

With few exceptions, I have not been able to improve the classification of the pupils: irregularity of attendance owing to inclement weather was partly the cause. Collective teaching has not been carried out as I wished it to be; nevertheless I am glad to say that the amount of individual teaching is greatly diminished.

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Reading is somewhat improved in most of the schools, but still there is too much muttered and indistinct utterance. Provincialisms in pronunciation are nearly extinct. There is a great want of intelligence in the reading. When questioned on the subject read, the answers are generally feeble and incorrect. This is especially the case among the girls. At — I found they did not know the meaning of the principal words read: they have been put into books beyond their comprehension. There is no vivacity or eagerness to answer questions. I do not think many of the teachers realize the amount of valuable instruction which can be given in a reading lesson. I wish the teachers to excite a spirit of inquiry among their pupils, and lead them to ask questions when they do not understand anything, and to feel that a short reading lesson, thoroughly explained and understood, is worth far more than pages read which convey no other impression than that of sound. I have begun to introduce simultaneous reading in the junior classes, and, where the utterance is hurried, I have found syllabic pronunciation produce a good result. I may here incidentally mention that I have been much pleased by cases of pupils whom I have met with in my journeys asking me questions as we went along, and bringing things they had found for me to tell them "all about it."

Arithmetic is not much advanced, except in the East School, where the fourth class, if tested, would, I think, pass the Fifth or even the Sixth Standard of the new regulations. There is also a great advance in the Huirangi School. Some pupils in the Inglewood Girls' School were very fairly correct; but still, on the whole, there is too much inaccuracy in the work, and not sufficient mind employed in finding out how to do a sum of very ordinary character. I have urged more attention to notation, and am glad to report a marked improvement, though not to the extent I require. Tables have generally been very accurately learnt. Except in the West and East Schools, mental arithmetic has not been attended to so much as it must for the future.

The progress made in English grammar, with the exception of the East, Bell Block Boys', and Huirangi Schools, is very unsatisfactory. This lesson seems to be degenerating into a monotonous use of phrases. There is a great variety of grammars scattered through the schools (a remnant of former days). I should like to see the whole withdrawn, and Cornwall's Grammar used; and that it be taught orally, with a very free use of the black-board, so that the minds of the pupils may be exercised properly.

In geography some progress has been made, especially in that of New Zealand. At the Kent Road School some very good sketch maps were submitted to me, and also at the West and Inglewood Boys' Schools. At the Omata School, which is greatly improving in most respects, I found a satisfactory knowledge of the political geography of Europe; but I think it is greatly to be desired that more attention were paid to physical geography in the first instance. Some of the volunteered recitations of poetry were very satisfactory.

I find in many of the schools that children present themselves who are not supplied by their parents with books, slates, &c. These individuals are a great source of noise and disturbance in school hours. As education is now gratuitous, the masters should have the right of refusing admittance to such children, unless they bring the money necessary to purchase them from the master.

Quietness of demeanour, attention, diligence, and silence during school hours have greatly increased throughout the schools, with the exception of those already referred to. The introduction of "Norman's School Drill" will effect still greater improvements.

Irregularity and want of punctuality in attendance are still the great hindrances to progress. I learned from Mr. Hislop that in some districts public opinion has been brought to bear on parents, and it is deemed a disgrace if the children do not attend as they ought. Neither the injury done to the children nor the injustice to the teachers seems to be at all understood. Something should be done to get hold of the children of a certain class, who attend no school whatever. In the list annexed I omit all reference to the first quarter of the past half-year. The weather was then exceptionally bad. It shows the number in each school who have not attended even half the number of days it has been open during the last quarter. If necessary, I can furnish the names of the truants. I have been requested to suggest an alteration in the rules as regards holidays. The Michaelmas holidays are objected to as coming during the stormy weather, and there is nothing for the children to do. The first six weeks at least of the January quarter are very irregularly attended, as it is then harvest time, and there are endless anniversaries, picnics, &c. I would suggest that one day only be allowed at Michaelmas, and two days at Easter; and the days thus struck off be added to the midsummer holidays. This, I believe, will be a boon to many.

I have, &c.,

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WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Office, 29th January, 1879.

I have the honor to present my first report upon the schools which I examined between 1st May and 31st December, 1878, according to the prescribed standards. These schools are 47 in number, and are situated in the Counties of Patea, Wanganui, Rangitikei, and Manawatu, which constitute my district. The number of children in attendance, according to returns made by each school at the time of its inspection, was 2,348, and the number of children on the books 2,680, which shows that parents are not always sufficiently careful to send their children to school on the day of inspection.