

find little difficulty with names, for, as has been pointed out, they readily take to such words as "rhinoceros," "hippopotamus," and difficult surnames of their fellow-pupils. With regard to the geometry in Standard IV., we think that the number of problems might be materially reduced.

Geography has shown a slight improvement during the year in Standards V. and VI. The British possessions are, as a rule, now well known; but physical geography is still far from satisfactory, intelligent and full answering being rare. In Standard IV. the requirements, though lessened somewhat during the year, are still too exacting. In Standard III. the answering often was very good.

Preparatory Classes.—In the schools examined there were 2,662 pupils in the preparatory classes, and of these 567 were over eight years of age. Last year 22.1 per cent. of the preparatory pupils were over eight years old, and this year there is a decrease to 21.3 per cent. There is thus a distinct advance in the right direction, a result of the clause requiring that pupils shall be presented in Standard I. at the age of eight years unless satisfactory reason for non-presentation can be shown. Another result of the clause is a fall in the average age of pupils in Standard I.; this year it is nine and a quarter years, which is lower than it has been for four years. In very few schools had fault to be found with the reasons for non-presentation. Of the 567 pupils over eight years of age, 236 had not made half the attendances during the three quarters preceding that quarter in which the examination was held, and forty-six were Maoris.

Additional Subjects.—The average marks for each school in the additional subjects and in the class-subjects are higher than in any former year. Those for the additional subjects are under the present arrangement, however, no criterion whatever of the quality of the work done, for, although all the subjects cannot possibly be taken at many schools, the average number of marks per school is ascertained by dividing the total number of marks obtained by the district by the number of schools examined. The subjects are repetition and recitation, drill and exercises, singing, needle-work, and subject-matter of reading lessons. Of the eighty-nine schools examined last year, needle-work was not taught in fifty-one, which number was composed of schools without a female assistant and schools with a male sole teacher. Again, singing is taught above Standard I. in very few schools. Now, as the highest marks for each subject are twenty, while the possible marks obtainable by one school might be 100, those obtainable by another school might be sixty only.

As recommended at the Inspectors' Conference, the use of symbols, such as "excellent," "very good," "good," &c., would be preferable to the present system of assigning marks for these additional subjects, for, in estimating the result of oral questioning of a class, it is hardly possible to adopt the arithmetical mode of measurement with perfect exactness, while the symbols are suitable for describing general impressions.

Buildings and Playgrounds.—Many of the buildings are fast going to ruin for want of a coat of paint. Playgrounds are gradually being improved, and the Arbor-day movement has resulted in many young trees being planted.

Discipline, &c.—We are pleased to be able to speak in high terms of the order, discipline, and behaviour in the majority of the schools. The manners of the pupils also are, as a rule, most pleasing.

In conclusion, we trust that during the coming school year the efforts of the teachers will not be hampered, and the funds of the Board decreased, by any further epidemics.

We have, &c.,

W. H. VEREKER-BINDON, M.A., Inspector,

W. E. SPENCER, M.A., B.Sc., Assistant-Inspector.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 28th February, 1894.

We have the honour to present our report on the condition of the State schools of the Wellington District for the year 1893.

Five new schools have been opened during the year, making the total number in operation ninety. The increased accommodation required at Newtown has been well provided for, and the immediate pressing needs of the district for further accommodation are for the time fairly met, although a large expenditure is needed for repairs. The total number of children on the books for the past year was 12,337, an increase of 656 on the returns for 1892. We still maintain a high average roll-number for each school—137.

In making this report to the Board on the working condition of the schools we find that much consideration is due this year to the teachers, on account of unavoidable drawbacks, the most serious of which has been an epidemic of measles of exceptional severity and of unusual duration. In many cases the attendance for many consecutive weeks was reduced to nearly one-half the normal returns; and during this period many teachers were also on sick leave. The standard and class work have necessarily fallen off, and probably to an extent greater than is contemplated and greater than the decrease in the number of standard passes will indicate, so that the best efforts of the schools for another year will be needed to reinstate them in their former condition. These remarks apply with much diminished force to the work of the higher standards, in which the attendance was less affected and the conditions less altered. Indeed, we found a considerable improvement in the scholarship work for the year, and in many good schools considerable effort had already been effectually made to recover lost ground.

Although, under the circumstances, we deplore any unfavourable comparison of the results in standard examinations, and bearing in mind that at all times we look upon such numerical results as being only an approximate index of efficiency, we still think it will be useful to again put before