

The results in arithmetic in Standards II. and V. were frequently unsatisfactory. Many bad failures in the subject occurred in both standards. Even the mechanical work could not be classed as accurate. It appears as if the irregularity of attendance had retarded the progress in arithmetic of these standards to a degree far greater than it had the other standards. Arithmetic, however, has improved in the majority of the schools. Methods are, on the whole, good; the mechanical work is fairly accurate, and the papers worked at examinations are, as a rule, creditable in neatness. This is especially so in Standards VI. and IV. Occasionally an evident weakness is met with in the treatment of this subject in Standard III., which is greatly due to the want of exactness on the part of a few teachers. Mental arithmetic still receives in every school the attention it deserves.

Spelling and dictation continue to be well taught; but neither the transcription on slate of Standard II. nor the writing of Standard I. was equal to past effort.

Paraphrasing was the weakest part of the instruction in composition. In the best schools this useful exercise had been taught with success, but the teaching of it generally, judged by its results, must have been carelessly performed. The exercises of Standards III. and IV. show that the teaching of composition is receiving more methodical treatment at the hands of teachers. I noticed that the lessons on the knowledge of form were helpful to the scholars when describing the objects they were asked to write about.

Reading is one of the best-taught subjects. But the explanation of the language is too often confined to the meanings of words, while the phrases and sentences are left unexplained. There is great need for improvement in this part of the teaching, as the results were frequently indifferent or bad.

Drawing is another subject that is progressing very satisfactorily. Two portions of the work, however, require comment. Scale drawing was inferior and by no means as well done as I expected it would be. A want of decision, also, in the freehand tests was frequently noticed. The rubber is too liberally used, though many teachers wisely prohibit its use altogether. I suggest as a remedy the French treatment—a free use of the pen and ink. The old drawing-books could be utilised for such work. A supply of suitable drawing models and other apparatus is much needed; those in use are of a very primitive character.

Geography as a class-subject was fairly well known, but the answering in the pass-work was not so good, the words of the text-book had in many instances been committed to memory, showing that the teaching was mechanical. Questions requiring the exercise of intelligence were frequently avoided or imperfectly answered.

More attention has been given to the grammar of Standard IV.; the papers were a marked improvement on those which I examined last year. Very unsatisfactory work was done in the other standard classes. Serious blunders were often met with in the parsing and analysis exercises. The subject receives but little attention now, and in a number of schools the time given to this subject in the higher standards at examination could be more profitably given to other work. Satisfactory work, however, was done in Standard III.

On the tone and order of the schools I have to report most favourably. It is a pleasure to inspect in many of them. In a few the discipline is weak, but yet in these the teacher who has not the personal qualities of the disciplinarian may do much by proper method.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Taranaki Education Board.

WILLIAM MURRAY, Inspector.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Office, Wanganui, 25th February, 1894.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending the 31st December, 1893.

During the latter half of the year measles were very prevalent throughout the district. Many schools were closed for varying periods, while many were kept open with three-fourths of their pupils absent. Epidemics are seriously interfering with the work of education in this district. For the past three years we have had influenza and whooping-cough, influenza and diphtheria, and measles. For the quarter ending 30th September the average was 393 lower than in the June quarter, owing to the prevalence of measles, while in the ordinary course of events the average would have considerably increased, owing to the examination in standards going on throughout the September quarter. The weather, too, no doubt seriously affected the attendance, for rain fell on an unusually large number of days throughout the year.

Inspection.—All the schools, with the exception of five which were opened during the latter part of the year, were duly inspected, ten more visits being paid than during 1892.

Examination of Schools.—Of the 103 schools open at the end of the year, eighty-nine were examined in standards. Of the fourteen not examined five had been newly opened, and nine were closed at examination time on account of the prevalence of the measles, and time did not permit of special visits for examination being paid.

On the days appointed for the examination there were 7,831 pupils (4,082 boys and 3,749 girls) on the rolls of the eighty-nine schools examined, of whom 5,137, or 65·6 per cent., were presented in Standard I. to Standard VI.; 2,662 were in the preparatory classes; and thirty-two had already passed Standard VI. Of the 5,137 pupils presented in standards, 4,610 attended and were examined, 527 were absent, 379 were excepted, 988 failed, and 3,243 passed the requirements, and were promoted. The number of pupils absent from the examination is proportionately much higher than has been the case in any former year; but this is accounted for by the measles epidemic, which was very prevalent throughout the five examination months. Also, the number of "exceptions" is higher than in any previous year, and this is due partly to the cause mentioned in the foregoing sentence, and partly to the fact that one of the largest schools examined had not been