

While the attendance at some of the schools has fallen off, at others it has increased, but the total number inspected was the same this year as last. This result, though not altogether satisfactory, shows, at least, that those Maoris who value education are persisting in their opposition to those amongst them who desire to see the schools closed.

It must be borne in mind that the education of Native children in this island is beset with exceptional difficulties, for, besides those common to other parts of the country arising from the dislike of Maori children to be subjected to any kind of restraint, and the inability of the parents, owing to the peculiar social customs of the people, to compel obedience to their wishes where they desire their children to attend school, there is the special difficulty presented by the systematic opposition of those who regard these institutions as having been established as a set-off against their claims to further monetary compensation for their lands.

If the Maoris alone were likely to suffer by this foolish opposition to the education of their children, there would be less need for immediate interference; but it is evident that the whole community must suffer by allowing hundreds of children to grow up in ignorance and vice. There is no reason to believe that neglected Maori children will prove an exception to others in the same condition, and if it is thought necessary to protect the interests of the community at large by removing European children from the custody of parents who, owing to their vicious character, are incapable of bringing them up honestly and virtuously, why should not the same precaution be taken with the Maori? The isolation in which the Maoris have hitherto lived has helped them to conceal their moral shortcomings, and has prevented this question being raised before the Magistrates; but this isolation cannot be much longer maintained; the Maoris are being rapidly surrounded by Europeans, whose children are in danger of being contaminated by the unrestrained viciousness of the Maori youth.

Happily the case of the Wairau Natives to which I have drawn attention in my report is an extreme one—it is the worst that has ever come under my notice. At the same time it is a condition of moral degradation into which it is possible that other Maori communities may sink, and in view of such a contingency it is worth considering whether something cannot be done to enforce the attendance of Native children at school, where they would be daily subjected to such elevating influences as might serve to counteract the corrupting influences of their homes.

I am glad to report a steady improvement in the attainments of the children under instruction, nearly a fourth of whom are able to read any ordinary English book, to write from dictation, and to work sums in the compound rules.

The Under Secretary, Native Department,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,
JAMES W. STACK,
Inspector.

RETURN showing the NUMBER of NATIVE CHILDREN attending SCHOOL in the SOUTH ISLAND.

Name of School.	Boys.	Girls.	Total present at Inspection.	Highest number on Books.	Name of School.	Boys.	Girls.	Total present at Inspection.	Highest number on Books.
†Half-moon Bay	2	1	3	3	*Waikouaiti ...	15	18	33	47
*Neck ...	11	15	26	27	*Little River ...	14	9	23	24
*Ruapuke ...	5	6	11	12	*Wairau ...	3	8	11	13
†Bluff ...	4	4	8	12	*Motueka ...	0	4	4	4
*Riverton ...	8	8	16	23	*Whakapuaka...	8	6	14	14
†Taieri Bridge ...	3	5	8	15	*Arahura ...	9	3	12	12
†Taieri Beach ...	8	2	10	10					
*Otago Heads ...	17	18	25	27		98	109	207	246
†Purakaunui ...	1	2	3	3					

Probable number of children of an age to attend school 500

Highest number on school registers 246

Not attending school 254

Otago Heads Night School.—Males, 9; females, 1: total 10

Neck Night School.—Males, 7; females, 5: total 12

Total attending night schools 22

(Those attending the night schools are adults.)

Half-moon Bay School (Stewart's Island): Master, Mr. Petersen. Visited 15th November, 1876.

—Present: 3 half-castes.

Reading: 3rd Royal Reader, fairly. Arithmetic: Simple rules, fairly.

The room, though small, was very clean and cheerful, and fairly furnished. The children belong mostly to persons engaged at the saw-mill close by.

Harry West, an exceedingly intelligent half-caste, lives in the Bay. He is a skilful boat-builder, and seems to maintain his family in comfort. His home is roomy and tolerably furnished. I met a few Maoris there, but they were only birds of passage, the West family and two elderly Natives being the only permanent residents.

Though this school is entitled to the capitation grant, I understood from the master that no application had yet been made for it.