

placed at a great disadvantage by beginning late. Our experience in Auckland does not bear out this last objection. It is well known that the district scholarship boys have come well to the front at the Grammar School, and that many of them have gained open scholarships. I am inclined to think that the first-named objection has been over-rated, as what I have just stated will, to some extent, bear out. To return to the last objection, I am aware that a good deal may be said in favour of the idea that boys for secondary schools should be caught young. I am not prepared to admit that this is to be looked on as indisputable; if, however, we admit its truth in a general way, it by no means follows that it is justifiable to make very young boys fight their way through a competitive examination into these schools. I really cannot think that it is required at this time of day to show how deadly such a process must be to children of, say, eleven. Every one should be able to figure that to himself. Unfortunately we are not left to rely on theory alone in this matter. We have a wide experience, too, to warn and to guide. To come to a particular experience. A gentleman, whose recent lamented death causes a serious loss to education in this colony, described to me the sort of young boys who won scholarships in the district with which he was connected. Small, sharp, precocious boys, with bad physical development, no weight of brain, and no future in them. He was of opinion, and I entirely agree with him, that public money spent in turning out such an article is worse than lost. It must be borne in mind that the mischief done by early competition is not confined to the unfortunate competitors; the *virus* infects the school and the district. Under what I may call the comparatively healthy system pursued here, I am satisfied that, as a rule, the most promising boys have gained the scholarships. Some of the best have gained them at fifteen, after trying for two years before. I myself agree with those who think that it is no benefit to a boy to begin the study of classics and mathematics before twelve. However that may be I am convinced that it would be most injurious to the public primary school system to permit competition for scholarships by children under twelve. I do not see so much objection to reducing the upper limit of ages, say, to boys under fifteen. The vital point to be considered is the healthy and successful education of the great body of the people. If the secondary schools cannot make their arrangements to contribute to this end, some other mode of disposing of the winners of scholarships must be devised. I fully recognize the importance of secondary and higher schools and the University in the structure of national education. That structure has its foundation in the primary school, and it behoves us to build the foundation strong.

The system of examination in standards, begun here in 1879, has received further development. It must, of course, take some years yet before the system is fully developed, so that its defects shall be minimized and its good points made the most of. I would again point out that much mischief will be done by putting pressure on teachers to send up pupils prematurely. Undoubtedly, as the Chairman of the Board has pointed out, every reasonable precaution should be taken to prevent abuse. Teachers are now required to furnish a list of the pupils not presented; and, in case of every child over seven, to state the reasons why the child has not been presented.

I append a table showing the number examined and passed in each standard. It will be seen that the percentage is larger than that of last year (66).

Standard.	Presented.			Passed.			Per Cent.
	M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	
I.	1,250	1,102	2,352	964	905	1,869	79.4
II.	1,299	1,236	2,535	911	904	1,815	71.5
III.	842	823	1,665	496	512	1,008	60.5
IV.	462	438	900	271	292	563	62.5
V.	152	108	260	111	70	181	69.6
VI.	23	17	40	21	12	33	82.5
Total ...	4,028	3,724	7,752	2,774	2,695	5,469	70.5

As I mentioned in my last report, the test of results is often a fallacious one. We want to know how the results have been brought about. Great efforts have been taken here to encourage teachers to seek results from judicious training, and not from "the brute force of cramming," which is directly antagonistic to healthful "mental training." Injudicious outside interference will tend to neutralize these efforts. There seems, unfortunately, now-a-days a tendency in this and other matters to believe that entire ignorance of a subject is the best qualification for the utterance of dogmatic opinion upon it.

The state of the schools is on the whole satisfactory. Of course there are many shortcomings—a want of buildings, unsuitable buildings, unsatisfactory teachers. The last-named evil will never wholly disappear; it is to be hoped that year by year it may be lessened.

The methods of teaching the various subjects are, on the whole, improving. I have so frequently dealt with this subject in former reports that I think that it is not needed I should do so now. But I would again impress on teachers the necessity of teaching arithmetic in an intellectual fashion. It is time that the use of the multiplication table were abandoned.

The remarks made in my last year's report, in regard to teachers not paying due attention to the health of their pupils, are, I regret to say, still in some degree applicable. I find that in many cases the means provided for the ventilation of schools are not sufficiently made use of; that the rooms are not flushed with air when the pupils are out of them; that an undue amount of home work is given. There is undoubtedly an improvement in these respects since last year, which it is to be hoped will be rapidly progressive.

There is, I am glad to say, a somewhat better state of things prevailing respecting that exalting of children on which I had occasion to animadvert last year. Not only here but in other districts, as I am