the two last also taking up the greater part of the month of January. To Mr. C. S. Howard, who took Mr. Wood's place during a six months' leave, we are indebted for able co-operation, which we now have pleasure in acknowledging.

The schools are in general in an efficient condition. The buildings are good and well maintained, and the space only too ample in many cases for the number of pupils in attendance. The teaching appliances, though in some features a further expenditure in this direction might form the subject of a recommendation, are sufficient for the ordinary purposes of instruction. The staffing is liberal, and the teachers themselves in all but a very few cases show themselves in character, ability, and industry worthy of the positions they occupy. As without good teachers nothing else matters, we are particularly grateful to the Board for initiating and carrying out during the last year or two an improved system of appointment which cannot fail to be of great service in assisting local committees to make their choice among candidates, and in securing reasonable chances of promotion to the most deserving.

The usual statistics of examination are included or appended. Subsequent returns under the amended regulations now coming into force will necessarily be different in form, but for the purposes of comparison with earlier years we have not attempted to anticipate any contemplated change.

TABLE A.—PASS-SUBJECTS.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Schools presenting.	Average Age of those that passed.
					Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	326	189	...	96	...
Standard VI.	1,460	1,390	1,153	169	13 9
" V.	2,299	2,174	1,654	189	12 11
" IV.	2,778	2,632	2,069	188	11 11
" III.	2,923	2,796	2,238	192	10 11
" II.	2,505	2,417	2,240	191	9 8
" I.	2,233	2,174	2,112	188	8 7
Preparatory	5,904	5,264	...	196	...
Totals for 1899	20,428	19,036	11,466	200	11 3*
Totals for 1898	20,890	19,538	11,691	200	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

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

Classes.	School-roll.	Class-roll.	Passed, 1899.		Passed, 1898.	
	Presented.	Present.	School-roll.	Class-roll.	School-roll.	Class-roll.
Above Standard VI.	1·5	58·0	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	7·2	95·2	5·6	79·0	5·5	79·0
" V.	11·2	94·5	8·1	71·9	7·6	69·6
" IV.	13·6	94·7	10·1	74·4	10·5	72·9
" III.	14·3	95·6	10·9	76·6	10·6	73·7
" II.	12·3	96·5	11·0	89·4	11·0	90·4
" I.	10·9	97·3	10·3	94·5	10·8	95·1
Preparatory	28·9	89·2	...	...	...	...
Totals	100·0	93·2	56·1	80·8	56·0	79·8

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 ...	4	14	24	7	2	Repetition of poetry	200
Good	17	44	50	50	19	Drill	154
Satisfactory ...	41	71	56	69	44	Singing	149
Fair	62	40	38	40	49	Sewing	189
Moderate ...	22	8	15	5	24	Comprehension of reading-matter	200
Inferior ...	52	21	8	29	62		
Total schools included in estimate	198	198	191	200	200		

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.

In the schools examined there were present on the dates of examination 19,036 children out of a roll-number of 20,428. The standard classes (Standards I. to VI.) were represented by 14,197 (present, 13,583), and of these 11,466 succeeded in passing their respective standards, the proportion of the roll-number of the schools so succeeding being 56·1 as compared with 56 of the previous year. The total number of schools is not altered, being just 200, as in the past two years, but the enrolment shows a further decline, for which the older settled parts of the district are chiefly

responsible. The decline first showed itself in 1897 with a drop of 290 children, though in that year five new schools were added; 1898 witnessed a further drop of 138; and 1899 another fall of 462; making a total loss in the three years of 890. To speculate on the causes of the decline, which is even more marked in some other parts of the colony, is not within the scope of our duty, but we may add our regrets to those elsewhere expressed that the steady movement upward which marked each succeeding year up to 1897 has been succeeded by so serious a reversal.

The most interesting and important feature of the year has undoubtedly been the issue, after a considerable amount of discussion, of amended regulations to come into force immediately. On a number of the topics involved we have already expressed opinions pretty fully, and it is therefore scarcely necessary here to do more than review the prospective changes in their relation to the Inspector's duties, and in one or two other closely related aspects. For some years past the Home authorities have been gradually substituting inspection for examination in judging the efficiency of schools, and the change has been received with a chorus of congratulation broken only by a few solitary voices of warning. Inspection as understood, however, in English schools at present is hedged in with elaborate precautions which our form of control would find difficult of enforcement in New Zealand, and one vastly important consideration is ever present, that in England the payments from the public funds made to the school managers for the purposes of the school vary with the degree of efficiency, and may be withdrawn altogether under exceptional circumstances. Nothing like this power of the purse exists in New Zealand, and the greatest caution has therefore to be exercised in any attempt to transplant arrangements which have met with approval under widely different conditions. We are ourselves of opinion that, whatever be the ultimate form of an Inspector's duties, inspection pure and simple can never prove sufficient, and we fully expect that a few years more will see an English reaction in favour of a greater element of examination than is now the practice. The Inspector, especially when he takes the form of an examiner, we all know is a nuisance, and we can hardly suppose that any place will be found for him in the general scheme of things in the happy millennial days, but in the meantime he is necessary, and necessary not only as the observer and reporter of the ordinary course of school work, but as the inquirer by means of special tests into the mental progress made by the pupils under the teachers' instruction. It does not by any means follow, however, that the Inspector as an examiner should conceive it his duty to ascertain and record with a view to promotion the individual proficiency of every child subject to his inspection. That is the conception that has for many years determined the practice in New Zealand, and it may be a surprise to some people to learn that such an undertaking belongs properly to the head teachers of the schools themselves, and forms no part of an Inspector's legitimate function. The conception has had, however, advantages as well as disadvantages, and if it is a wrong one, the Inspector has probably been as great a sufferer as any person concerned. In future the head teachers will exercise this, their proper function, with certain precautions which we think are wisely provided, and the Inspectors, while not exempt from the obligation of examination in the formation of judgments, will save in the larger schools at least a certain amount of time and labour which might profitably be otherwise bestowed.

It is this alteration in the respective duties of Inspector and head master that has probably been most prominent hitherto in the minds of teachers when they have urged a claim for "freedom of classification," but the expression has also been used in an authoritative way to summarise with a somewhat different connotation the changes at present contemplated. The expression is a fine mouth-filling phrase with a pleasant suggestion of tyranny subverted, and the different meanings it may bear will repay inquiry. In one sense the teachers have enjoyed the privilege for a number of years, as it has long been expressly laid down that "for the purposes of instruction the principal teacher of a school shall have full discretion to arrange his pupils in different classes for different subjects, according to their ability and proficiency in the several subjects, and according to the number of available teachers," &c. This recognises for instruction purposes a subject classification, and that little or no use has ever been made of the permission given is set down with more or less truth to the fact that at the same time "for purposes of inspection and examination every pupil in the school must be considered to belong to one of the standard classes" as previously defined. The amended regulations in their original form as first proposed abolished the standard of average attainment with a view to the encouragemett of a greater use of a classification by subjects. In doing so, however, it seemed to us to be opening the door to very serious abuses, and this subject classification on further examination was found to be by no means the entirely desirable thing it had appeared to be. It is open primarily to the objection that in the elementary school, so far at least as the commonly understood elementary subjects are concerned, specialisation on the part of the pupil is by no means desirable, and, secondly, it is in a large measure impracticable. In the small school, where several classes have to be taught by the same teacher, the necessities of the time-table arrangements forbid a subject classification; and in the large school, with a large number of classes, and a separate room for each class, considerations of discipline stand in the way. If, then, a subject classification, which at first sight appears so attractive, is impracticable in the smaller school, and to be sparingly resorted to in the larger, and to be, further, from an educational point of view at the least of very doubtful expediency, we have found ourselves unable to see why the very substantial guarantee that a standard arrangement provides should be abandoned in its favour. As the outcome of the objections accordingly made, some modifications in the first proposals have been made, affecting a compromise. A standard of average attainment at the several stages has been recognised in a limited number of subjects, while outside this group the teacher is at liberty to classify his children in the different subjects as he pleases, and the Inspector is bound to examine them as they are so classified for instruction. The newer arrangement is, we think, quite a workable one, and has capabilities for fruitful developments; but the value of the whole appears to us to be en-

dangered by the extremely limited character of the standard of attainment prescribed in Standards III., IV., and V., forming a very frail foundation for promotion. We have elsewhere made representations on the subject, and we earnestly trust that in this respect the scheme will be reconsidered in time to save the schools from starting a fresh career on a false basis.

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

The Chairman, Board of Education, North Canterbury.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,— Education Office, 26th February, 1890.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1899.

At the close of the year there were sixty-seven public schools in South Canterbury. The Geraldine Flat School, which was established eighteen years ago, was closed in the month of July, as it was recognised that it was no longer necessary; and the school-buildings and dwellinghouse were removed to the new district of Clandeboye and re-erected there. In the month of September a new school was opened at Salisbury, just after the annual examinations of the neighbouring schools were completed.

The number of public schools examined during the year was sixty-six, and these with the five Roman Catholic schools brought up the number of schools examined to seventy-one. The details of the examinations of the Roman Catholic schools show that the number presented was 703, the number present in the standards 425, and the number passed 369. The percentage of passes was 86·8 against 86·7 in the public schools; but it is a significant fact that the mean of the average ages in Standards I. to VI. is eleven years ten months against eleven years one month in the public schools.

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.	150	...	...	...
Standard VI.	341	333	258	13 8
" V.	564	539	423	12 9
" IV.	743	726	585	11 8
" III.	681	656	549	10 8
" II.	625	613	601	9 5
" I.	590	578	572	8 7
Preparatory	1,408	...	...	...
Totals for 1899	5,102	3,445	2,988	11 1*
Totals for 1898	5,094	3,467	3,110	11 2*

* Mean of average age.

A comparison with a similar table in last year's report shows that the decrease in the number presented still continues, though in a less marked degree than formerly. When allowance is made for the inclusion of the Hakataramea School, which was not examined last year, the number presented this year is about thirty less than last year. The cutting-up of the large estates of Waikakihi, Pareora, and Three Springs will bring into the district a large number of settlers, and the increased attendance at the neighbouring schools should more than counterbalance the falling off in attendance at schools in other parts of the district.

The number of pupils presented and examined in Standards I. to VI. is 3,445, as against 3,467 last year; and the number of pupils that passed in one or other of the standards is 2,988, as against 3,110 last year. The percentage of those that passed is 86·7; it was 89·7 last year. In Standards III., IV., V., and VI., the percentages of passes are 83, 81, 78, and 77; the corresponding figures for last year were 86, 83, 81, and 88. In every class the percentage is lower than last year, the greatest falling off being in Standard VI., a result that may be accounted for by the increased difficulty of the arithmetic tests furnished by the Education Department.

Of the 1,408 children in the preparatory classes, 180 were over eight years of age when the schools in which they were taught were examined; last year we had 184 out of 1,394. The number is not excessive, and the explanations furnished by the teachers appeared satisfactory.

The following table 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.	
						℔ cent.		℔ cent.		℔ cent.		℔ cent.
Standard VI.	333	325	333	328	296	89	171	51	298	89	296	89
" V.	539	488	531	512	445	83	345	64	481	89	470	87
" IV.	726	670	705	698	603	83	559	77	595	82	628	86
" III.	656	593	644	624	531	81	502	76	615	95	583	89
Totals, 1899	2,254	2,076	2,213	2,162	1,875	83	1,577	70	1,989	88	1,977	88
" 1898	2,272	2,100	2,226	2,211	1,942	85	1,761	78	2,021	88	2,027	88

From this table it will be seen that the results, except in arithmetic, are very similar to those of last year.

The figures given in Table II. refer only to pass-subjects. Most of the work done in our schools is not included in the pass group, but belongs either to the group of class-subjects, or to that of additional subjects. The class-subjects are grammar, history, geography (Standard II.), science and object-lessons, and mental arithmetic. A summary of the degree of proficiency shown in class-subjects is as follows: Good, 7 schools; satisfactory, 33 schools; fair, 22 schools; moderate, 4 schools. The additional subjects are recitation, drill, singing, sewing, and comprehension of the language of the reading-lessons. The results recorded are: Good, 8 schools; satisfactory, 38 schools; fair, 16 schools; moderate, 3 schools; inferior, 1 school. The results in both groups are very close to what they were last year, there being a slight advantage on the side of the class-subjects, with a correspondingly slight falling-off in the additional subjects. Though twenty-six schools in class-subjects and twenty schools in additional subjects fall below the mark of "satisfactory," it is worth pointing out that these are, with very few exceptions, small schools with only one teacher—a class of school which is not expected to obtain great credit for all the class-subjects, and for all the additional subjects. Taking the number of pupils instead of the number of schools, I find that 75 per cent. are in schools that receive the mark of "good," or of "satisfactory," in class-subjects; and that 85 per cent. are in schools that receive the mark of "good," or of "satisfactory," in additional subjects.

Without going further into figures and percentages, I may state that the schools in general are in good working order. The teachers, with few exceptions, apply themselves with zeal and energy to the carrying out of their duties; they show themselves ready and willing to improve their methods; and they are quick to take advantage of helpful criticism. There are amongst our teachers many whose conception of their profession as educators of the children is not cabined and confined by the bare requirements of the syllabus and the exigencies of examinations; they recognise these as necessary—the former to show what they are to teach, and the latter to test, however imperfectly, how much is taught; but they regard the question of how to teach as equal in importance to the question of what, or how much, is taught. Good teaching presupposes intellectual fitness, character, sympathy, and tact in the teacher; and good teaching implies good learning on the part of the pupils. The influence of such teachers, not only on their scholars, but on other teachers brought in contact with them at Institute meetings and at other less formal gatherings, is wholesome and far reaching in its effects.

I have, &c.,
JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A.,
Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury.

EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	10	...	...	...
Standard VI.	34	34	28	14 2
" V.	66	60	36	13 2
" IV.	80	75	63	12 6
" III.	109	100	88	11 9
" II.	86	77	77	10 3
" I.	87	79	77	9 2
Preparatory	231	...	...	...
Totals	703	425	369	11 10*

* Mean of average age.

OTAGO.

IR,— 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-

viding for the grouping into working units in each of these subjects respectively only such pupils as possess equal, or approximately equal, attainment and aptitude in it. The question of attendance and, to some extent that of home advantages, lie with parents; but innate capacity, whether mental or physical, lies beyond both them and the teacher. Where nature is against us, little can be done; but in so far as equality of opportunity is controllable by parents and teachers, it should be controlled. Most teachers are alive to their duty in this matter; but, unfortunately, no inconsiderable proportion of parents are, we regret to report, largely insensible to theirs: they do not realise the necessity either for regular attendance or for home assistance and sympathy. British freedom is an excellent thing; but when it is claimed and practised by parents to the extent of depriving their children of the means of qualifying for citizenship and of hindering those of others in their efforts to qualify, it degenerates into license and should not be allowed. More than one-seventh of our pupils are always absent from school. Irregular attendance is the most distracting factor in our school economy. It retards the progress even of pupils who attend well; it depresses the spirit of the schools; it causes friction between teachers and pupils and between teachers and parents; and it adds immensely to the difficulty of discipline and control. It is, indeed, an unmitigated evil. Country Committees are, not unnaturally, unwilling to face the enforcement of the compulsory clauses; enforcement, however, is the only effective way with inveterate defaulters. Who should face it?

The discipline and *morale* of our schools are very good. Willing obedience, orderliness, honesty, good manners, and good temper are, so far as our observation extends, the rule within the limits of the school ground; and, though in the streets and on the roads we not infrequently note an absence of easy politeness, we hardly ever see an instance of actual rudeness. The factors operating on the ethical side of school life are—(1) the influence of the teacher, and (2) the influence of home and local environment; and it is only when both of these make for good that we can reasonably expect to see good conduct exemplified in the totality of the child's life. In estimating conduct we should keep this in view; and, in considering the relation of the teacher thereto, we should remember that the children spend only about one-seventh of their brief school life within his ken.

During recent years the public mind has greatly changed on the question of school and home discipline. Formerly it erred on the side of severity; it now errs on the side of lenity, if not of laxity. "Rule by love" is now the maxim. It has a fine sound, but the teacher who should attempt to found his government upon it alone would certainly fail ignominiously. A considerable proportion of children are amenable to the discipline of love; but he has little knowledge of juvenile human nature who does not know that no small proportion are amenable only to the discipline of compulsion. Children would not be children were that not so, and it is absurd to credit them with qualities they do not possess. The average child is much more disposed to gratify his own inclinations than to yield himself to the rule of another, be it that of teacher or parent. Though he may be an angel in the making, he is a long way short of being an angel wholly made; and it is unreasonable to stigmatize as harsh and cruel the teacher who, when the discipline of love and persuasion fails to compel to right conduct, resorts to that of physical force. To maintain effective working discipline in a class of from sixty to eighty pupils of as many different temperaments is no easy matter, and we should like to see those who make light of it try their hand at it for a day or two. The average child has little love for intellectual conquest; real mental discipline is disagreeable to him; he shirks it whenever and wherever he can. But without mental discipline there is no education, no adequate training in what constitutes a large part of life—namely, the doing of disagreeable work willingly and cheerfully. What follows? That with the average child there must be compulsion, wise compulsion it should be, but compulsion all the same, to do with all his might what is disagreeable or even repulsive to him. Effort, strenuous effort, is of the very essence of education; and, when and where it is not given willingly, it must be compelled. Here is the point at which lies the parting of the ways: the skilful teacher will compel wisely, the unskilful unwisely; but even unskilful compulsion is for the child better than none at all. To few is it given to be entirely successful in every department of their work, and we plead that parents should try to realise the great difficulty of teaching large numbers, and be slow to take the part of the children against the teachers, even when they feel that the teachers are in the wrong. Most parents are familiar with the difficulties of family management. Let each multiply his difficulties many times, and he will get a faint notion of those of teachers.

Owing to an invasion first of measles and then of influenza our average school year was of only two hundred days' or forty weeks' duration, and the mean average attendance was only 169·4 days, or thirty-four weeks. That is to say, the children were on the average eighteen weeks absent from school. Under circumstances so unfavourable high results were, of course, unattainable; still they are satisfactory, the mean efficiency mark being 63. The following table gives the details:—

TABLE B.—SHOWING EFFICIENCY-MARKS IN SUBJECTS.

Pass-subjects.

Reading.	Spelling.	Writing.	Drawing.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.
64 per cent. Satisfactory.	69 per cent. Good.	68 per cent. Good.	68 per cent. Good.	61 per cent. Satisfactory.	57 per cent. Fair.	62 per cent. Satisfactory.

Mean percentage, 64·2—"Satisfactory."

Class-subjects.

Grammar.	History.	Object-lessons and Science.	Mental Arithmetic.	Mean Percentage.
55 per cent. Fair.	61 per cent. Satisfactory.	60 per cent. Satisfactory.	49 per cent. Weak.	52·25 per cent. Fair.

Additional Subjects.

Recitation.	Drill and Exercises.	Singing.	Needlework.	Comprehension.	Mean Percentage.
68 per cent. Good.	68 per cent. Good.	59 per cent. Fair.	72 per cent. Good.	60 per cent. Satisfactory.	64·25 per cent. Satisfactory.

In 1898 the mean of all the subjects was 62; in 1897, a more favourable year, it was 65.

The difference between the standard-pass percentage mark, 88, and the efficiency percentage mark, 63, is very striking, and to the lay mind must be puzzling. It is easily accounted for. A child may pass a standard, failing wholly in one pass-subject, gaining only 60 per cent. of the marks in the other pass-subjects, and doing poorly in the class and additional subjects. He may, therefore, and often does, pass on a very low percentage of the marks attainable. At a time, too, when, as during the last two years, children undergo examination while in the incipient stages of sickness or while recovering from sickness, it is plainly the duty of the Inspector to take these circumstances into account and not to withhold the pass if it is nearly won. Accordingly, during the last two years we have, in cases where the child was obviously suffering from temporary incapacity, awarded the pass even though it was not quite earned by marks. This has tended to swell the standard-pass percentage; but it has not affected the efficiency mark, which mark is invariably the percentage ratio of the marks attained by the schools to those actually attainable. It is, we consider, a very accurate index of the degree of attainment that the children gave proof of possessing at the time of examination. It is not so high as we could wish, but it is as high as could reasonably be expected in a school year so short and so broken by inroads of sickness.

It will be observed that Tables A and B take no note of order, attention, and manners—important ethical sides of school life. They are omitted from Table B only because they are not classed as "subjects" in the standards of instruction. We regard them as of the highest importance, observe them with great care during our examination and inspection, and assign them efficiency marks of the same range as those of the standard subjects. These marks are generally high, often very high, and go to swell the total that determines the general efficiency mark of the school. On the basis of all the marks we classify the schools as follows: Weak, 5; fair, 27; satisfactory, 96; good, 86; very good, 2.

Eighty-eight schools, exclusive of district high schools, presented an X class (the class above Standard VI.); but five of these had done little or no work beyond that of Standard VI. The following shows the classification of the others according to the character of their work as disclosed by examination: Weak, 20; fair, 19; satisfactory, 19; good to very good, 25. To get "fair" a class must win at least 50 per cent. of marks; to get "satisfactory" at least 60 per cent. of marks; and to get "good" or "very good" from 68 to 80 per cent. of marks; and Table D shows that 53 per cent. of the schools gained from 60 to 80 per cent. of marks, and that 76 per cent. of them gained from 50 to 80 per cent. of marks. There is not, we think, much reason for dissatisfaction with this result. In a large number of schools with a class above Standard VI. there is but one teacher, who has to teach the preparatory class, six standard classes, and the class above Standard VI. In such cases the work of the class above Standard VI. is done under highly disadvantageous circumstances, the teacher snatching a minute or two whenever he can to assist or direct the pupils, but doing most of the actual teaching before and after ordinary school-hours. The presence of this class in a country school obviously entails, where the subjects are efficiently taught, a large amount of extra work to the teacher, and such work, if efficiently done, should, we think, carry with it extra pay. To encourage advanced education in schools remote from high schools, the Education Department might well double the grant for pupils who have passed the highest standard and are efficiently instructed in work of more advanced character than that provided for in the public-school syllabus. The district high schools are only elementary schools with an advanced department, for instruction in which fees are charged to parents, and to which an extra grant is made by the Board. Schools with a class above Standard VI. are also elementary schools with an advanced department. Why should fees be chargeable in the one case and not in the other? and why should the one and not the other receive an extra grant? To the former is given an extra grant with power to charge fees, to the latter no extra grant and no power to charge fees. Why this difference in the conditions of institutions of the same kind? We do not grudge the high schools their privileges. On the contrary, we wish they and their privileges could be multiplied; but we contend that all schools that are similar in kind should enjoy similar privileges, that, in fact, since provision is made in the one class of school for increased payment for instruction in secondary subjects, provision should also be made for increased payment for the

same kind of work in the other. To us there does not seem to be room here for divided opinion. The question is: How to provide the means? That question should, we reply, be faced and answered by the Education Department as it has been faced and answered by the Home Education Department—namely, by an increased grant for the teaching of what is called the "Advanced Department," the class into which, if they remain at school, pass the children who have obtained the merit certificate, and which, in its main features, corresponds to our class above Standard VI. Its purpose is to prolong school life and, by making secondary education as accessible to the country child as to the town child, to create equality of opportunity to all the children of the land. This is precisely what ought to be the purpose of our class above Standard VI. At Home, the authorities have created the department, and provided the means to enable it to discharge its functions; our authorities have done the first and left undone the second. There, for the advanced department they have more than doubled the grant allowed for the department below it; here the grant remains the same. A double grant for the teaching of secondary subjects would last year have increased the Board's revenue by more than £2,000; and, if a similar grant had been made for all the years we have been teaching these subjects, the Board would not only have escaped the stress of its present impecuniosity, but would have been able to make provision for teaching in one school all the city children who wish to remain at school a year or two after passing the Sixth Standard. We want classes above Standard VI., advanced departments, superior primary schools, call them what you will; but with the thing we must have the means with which to make it efficiently perform its functions. Who shall provide it?

The Minister of Education has recently added another department of work to the school course. We refer to "handwork" now included in the syllabus for the first time. With this class of work we are in entire sympathy, and we trust that the Minister has counted the cost and resolved to bear it.

We have left ourselves but little space for comment on the subjects of instruction. Indistinct utterance and impurity of vowel sounds are the chief mechanical defects in our reading. Two years ago we gave lists of words in which these defects were frequently exemplified. The lists would bear repeating, for the defects are still very common. Undoubtedly, there ought to be more articulation and mouth exercises in the junior classes, and the exercises should be kept up in the other classes. In sight-reading there is some excuse for errors in interpretation of the meaning of parts of the passage read; but there is none for slovenly indistinct utterauce of familiar words. Accordingly, we penalise heavily errors of this kind. Intelligent reading, of which we hear a good deal, implies power to interpret the language and thought of what is read. It is, in no small measure, a question of vocabulary. Nobody finds much pleasure in reading a book that contains on every page many words of the meaning of which he is ignorant; and we cannct reasonably expect our children to read well or to become reading men and women, unless, during their school life, we furnish them with a fair working vocabulary of literary English. The acquisition of such an equipment should be one of the chief aims of our education system; for, if children leave school without it, they leave without the means of self-culture; without adequate means of expression, and without the key to the vast treasures of thought and knowledge bequeathed to them by the great minds of the nation. In our opinion, neither the importance nor the difficulty of English teaching has yet received due recognition from the framers of school programmes.

Passing to another branch of English—namely, grammar and composition—we have to express our deep regret that the department, while remodelling the regulations, did not recast the syllabus. It is, for instance, difficult to imagine anything more misleading to teachers than the present divorce of grammar from composition. What is grammar chiefly concerned with? The functions of words and the build of sentences. Is not composition concerned with precisely the same? Grammar teaches through model examples the principles that underlie sentence-building; composition applies these principles to our own written and spoken speech; but how can we apply them if we do not know them? And how can we learn to know them without studying them? Grammar and composition are, in truth, interdependent parts of one and the same art—the art of expression: neither can be separated from the other without detriment to both; and their separation in the syllabus is illogical and unnatural. It is unworthy of a great department.

Again, even as a scheme of work, the grammar syllabus, though in perfect accord with the ideas that prevailed when it was devised, about twenty years ago, is utterly at variance with present-day conceptions. Then the sentence was considered as consisting of so many "parts of speech"; now it is considered as a unit of expression consisting of two parts—the part denoting the thing thought about and the part denoting what the mind affirms of the thing—in technical language, the subject and the predicate. These are the necessary parts of the sentence, and are therefore the parts with which the children should begin their grammar studies. According to the syllabus, this simple conception of the sentence or unit of expression is to be brought before the pupils, not when they begin their grammar course, but after they have learned to distinguish all the parts of speech and to inflect the noun, the adjective, and the pronoun. They begin grammar in Standard III.; they continue it in Standard IV.; but not till they reach Standard V., if they are kept to the syllabus, do they enter upon the study of the necessary parts of the sentence. In this standard and after having given two years of their school life to the consideration of the "parts of speech," they begin to do what they ought to have done at the commencement of the grammar course. The verb is the key-word of the sentence. Every day children use it and see and hear it used in all its tenses; yet, according to the syllabus, they must study it for two long years as a mere "part of speech," never for a moment considering its simple time functions and forms. The complex sentence, the typical sentence of English speech, finds no place in grammar below Standard VI. This means that, if the syllabus is adhered to, only those children

who remain at school after passing Standard V. ever enter upon the study of a type of sentence they have for years been using in their spoken and written speech. The most useful as well as the most educative side of grammar is its constructive side; yet this department of work is entirely ignored in the prescribed grammar course. No wonder teachers complain that the grammar prescribed for the classes is useless for purposes of composition. The truth is that to be useful grammar must be practical, and to be practical it must deal largely with the forms of the child's every-day speech. Except the definition of composition for Standard IV., there is not in the syllabus one word that recognises this simple condition. It is this ignoring of the proper function of grammar that has brought upon the subject so much condemnatory criticism. Fortunately, a large number of Otago teachers, while doing the prescribed grammar, adopt a more rational treatment of it than that suggested by the syllabus.

Of the many thousand composition exercises we read during the year, a fair proportion were of high merit; but the quality of the majority of them ranged from fair to satisfactory. Year by year errors in concord and government are becoming fewer; but errors in placement of qualifying phrases and clauses and in sentence connexion are still very common. The department of syntax that deals with the function and distribution of adjuncts and with the connexion of sentences is of great importance in composition, and is deserving of much more thorough study than it has yet received in our schools. The paraphrase was generally poorly done.

Though the efficiency mark gained in arithmetic is not high, the teaching of the subject is generally good. It would be of considerable advantage to many children to receive less teaching. Things are made too easy for them; too much is explained; too little is left to their ingenuity and personal application. More frequent practice in long tots would undoubtedly raise the standard of accuracy and rapidity in computation. In future a portion of each class will be examined orally at the blackboard. How? and why? will be much in evidence in this part of the examination.

We do not see much live teaching in geography. The subject being now a class subject in all the classes but Standard VI. we hope to see improvement in the treatment of it.

There is nothing alarming in the lower efficiency mark for needlework. This important department of school work continues to reflect the highest credit upon the female teachers. The decline in the mark is no doubt owing to the change in the syllabus of work.

The singing of the large schools is generally good, often very good. The low efficiency mark is due to the poor singing of many country schools. We recommend more attention to voice training and expression.

Drill is often very good; it is also often very slovenly. In quite a large number of schools the children are made to sit at attention with their arms folded across the chest. This pernicious practice we have frequently condemned.

There is improvement in the methods of giving object and science lessons. One of the chief aims of instruction in nature-knowledge is to excite in children interest in the things and phenomena of the district in which they live. The exposed rocks, the water-worn stones, the hills, the valleys, the streams, the wild flowers, the insects, the birds, all contribute material for interesting and profitable study. The teacher who can read the book of nature does not need to go far afield for subjects, nor does he need a lot of expensive apparatus.

We are seldom satisfied with the treatment of the elements of agricultural knowledge. What is learnt is for the most part learnt from text-books, and rouses no interest in rural life and occupations. The department's syllabus is in the main an excellent one; and, though it involves some knowledge of all the sciences, it involves little that cannot be learnt by observation and easy experimentation. Plants and insects abound. Why not examine them instead of pictures of them? The soil is always present, and its mechanical, but not its chemical, analysis is easy to any one. How it is formed stares us in the face everywhere. Why restrict the work to the text-book when the book of nature lies open to the reading eye? There is the soil of the school ground; why not experiment with it, instead of learning from the text-book what will happen if we do so-and-so? We have only to plant a few beans or other seeds, and examine them at suitable intervals to see all the phenomena of germination, and only to put a spray of green leaves into a tumbler of water, invert the tumbler in a shallow dish, and put it in the sunlight to see part of the phenomena of respiration; and so on with scores of other things prescribed for study by the department. Why not see for ourselves instead of learning about what others have seen? What we have to do is, not to teach farming, which we are wholly unfitted to do, but to rouse in children keen interest in and love for all kinds of rural life and work, to generate in them habits of accurate observation, and to lead them to such first-hand knowledge of Dame Nature and her wonderful ways as shall enable them, when they enter upon the practice of farming, not only to press her into their service, but also to find

> Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

We are, &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, 1900.

We have the honour to lay before the Board our report for the year ended 31st December, 1899.

The number of pupils in the various standard classes, the number promoted to higher classes during the year, as well as the average age of pupils so promoted, and the results of the examination of each school will be found in the tables submitted herewith.

Our general impression of the work of primary education as carried on in our schools during the past twelve months harmonizes with that of recent years, and that impression, as contained in reports already submitted to the Board, is that substantial progress is being made.

We do not propose on this occasion to enter into any detailed criticism of the manner in which the subjects of instruction have been treated in the schools. It will be more fitting, and perhaps more profitable, in view of the introduction of a revised syllabus, marking as it does an epoch in the history of primary education in this colony, to take a retrospective glance at some of the salient features of progress in connection with our schools during the past ten or twelve years, and thereafter to examine the contents of the revised syllabus as shaping the course of primary education in years to come.

Among the more prominent items of progress introduced during the period we desire to pass under review the following may be mentioned:—

(1.) There has been a gradual but steady dispersion of highly qualified teachers throughout the district. Of such the towns absorb but a small proportion, the result being that the majority seek appointments where haply they may be found, thus distributing themselves evenly throughout the length and breadth of Southland. The significance of this diffusion of teaching capacity cannot be overestimated, for by this means unquestioned fitness to teach is put at the service of the remotest settlers.

(2.) In all the schools there has been improvement in the methods of teaching. This is perhaps most noticeable in the instruction of the lower classes. There is hardly a school in the district into which kindergarten methods, or at least some of the principles of teaching given to the world by Pestalozzi and Froebel, have not been introduced. This may seem an inconsiderable step, but it is really of extreme importance. The foundation of technical education is laid by the application of kindergarten methods; in truth, kindergarten is technical education in a pure though elementary form.

(3.) Within the same period there has taken place marked improvement in the quality of the candidates for admission to the ranks of the pupil-teachership. At the beginning of the period almost the sole qualifications of candidates for this office were some practice in teaching and a Fifth or Sixth Standard pass. At the present time, for every vacancy that occurs the Board receives applications from young people who, in addition to passing their standard examinations and having had some practice in teaching, have matriculated, passed the Junior or Senior Civil Service examination, or secured the teacher's D or E certificate. Many of these candidates have, moreover, been holders of Board's scholarships, and so have the additional advantage of having had a course of education at the local high school. Thus the ranks of the teaching profession are filled by the pick of our scholars, and a department of the public service is supplied by a process of rigorous selection.

(4.) There has been established between the primary and secondary schools a closer relation than had previously existed. What with Board's scholarships, liberal grants of free education by the High School Board, and the determination of parents to give their children a course of secondary education at all costs, large drafts of pupils from every part of the district find their way annually to the high school. If the educational ladder, the path from the primary school to the university, is not complete, it is not the fault of those intrusted with the administration of educational affairs in this district.

(5.) As might be expected, much advance has been made in the direction of supplying the schools with suitable apparatus and appliances. We heartily wish, however, that we could record greater progress in this important branch of school administration.

(6.) It is only a just tribute to the Committees to say that among their other duties they have not been unmindful of the appearance of the school buildings and grounds, and of arrangements making for the comfort and enjoyment of the children. There are, indeed, but few cheerless or neglected-looking schools in the district.

(7.) Last but not least, though this is an indication rather of the material prosperity of the district than of progress in education, the roads leading to and from many of the schools have been improved almost beyond recognition.

Turning now to the syllabus, we may remark that, while we bid good-bye to the old order of things without regret, we must not fail to recognise its merits. Recently a prominent educational authority averred that our New Zealand education system was no system. This statement we take to be just the reverse of the truth. If anything, the organization of our primary education has been too systematic. From its very nature it possessed the characteristic merits and defects of rigorous system. The merits of the system consisted in the thoroughness and in the strenuous effort towards certain definite ends that it demanded of the teacher. Its demerits consisted in the chill atmosphere of routine and the dull monotony of mechanical methods into which in the hands of all but the most skilful it was apt to degenerate. Teachers, we may be sure, did not manifest these defects by choice. They were compelled willy-nilly to do so by the daily march towards the annual examination. After all, these defects were an accident of the system, not its essence. To say without qualification that the system has been a failure would be tantamount to saying that thousands of young men and women in the colony are but indifferently fitted to perform their appointed tasks—a statement, surely, that no one will hazard. Thoroughness and steady effort

are essential elements in the foundation of character. It is one of the risks to which the new system exposes us that this fact may to some extent be lost sight of.

Regarding the revised syllabus we may say, without committing ourselves to any decided opinion as to how it will work out in practice, that we are in entire sympathy with the general tenor of its provisions. The chief of the new provisions are these :—

(1.) The arrangement of pupils in classes and the promotion of pupils from class to class are entirely in the discretion of the head master.

(2.) The standard of exemption has been raised from Standard IV. to Standard V., and special provision is made for the examination of pupils desiring exemption certificates.

(3.) In Standard VI. alone will the examination of pupils for certificates of proficiency be entirely in the hands of the Inspector: this doubtless with a view to the production of independent testimony of ability by pupils applying for situations in a public or private capacity.

(4.) The standard subjects have been rearranged, the grouping now being—A. Pass-subjects: (1) English, comprising reading, spelling and dictation, writing and composition; and (2) arithmetic. B. Class-subjects: Geography, drawing, grammar, history, elementary science and object lessons, recitation and handwork. C. Additional subjects: Singing, needlework, and drill. This is the arrangement of subjects for all classes except Standard VI., in which geography and drawing are retained as pass-subjects. Mental arithmetic and comprehension will again be taken as an integral portion of arithmetic and reading respectively, a position from which we have always maintained they should never have been divorced.

(5.) As has been done hitherto, the Inspector at his annual visit will report on the condition of the school, with this fundamental difference: that the individual pass drops entirely out of sight. The annual report will record in general terms the Inspector's estimate of the quality of the work done in the pass- and class-subjects, the amount and quality of the work done in the additional subjects, and the efficiency of the instruction in the preparatory classes and the class above Standard VI. The Inspector will have further to report on the discretion shown by the teacher in his classification and promotion of pupils.

(6.) Distinct recognition is given by the syllabus to the class above Standard VI.

(7.) The conditions for the promotion of pupils to higher classes have been rendered less stringent than they have hitherto been. The only subject in which an absolute pass is uniformly insisted upon is reading, Standard VI. alone being an exception.

(8.) The Inspector may, if he deems it necessary, make an independent examination of the whole school.

(9.) The inspection report will take the same form as before, except in two respects: (1) The list of text-books in use will be reported on; as will also (2) the condition of the apparatus and appliances—a provision agreeing with a recommendation we made in our special report on the first issue of the revised syllabus.

The revised syllabus has been prepared with the view of bringing our school-work into agreement with existing social conditions and with the spirit of the times. What appear to be its most beneficent provisions to those actually engaged in the work of education are the following: To the pupil it brings relief in the form of less rigorous examination, and variety of occupation in the form of handwork. Many a child whose mind is irresponsive to ordinary instruction, whose store of nerve energy is scant at the centres of thought, but plentiful at the tips of his fingers, will now be solaced by an occasional hour's "learning by doing," during which his natural tastes may freely manifest themselves. Again, pupils who excel in any subject—arithmetic, for instance—need not keep marking time till their slower classmates come into line. The frequency of their promotion will be in proportion to their own diligence. Once more, supreme importance is attached to the subject of reading, the full import of which provision will not be adequately recognised till girlhood and boyhood merge into youth, and youth into womanhood and manhood.

The advantages of the revised syllabus to the teacher may be summed up in a single word, and that is the word "freedom." His individuality will now have a better chance of asserting itself in those directions whither his natural bent and abilities lead him. He will be able to study to a greater extent the tastes and temperament of individual pupils, promoting the brighter while not unduly hurrying the more backward. Acting more largely on his own initiative, and recognising the larger trust that has been reposed in him, he must perforce develop an increase of originality, penetration, and power in grappling with the problems of his profession.

The Inspector's work will be modified in several important directions. At his annual visit he will have less ground to cover, though no less work to do. His examination will be directed more to the discovery of the quality of the instruction imparted than of its amount. He will have more time to study the school not merely as a cunningly devised machine mechanically turning out a certain product, but as, under the control of the head master, a self-determining agency striving to launch pupils into life strong and sound in body, mind, and character.

It is said that Bismarck, on being asked after the battle of Sadowa who was the best general, instantly replied, "The schoolmaster." The story may be apocryphal, but its appositeness is shown by the growth of the German Empire. If New Zealand is to take her legitimate place among the nations of the earth it can only be by the schoolmaster doing his part well. It may gravely be questioned whether the estimation in which the teacher is held, and the sympathy extended to him, is at all proportionate to the importance of the mission he is called upon to fulfil. Beset on every hand by petty difficulties, sensible at every turn of patent failure, feeling that the attainment of his ideal recedes with the flux of time, he may at least take refuge in the just reflection that his part in shaping the nation's destiny is second to none.

Recalling ourselves for a moment to questions more directly practical and pressing, we venture to urge the Board to keep the following in view:—

(1.) There is a clamant need in our schools for more apparatus and appliances. Agricultural

science, for instance, a subject lying at the root of the development of the staple industry of the colony, is generally taught through the sole medium of a text-book. For sheer impotency this proceeding would be hard to match.

(2.) In our annual reports we have over and over again referred to the desirability of making our pupils proficient in swimming and military drill. We again urge the Board to take some decided step in these directions, especially as so much could be done at a slight cost. Regarding military drill we take leave to quote what we said in our report for 1895: "We again observe with regret the apathy shown in the district in the matter of military drill: the time may come when those in authority will marvel why such sleepiness had been shown in a concern so vital to the national existence."

(3.) In view of the introduction of handwork into the course of instruction we would recommend the Board to take steps to popularise the subject among the teachers, and also to recognise in some special way the efforts of teachers that treat the subject successfully.

(4.) The passing of the new scholarship regulations rightly marks out for a small proportion of our pupils a professional career. All, however, cannot travel by that route. If the needs of the community are to be studied there should be further specialisation into (1) a commercial course, and, (2), a mechanical course. This matter takes us beyond our special province. We merely mention it as a problem for solution.

We have, &c.,
JAMES HENDRY,
GEO. D. BRAIK, } Inspectors.

The Secretary, Education Board, Southland.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS for the WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	193	...	...	...
Standard VI.	588	570	490	13 9
" V.	924	903	713	13 0
" IV.	1,200	1,168	941	12 0
" III.	1,294	1,252	1,048	10 9
" II.	1,214	1,179	1,130	9 9
" I.	1,164	1,132	1,103	8 9
Preparatory	2,847	...	...	...
Totals	9,424	6,204	5,425	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

School.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Class Subjects.	Additional Subjects.	Order and Discipline.	Manners.
Convent, Invercargill ...	111	82	69	Satisfactory	Excellent ...	Good ...	Excellent.
Boys' School, Invercargill	97	82	78	Good ...	Good ...	Excellent ...	"
Convent, East Gore ...	55	31	26	Satisfactory	" ..	Good ...	Good.
" Queenstown ...	54	38	37	Good ...	Excellent ...	Excellent ...	Excellent.
" Arrowtown ...	28	21	20	Satisfactory	Good ...	" ...	"
" Winton .	54	32	20	...	" ...	Good ...	Good.
" Wrey's Bush ...	61	41	28	...	...	Satisfactory	"

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