

encouraged with a view to teaching the children to speak in good sentences, and some departure made from the almost monosyllabic utterances in reply to questions often especially framed to be answered in one word. It is a complaint made against public schools that boys learn to speak badly, and I am afraid there is some truth in the objection. In the past year I was visiting a country school and had given a composition exercise to a class, and heard that class read, when a few minutes after all were sent out into the playground. I noticed that one big boy, who had read fairly well, sounding the aspirate, and who had written a tolerably good composition exercise, immediately fell in with others to a game at leap-frog. His first ejaculation was, "Old yer ed down." Another boy said, "Don't never go no further ner the top of the ill." The language of the playgrounds teems with such expressions. If all teachers were to join in the games with the express object of trying to make a reformation in this matter, something might be done. Any errors of speech in the schoolroom should of course be carefully corrected.

EARLIER USE OF THE PEN.—In my late examinations I have given dictation on paper to Standard IV. candidates, and also to Standards V. and VI. candidates. In the two highest standards the grammar and composition have also been done on paper. I find, in Standards III. and IV., that pupils often write very well on a slate and comparatively badly on paper. The use of the pen should begin in Standard III., and much more written work than appears to be done at present should be given in the higher standards. Also greater facility in writing with the pen is required, as the time taken up in the grammar paper by Fifth and Sixth Standard candidates was more than should in future be allowed. I purpose next year giving dictation on paper to Standard III.; arithmetic, dictation, and grammar to Standard IV.; and to examine on paper in all the subjects in the two highest standards, limiting the time allowed for each subject. Pupils will not be expected to do their work on paper without making corrections; but, when a correction is to be made in a word, the whole word should be rewritten plainly. No correction in a letter in a word should be made by alteration of the letter, as the word then becomes difficult to read, and the spelling is rendered uncertain.

SPECIAL SUBJECTS.—Under this heading I include such subjects as do not form part of a standard pass. They are singing, drawing, and science; also, sewing for girls, and drill for boys. These subjects are all taught throughout the city schools, and generally very fairly taught; but I do not think any great amount of success will be achieved until professional teachers are appointed in each subject to visit in each case the whole of the city schools, to direct the teaching, and to report from time to time on the work done. Sewing is satisfactorily taught in most of the city schools; and drill is well in hand at Mount Cook, where a cadet company is formed, and at Newtown, Thorndon, and the Terrace. Cadet companies have recently been formed at Greytown and Masterton. In all the larger schools sewing is fairly taught, drawing is imperfectly taught, and singing with more or less success. Only a few of the country and rural schools are teaching any special subjects, except sewing; and, of the larger schools, the Upper Hutt is most remiss in attention to the special subjects. I observe some falling-off in the teaching of special subjects, particularly in some country schools. I find that the best schools never neglect them, as they make a pleasant change in the curriculum, and are liked by the children.

THE ATTENDANCE QUESTION AS AFFECTING RESULTS.—One of the gravest questions touching the education system is that bearing on the regular attendance of children. The success of a national system, and the efforts of the most painstaking teachers, are largely being sacrificed to the thoughtlessness, cupidity, or dense ignorance of parents. Children are kept away from school because the weather is too hot or too cold, to nurse a baby or pick potatoes, to mind a cow, or to do any trivial thing which might be done out of school hours. No one but those constantly engaged in school work can form the least conception of the indifference of many parents. Unless the State steps in to the rescue of the children from the apathy of parents, much of the public expenditure on education will be wasted. I am almost afraid to quote figures, as so few care to study them. I will, however, analyze some of the schedules showing the attendance during the past year of children who have come up for examination. I will take one or two of the very best schools, a few average schools, and one or two in which the attendance is low. The highest attendance registered is 447 half-days.

SCHOOL.	Number Presented.	Number who have attended 400 Half-days or more.	Over 300 and under 400.	Over 200 and under 300.	Under 200.
Terrace	231	2	137	66	26
Mount Cook Boys'	334	...	215	89	30
Lower Hutt	148	...	42	56	50
Carterton	173	50	79	30	14
Matarawa	31	...	12	9	10
Waiinga	23	12	7	4	...
Waingawa	19	...	5	7	7
Totals	960	64	497	262	137

From this I think it is apparent that the number of very good attendants is small, and that 400 children out of 960 have attended so badly that no teacher could be expected to pass them in their examination. It is also very striking to my mind how wide is the difference in two school districts, such as Carterton and the Lower Hutt. How is it that children attend so well in some districts, and so badly in others? The people themselves have this question to answer. They should know that what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well.