

should be allowed to write in an exercise-book at home before the Second Standard was passed. The bad reading of the lower standards in the large schools is easily traceable to inefficient and unskilful teaching. In very few instances were the children in these schools able to deal intelligently with the meanings of the words occurring in the lessons read. The numerous failures in history are due to the fact that teachers attempt too much. A clear outline of the sequence of great events in English history is as much as can be reasonably expected in most of our schools.

In the large majority of country schools, conducted by two or more teachers, the organization has improved. In the town schools too much of the time and attention of the adult teachers is still given to the higher classes. I am convinced that 30 per cent. of the children attending such schools as Gloucester Street leave before they pass the Fourth Standard, and that during an altogether unreasonable proportion of the time they attend their instruction is intrusted to inexperienced pupil-teachers. I am afraid that a large number of those children who leave school imperfectly educated, and with unformed habits of industry and diligence, find their way into the larrikin classes. Speaking generally, it may be said that the discipline and order are good.

In a former report I took occasion to express my approval of the "standard system of education," and I must say that during the past two years I have neither read nor heard anything to cause me to alter my views. I have, I think, never expressed any opinion for or against the requirements of the New Zealand standards, and I do not intend to do so now. I have considered it my duty to see that the regulations were, as far as possible, carried out in all schools inspected by me. I am strongly averse to continual changes and alterations, and we have certainly had enough of such in the educational history of this district. In all schools where more than one teacher is employed, it is, I think, quite possible, provided that the attendance is regular and the teaching efficient, to successfully cope with the requirements of the standards. In small schools, even under the most favourable circumstances, the teacher's task is a difficult one, and doubly so if he attempts to teach separately every class in the different subjects required for their respective standards.

In some districts the local supervision is reasonably good, but, generally, Committees appear to take but little real interest in the welfare of their schools. Previous to the completion of a new school very considerable enthusiasm is manifested in educational matters; but shortly after its opening this feeling dies out, and it too often happens that the newly-appointed teacher is unable to enrol more than half the children guaranteed to attend.

The usual schedules are attached.* I must apologize for the lateness and incompleteness of this report, but my health during the past two months has been so indifferent that it has been a difficult matter for me either to think or to write.

I have, &c.,

W. L. EDGE, M.A.,

Inspector of Schools.

The Chairman of the Board of Education, Canterbury.

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Greymouth, 14th February, 1882.

I have the honour to submit my Seventh Annual Report on the condition of elementary education in the District of Westland.

The number of schools in the district is now 35, or one more than the number returned in my last report. Eighteen of these are carried on under the provisions of the 88th clause.

All the schools in the district have received one visit for the purpose of examination; nearly all have also been visited for general inspection without notice, and to many I have paid one or more incidental visits in passing. The only school not examined this year is the smallest in the district, which was closed when I arrived on the morning fixed, some weeks before, for the examination. The No Town school was also closed and without a teacher on my arrival; but thanks to the exertions of the Chairman of the Committee, who took the trouble to muster all the children, I was enabled to hold the examination at the time appointed.

For the first time in the six years and a half during which I have been connected with your Board, I have to announce a general falling-off in the results of the year's work. At the same time I desire to express my firm conviction that in the case of the principal schools in the district, and with a few exceptions, which will be referred to in the confidential report which accompanies this, the inferior results recorded this year are in no way attributable to any diminution of zeal or ability on the part of the teaching staff, but to a variety of circumstances, some of which I will now bring under your notice.

During the latter half of the school year just ended I received numerous communications, through local Committees, from parents complaining that their children were not advanced into higher standards, notwithstanding that they had passed at the last examination. As I reminded you in my last report, it has been the custom in this district to expect that every child who passes any standard shall be presented in the next higher one at the following examination, and under your Board's former programme this was seldom attended by any difficulty: under the present system, however, and with the more extensive requirements of the Government standards, a gradually-increasing strain has been felt in the endeavour to continue the practice of annual promotion in all cases, which, though not positively demanded by the regulations, was nevertheless expected by the public. The difficulty was aggravated by the impossibility of persuading many parents that their children's best interests are often more truly consulted by withholding those who have barely passed at any examination from presentation in a higher standard at the next, and a system of annoyance and interference with the teachers' plans seemed likely to become general and intolerable. Many parents appear to be unable to believe that their children are less gifted by nature than those of their neighbours, or that their continual absence from school can interfere with their progress; and prefer to assume that their inability to keep pace with their class-mates is the result of neglect or of deliberate injustice on the part of the teachers; whereas in several cases that came under my notice the children supposed to have been thus neglected

* Not reprinted.