

## TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 25th March, 1907.

I have the honour to lay before you the annual report for the year ending the 31st December, 1906.

At the beginning of the year seventy-eight schools (including six part-time schools) were in operation, and during the year new schools were established at Douglas, Mangaroa, and Matiere. The school at Pohokura was closed during the last three months of the year. In accordance with the arrangement made with the Auckland Board, two visits were paid to the school at Mokau.

The following table contains a summary of examination results :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	91	87	Yrs. mos. 15 2
" VI	...	...	...	...	320	313	13*11
" V	...	...	...	...	426	419	13*0
" IV	...	...	...	...	577	555	12 5
" III	...	...	...	...	657	641	11 3
" II	...	...	...	...	660	644	10 2
" I	...	...	...	...	636	620	9 0
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	1,712	1,526	7 0
Totals	...	...	...	...	5,079	4,805	11 6*

\* Mean of average age.

Compared with the return for 1905, the following increases are shown: Roll, ninety-five; present at the Inspector's annual visit, 111. The number of pupils absent at the annual visit was 264—seventy-eight in the standards, and 186 in the preparatory classes. The number of pupils in Standard VII was ninety-one, an increase of fourteen.

In addition to the public schools, the Roman Catholic schools at New Plymouth, Stratford, and Opunake were inspected and examined. The summary of results shows: Roll, 246; present, 238—a decrease of twenty-nine and twenty respectively on the 1905 return.

In a considerable number of schools reading receives very intelligent treatment, being characterized by fluency and good expression. On the other hand, in some schools the reading, although fluent, lacks the essentials of intelligent reading, the delivery as a rule being somewhat hurried, and the enunciation indistinct. I feel confident that if teachers were to instruct their pupils in the art of good reading, instead of merely "hearing the reading," many of the defects in this subject would soon disappear. It is pleasing to notice that some of our best teachers, not satisfied simply with correction of pronunciation, encourage the pupils to criticize one another's reading with respect to inflection, enunciation, phrasing, and so on. This will tend greatly to elevate the high standard already attained in these schools. With a view to fostering a taste for and love of reading, libraries have been started in connection with some of our schools, and the plan might with benefit be tried in others.

The exercises in dictation and spelling are generally well done as far as the set work is concerned, but in the composition and geography papers the general spelling is often faulty. This defect arises from the lack of care displayed during the year in the correction of the written work.

Oral composition, in the majority of our schools, is a particularly strong subject, especially in the lower classes, where some excellent work is received. The written work, on the contrary, has to some extent fallen away. The method of treatment undoubtedly accounts for this, the teachers placing far too much reliance on practice in writing. Mere practice will do little to raise the standard of composition. If fewer essays were taken, and these dealt with in a more thorough and comprehensive manner, I feel sure better results would follow. Good examples of English should also be placed before the pupils. It is not at all uncommon to find that in the correction of the composition exercises the teacher has written in all corrections, and thus has violated one of the fundamental canons of teaching, by doing for the pupils what they should be called upon to do for themselves. All corrections should be made by a system of signs known to the pupils, the mistakes made being corrected by the pupils themselves. Punctuation might also receive more attention.

Arithmetic, in the majority of our schools, is carefully set out, shows satisfactory accuracy, and is intelligently treated, especially in the junior classes, where the manual work is made to play an important part in the treatment of this subject. Occasionally, however, the methods of the senior classes leave much to be desired. This has been noticed particularly in the working of decimals, the pupils often adopting the fractional method where much time and labour could be saved by the use of decimals. Mental arithmetic does not receive the attention its importance merits.

In science subjects the value of the teaching lies not in the information imparted, but in the habits of mind induced by careful experiment, accurate observation, and correct reasoning. In the past, owing to want of suitable apparatus, the teachers have been greatly handicapped, and science subjects have been treated in anything but a scientific manner. To assist teachers to obtain the necessary appliances, the Board has now decided to subsidise all amounts raised locally, and the increased facilities thus given should result in a vast improvement in the method of treatment of the science lessons.