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NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION:
REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.-1B, 1906.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Auckland, 10th March, 1907.

I have the honour to submit a general report on the public schools of the Auckland Education District for the year 1906.

At the close of the year there were in operation 463 public schools, of which seventy-eight were part-time schools. Since the end of 1905 the number of schools has increased by twenty-one. The public schools inspected numbered 409; in the case of part-time schools only one of the grouped schools was visited for inspection. The number of public schools examined was 453. As in recent years, the Mokau School was inspected and examined by the Inspectors of the Taranaki Education Board.

In addition to the above, twenty-three Roman Catholic diocesan schools were inspected and examined, as well as the Parnell Orphan Home School.

The following table shows in summary the statistics for the year, as required by the Education Department:—

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.							Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	197	134	Yrs. mos. 15 11
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	2,143	2,104	13 10
" V	...	...	...	...	...	2,917	2,840	13 0
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	3,598	3,513	12 1
" III	...	...	...	...	...	3,652	3,553	11 2
" II	...	...	...	...	...	3,749	3,642	10 2
" I	...	...	...	...	...	3,870	3,774	9 3
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	12,571	11,395	6 4
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	32,697	30,955	11 5·6*

* Mean of average age.

The figures in this table show for the year an increase of 1,084 in the roll-number, and of 936 in the number of pupils present at the Inspectors' annual visits. The increase, though partly due to the opening of small schools in newly settled districts, is mainly owing to the growing attendance at the schools in the suburbs of the City of Auckland, and at such centres as Waihi, Whangarei, and Hamilton. Last year there was an even greater increase.

In Standard VI, 1,437 certificates of proficiency and 443 certificates of competency were awarded by the Inspectors. The standard of attainments required for the certificate of proficiency was raised considerably from the beginning of the year, in accordance with the revised regulations of the Department. The higher standard has been readily met in nearly all classes of schools, and quite a large number of pupils gained much higher marks than were required to secure a pass.

At the Roman Catholic schools there were 1,977 pupils on the rolls, 1,831 were present at the Inspectors' annual visits, and fifty-eight certificates of proficiency, and thirty-five certificates of competency were awarded. At these schools the proportion of pupils in Standard VI to those in the lower classes is much less than that obtained in the public schools.

During the latter half of the year, one of the Inspectors (Mr. J. S. Goodwin) was unable, by reason of illness, to undertake any work in country districts. This threw a very severe strain of work on the other Inspectors, and my thanks are especially due to Messrs. Grierson, Stewart, and Purdie for their exertions in preventing the work from falling into arrears. As Mr. Goodwin has now been retired from active service, I use this occasion to acknowledge his long, cheery, faithful, and efficient service as an Inspector.

Statements occasionally appear to the effect that the Board might do more to create facilities for education in newly settled and outlying districts. There is, so far as I am aware, no real foundation for such complaints. Unavoidable delays in providing schools in such districts are caused by the difficulty in procuring suitable sites and in subsequently getting them transferred to the Board, and by the fact that the Board has to secure the Minister's approval of plans and estimates of cost before any new school building can be erected. Considering the difficulties thus arising, the Board, it seems to me, deserves credit rather than censure for this part of its administration.

The promotions of pupils from class to class have, in general, been made on a sound basis, and only a small percentage of pupils have been denied promotion. Though the Inspectors' examinations rarely bring to light cases where it is proposed to grant promotions unworthily, later inspection-visits show that pupils sometimes have considerable difficulty in coping with the reading of the classes into which they have been advanced. Reading is a subject in which a satisfactory degree of proficiency, tested by matter not previously seen as well as by the usual reading-books, should be insisted on before promotion is granted; for if new reading-lessons are made out with difficulty, neither the matter nor the language can be so understood as to make their treatment productive of an intelligent and educative result. Hence considerable readiness and power in dealing with all new reading-lessons should be considered a *sine qua non* for promotion.

The classification of pupils in a lower class in arithmetic than in English is becoming less frequent than it has been in recent years. This arrangement involves a serious disadvantage in the Standard VI class, where pupils must take the Standard VI arithmetic for the certificate of proficiency examination.

The quality of the work done in the Standard VI class—the only class that has been examined with reasonable completeness in all schools—has been for the most part very satisfactory, and shows a distinct advance on what has been attained in former years. This result is, I believe, almost entirely due to the stimulus supplied by the certificate of proficiency examination. The gaining of these certificates is a distinction highly valued by pupils, as well as by their teachers, and the ambition to secure them has led to a degree of earnest and steady application that is bearing excellent fruit. If pupils in the intermediate standard classes could be brought to display the like earnest spirit of work, great would be the gain.

In the essential subjects of an elementary education the great mass of the pupils in the Board's schools are receiving a sound and in the main an intelligent training. Of the important subjects the weakest is composition, both oral and written, and this is especially true of the written composition of the Standard IV and Standard V classes. Reading continues to improve, and as regards fluency and accuracy it is usually very satisfactory. The practice of trying pupils with the reading of suitable passages not previously seen has been widely applied during the year, and it has afforded pleasing and conclusive evidence of very successful training in this subject. It is much to be able to say that the pupils of the public schools read lessons, suited to their stage of advancement, fluently and accurately, but it is highly desirable that we should be able to add that they read with expression. Though this praise cannot be very frequently given, it is now rare to find reading purely mechanical and unintelligent. School-children, especially in rural districts, seem often to regard elegant and expressive reading as affected and artificial, and it is not always easy to overcome this prejudice. On this aspect of reading, Mr. Garrard, who joined the Inspectorate early in the year, says: "The expression associated with the intelligent comprehension of the subject-matter (of reading-lessons) is woefully lacking, in the schools with which he has become acquainted. I find myself much more nearly in agreement with Mr. Grierson, who says: "I have used various books for Standard VI reading-at-sight, and both in town and country the examination of the pupils in this subject has been a pleasure." Such a result is not to be got in the Sixth Standard in all classes of schools without satisfactory training in the classes below.

There is still considerable scope for improvement in the methods of teaching reading generally used by teachers. While these methods are well applied, one cannot help feeling that they do not adequately foster interest in reading, or make the consideration of the reading-matter minister in the best way to a training in oral expression by constantly requiring the pupils to express in their own language the thoughts, incidents, and substance of the lessons. Some time-honoured methods are falling more and more into disrepute, more especially simultaneous reading—a practice long forced on teachers by the narrowness of the course of reading in the lower classes—and the too ready resort to pattern-reading, still so much in evidence in many of our schools. There is in both these methods a distinctly mechanical and imitative tendency, that conflicts with the higher aims a teacher should have in view in training his pupils to self-help and self-reliance in mastering the mother-tongue. In the upper classes of our schools there

should be little need for the use of either. To invest every reading-lesson with interest should be one of the teacher's primary aims. This cannot be done unless the reading-lessons, at each stage, are well within the pupil's powers. It excludes all unnecessary re-reading of lessons that are not of special value for their matter or style. It means, above all, that great prominence shall be given to consideration of the incidents and thoughts of the lessons, and that these topics shall regularly form the subject of free conversation and discussion between pupils and teachers.

It is necessary to repeat, what I have often urged before, that a wider course of reading should be overtaken from the Infant Reader stage to the end of the Standard III stage. At least three distinct books might well be read yearly in all these classes. For all primer classes I should like to see the Royal Crown Primers and Infant Readers brought into use.

The practice of silent reading* by pupils of the higher classes has much to recommend it, and I should like to see it widely tried. For this, large classes are divided into sections, which are taken in turn for oral work, while the other sections (or section) are engaged in the silent study of suitable reading-matter, the value of their study being evidenced by their ability to answer questions on the matter and language, and to give oral outlines of the substance of the passages read. To profit by this exercise, pupils must be able to use it intelligently—*i.e.*, they must be able to follow the sense, to use a dictionary in learning the meaning and (it may be) the pronunciation of new words, and to express with some freedom, both orally and in writing, the substance of what has been read; in short, they need a sufficient training in the art of original study—the most valuable discipline the school can give. A school library is necessary for furnishing a variety of books suitable for silent reading. Many cheap short supplementary Readers are now issued by educational publishers for the various classes of elementary schools, and it would be well if these could be made available for use in this connection. Messrs. Thomas Nelson and Sons and Messrs. Blackie and Son, among others, now offer a long list of good books for school libraries at the very low prices of 6d. and 1s. a volume, and teachers would do well to consult their recent catalogues. The "School Journal" which the Department has arranged to publish will no doubt also prove of service for this purpose.

Recitation, though in general well known, is often wanting in tasteful delivery, and in the upper classes the thoughts of the passages learned might be better appreciated. Mr. Garrard considers recitation "most unsatisfactory" in the country schools he has visited, and Mr. Crowe says much the same thing. From Standard IV upwards, a careful study on literary lines should be made of every poem that is to be committed to memory, and something might be learned about the author, and the circumstances that give the poem its charm and permanent interest. This is, I am sorry to say, a stock recommendation from Inspectors that will bear further repetition. Unless the beauty and interest of a poem are brought home to the pupils' minds, learning it by heart must be a profitless and ungrateful task.

Spelling continues to be well taught, and the written exercises of the older pupils show but few errors, mostly due to haste and preoccupation with the matter of the exercise. Such errors are too often in the spelling of quite common words. "A definite and progressive scheme of word-building has been adopted only in a few schools. This arises from the want of a really well-graded and helpful textbook. Some teachers, at a very great expenditure of labour, have drawn up tentative schemes for themselves" (Mr. Purdie). Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs are issuing a helpful series of books on word-building.

The writing done as a test for the Inspectors is as a rule good, and much of it is excellent. The public outcry about the teaching of writing in the public schools, that recurs from time to time, seems to me little justified. If some of our business friends would visit a number of our public schools, and look through the exercises written for head teachers at their periodical examinations, I venture to think they would find a great deal of creditable penmanship. Rapid formed handwriting can hardly be expected of school-children; older pupils, however, should be encouraged to write more quickly even though they do not attain or keep up so high a standard of penmanship. Much of the stiffness and slowness of writing is due to faults of position and pen-holding that have been dwelt on in many recent reports.

A great deal of time is still devoted to the teaching of arithmetic, more in most schools by one hour a week than I consider desirable or necessary. To give up one-fifth of the whole school time to this one subject seems indefensible. In some schools where much time must be spent at desk-work, five hours is a less objectionable allowance. The saving from this subject of an hour a week for English studies (reading and composition) would be a great gain. In most schools the teaching of the subject is quite satisfactory, and in many it is good. The weakest work is found in the Standards II and V classes. The scope of the work prescribed for the former class is generally considered to be too extensive, and in any revision of the syllabus part of it should be transferred to the next class. On the whole the analysis of numbers up to twenty—the course covered in the primer classes—is satisfactorily done, though ready answering is now less general among all the pupils of single classes than when tables were more thoroughly learned. I am still a firm believer in learning tables thoroughly, because the difficulty in getting to know results in the four simple rules (as far as the ordinary multiplication table) is a difficulty not of intelligence or understanding, but of memory. A child may verify ten times over that nine and seven when added make up sixteen, and yet have no mastery of what he has thus got to understand. It seems childish to insist that he does not understand the result he has worked out ten times, because he does not remember it; and it is certainly wasteful of time to keep him verifying the result again and again, till it is fixed in his memory. Still, the regular and free use of counters of various kinds in working out and gaining familiarity with the results of the analysis of numbers is of the greatest value, while the manipulation of the counters and the recording of the results afford a welcome outlet

* See the English Board of Education's suggestions for the consideration of teachers, &c. (1905. Price 8d.)

for the activity of childhood. By the use of counters bright children soon master every aspect of the analysis; for the duller ones table drill, even in addition, is often indispensable. Mr. Garrard enters a protest against the excessive and too long-continued use of the pseudo-concrete form of questioning in the simple rules—so many cows, nuts, apples, &c., being mentioned when no concrete objects of any kind are before the scholars. Exercises dealing with easy abstract numbers should not be too long deferred. Teachers need to make it a rule in their upper classes not to give more than half-marks for sums unless all needful explanations of the working are clearly set out.

There is considerable diversity of opinion among the Inspectors as to the success of the teaching of composition. Mr. Purdie regards it as "on the whole good," and remarks that insisting on full or (to use his own term) "voluminous" exercises, has greatly aided improvement, as I also am sure it has. Mr. Crowe considers that "the subject is steadily improving," though in Standards IV and V there is a noticeable tendency to brevity. Mr. Stewart says, "This important subject is not generally well taught. Very few teachers draw up a satisfactory scheme graduated from class to class." Mr. Garrard has written at some length on this topic as follows: "Composition is carefully, but in some ways unsatisfactorily, treated. I find that it varies from 'fair' to 'good' up to Standard III, but beyond that the progress is by no means what it should be; that is to say, children in the upper standards will write a correct composition, but that is all one can say of it; there is no pretence at style." In the Classes P to Standard III teachers are making good use of oral composition, though more time could with beneficial results be devoted to the P classes in this subject. The natural result of this oral work is, as indicated above, 'accurate' composition, but our teachers should endeavour to produce something more than mere accuracy. The chief means of obtaining good composition—that is, composition involving logically connected sentences, sequence of thought, and conciseness of expression—is by encouraging children to read, and this can best be done by adopting a wider course of reading, especially in the upper standards of our schools. In this connection teachers will welcome the issue by the Department of a 'School Journal.' But the teacher can on his own part do something. Let there be more oral composition in Classes P, Standard I, and Standard II; written composition from Primer 3 upwards; no slate-work above Standard II; co-ordination of grammatical and written composition in Standard III to Standard VI; careful and accurate marking of exercises, noting particularly any praiseworthy attempts; silent reading in Standard IV to Standard VI; the proper treatment of recitation; the establishment of school libraries; more difficult subjects for composition in Standard V and Standard VI; and finally a systematic course of subjects for composition in the standard classes. The grammatical part of composition is in most of the smaller and in some of the larger schools poorly done. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the teachers have not sufficient time to devote to the subject. It is doubtful, indeed, if this part of composition is of such importance as to warrant the setting of such difficult questions as appear on the Standard V and Standard VI test-cards." On the last topic mentioned above, Mr. Grierson remarks, "On the whole, the correction of grammatical errors (in answering the Department's questions on cards) is well done. Happily, 90 per cent. of our children are incapable of such barbarities of language as seem to come under the notice of the Department's English expert. Most likely the examples have been culled from English text-books. I should like to mention that during the past year several boys, fresh from their native Yorkshire heath and Yorkshire Board schools, have passed through my hands. Their dialect was as atrociously uncouth as I remember it thirty-five years ago; their general school-work fell far short of that of boys of their own age and standard in New Zealand schools. Success at examinations has been seriously discounted by the fact that the test-cards issued by the Department make use of grammatical terms banned by the syllabus; and further, by injudicious selection of extracts (chiefly in Standard IV and Standard V) for analysis and synthesis. A large number of the extracts contain language and ideas quite beyond children's comprehension." Mr. Purdie says: "The English test set by the Department in lieu of the formal grammar previously given is very poorly done. The verbiage enclosing the question too often obscures the requirement. The abolition of the use of set terms in language-lessons has been, in my opinion, the reverse of successful." These criticisms of the questions set in the Department's English cards for the Standard IV and Standard V classes are not beside the mark. I would add that, while faulty sentences are often duly corrected, a satisfactory or indeed any reason for the correction is rarely given. This points to a want of grounding in the principles of syntax—in general so simple in the mother-tongue—and in the placing and correct use of words.

While it must be allowed that there is real weakness in the teaching of composition in the Standards IV and V classes, the fact that much creditable and not a little very good work is met with in Standard VI shows that the weakness may be easily exaggerated. Much of this weakness is traceable to the use of unsuitable, and in the higher classes of too elementary, subjects, and to the recurrence of similar or cognate subjects in the work of successive classes. The lesson-periods are also frequently too short for dealing adequately with the subjects set, while the practice of doing much of the work on slates prevents thorough and careful correction. I think that all written exercises in composition from Standard III upwards should be done on paper, preferably in special exercise-books.

Considerable facility in finding matter is a point teachers should encourage in every possible way. In the higher classes facility is an object of equal importance with accuracy. Excessive attention to neatness, waste of time in the distribution of pens, exercise-books, &c., an insufficient length of time for the lesson—these and similar causes may not merely reduce the amount of composition done by a class within such narrow limits as to be almost valueless, but may even encourage the natural slowness of thought and expression which it is one of the chief aims of the lessons in English to eradicate.*

As few school-children have gained the mental maturity required for reflection, I think that exercises in which familiar objects and animals are compared, likenesses and differences and their effects

* See the English Board of Education's suggestions for the consideration of teachers, &c.

being here easily seen, might be more widely used with no small benefit. The horse and the cow, a lamp and a candle, a street and a country road, a school and a church, a coach and a railway-car, are easy examples of this kind. Stories suggested by well-chosen pictures and the so-called autobiographies of animals and other objects are also serviceable, and have the merits of affording scope for the exercise and the cultivation of the imagination, which is apt to fare badly in this age of utilitarian bias in all departments of education.

Though a good deal of attention is now given to oral composition the training is, I consider, rather disappointing, and methods of treatment are not very promising. The reluctance of pupils to stand up and speak with something like freedom and confidence on topics well within their knowledge has not yet been generally overcome. It is often attributed to shyness, but the shyness does not greatly obtrude itself in other ways, and but for this manifestation of it would hardly be suspected. The difficulty is partly the natural outcome of a still rather prevalent error in our teaching-methods—the error of telling and pouring in, which we should teach by drawing out, by fostering freer self-expression, and by training pupils to more resolute effort to clothe their thoughts and ideas in such words as they can find. Oral statement of pupils' knowledge and ideas is so intimately bound up with every part of school-work, and so constantly in use in the daily treatment of lessons of every kind, that readiness in using it should be a characteristic of every well-managed class and school. Teachers will do well to indulge in some honest heart-searching where their pupils fail seriously in this accomplishment.

"Composition, either oral or written, should form part of every lesson given in a school; it should be the common bond which unifies the whole curriculum, and its effect in increasing clearness of thought and expression will be evident in every part of the school-work."* In connection with oral composition useful help can be got from many recent small school manuals issued in great variety by British publishing firms.†

With reference to drawing, Mr. Stewart writes: "This subject is poorly taught in many schools. The chief faults are (1) the pencil is held too near the point and is gripped too firmly; (2) the drawings are too small; (3) they are too laboured, and the use of the eraser is abused; teachers should endeavour to do away with the slavery of slow drawing; (4) too much attention is paid to mere finish, whilst form and proportion are neglected. Better results would be obtained if less attention were directed to the lines, and more to the spaces enclosed by them. The drawing-instructors are undoubtedly improving the teaching of this subject; I had no difficulty in telling at sight if a teacher had been attending the drawing-classes." A great deal of creditable drawing is, however, to be seen in a considerable number of schools, and especially in the larger ones. Original designs are not as common as could be wished; such drawings should always be marked "original design"; the dates of the drawings should always be marked on the finished page. Drawing from objects is too little practised; for blackboard illustrations some mastery of this is most desirable for teachers.‡ In general a special drawing-test was given to all pupils who sat for certificates of proficiency, and a large proportion of these gained 60 per cent. of the marks or more.

In several respects satisfactory progress has been made in teaching Course A, or observational geography. In this connection lessons out-of-doors and excursions to the neighbouring places of interest might well be more freely used; excursions are specially necessary in town schools. In country schools the course of instruction should be chosen with reference to the geographical features of the neighbourhood, taking that term in a large sense. It is not intended that every topic mentioned in the syllabus should be dealt with in every school, regardless of local conditions. Plans and measurements of the play-ground and the roads or streets immediately adjoining the school should be made out by the pupils of Standards III and IV: a plan prepared by the teacher is not enough. In every play-ground should be laid out a level plot, say 10 ft. by 8 ft., neatly bordered by wood, for making relief maps of countries that are being studied. A supply of sand or friable soil should be kept alongside. It is much to be regretted that the Department has not yet issued trustworthy relief maps of New Zealand for use in the public schools. The most grotesque travesties of the real features of our island home are now being constantly made by pupils and teachers. Many teachers are gathering collections of pictures that are most helpful in making lessons on features not occurring in their districts intelligible and interesting. Mr. Purdie remarks that the study of Course A geography "has not been observational, except in a few cases, even when the material existed in the vicinity." This neglect, as he says, ignores the whole purpose of the syllabus in this subject, and it cannot be too strongly reprobated by the Inspectors. In treating of the formation of "dew" and of "clouds," great confusion arises from the use of the term "steam" instead of "vapour of water." In popular language "steam" means both "vapour of water," which is invisible, and "fine water dust" in masses such as we see before the spout of the kettle, in a fog, or over a moving locomotive engine, all of which are visible. In this connection the word "steam" had better be altogether avoided. Many of our pupils are learning that "water dust" or cloud (when the mass is large enough to deserve that name) is lighter than air, and that for that reason it floats. It floats in air for the very same reason that fine mud floats in water; if the water becomes still the mud sinks to the bottom, and in like manner in still evenings the clouds sink down to lower and warmer levels of the air, and are changed back into vapour. The observation of this fact is well within the powers of all older school-children. Our pupils are also being constantly taught that "the sun draws the vapour up" into the air. The heat of the sun truly changes water on the earth's surface into vapour, but the diffusion and rising of the vapour are due to its being a gas; for like all gases it spreads about among other gases with which it is freely in contact. The rising is

* Board of Education's suggestions.

† I can specially recommend Charles and Dible's "Oral Composition Manuals" by Mark Hughes—three parts, 2d. each; Teacher's Book, 3d. This firm has issued a great number of books of value to the profession.

‡ Mr. Wallace, drawing-instructor, has, at my request, examined Symon's "Object Drawing for Schools" (Charles and Dible; 2s. 6d.), and recommends it to the notice of teachers interested in the subject.

also largely due to "vapour of water" being lighter, bulk for bulk, than air. These errors are largely owing to inaccurate statements in popular books on such subjects. The books prepared in New Zealand for the Course A geography are of indifferent quality, and many teachers would find it worth while to become acquainted with the lucid, accurate, and interesting pages of Mr. Shoosmith's "Observation Lessons in Geography for Juniors." The astronomical phenomena included in the Standard VI course are naturally hard for children to understand, and from their complication difficult to explain, and are seldom intelligently dealt with by them. I have long been of opinion that this part of the syllabus should be struck out.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the Course B geography scheme is not calculated to give any satisfactory knowledge of even the most important matters covered by the course. In many schools very little is learnt about New Zealand; and the capitals, great ports, and great industries and productions of the chief countries of the world are very poorly known. The whole scheme is unworkable. Permanent knowledge of the more important facts cannot be gained without much revision, and a much more thorough drilling in possibly dry facts than the syllabus thinks necessary. Books suitable for such a course can hardly be got; as reading-matter their pages are not unsatisfactory, but they deal with so much in a cursory way that the few matters worth learning properly are lost in the crowd. Teachers would do well to mark in a copy of the Reader used such places and topics as they have endeavoured to plant firmly in their pupils' minds, and to take pains to revise these from time to time. Lasting knowledge cannot be gained without revision, and it is a misfortune that this is not emphasized in the syllabus.

History is in much the same case as Geography Course B. "Judged from the standpoint of what the children remember, the teaching of history by means of a reading-book is not proving satisfactory. This, however, is comparatively unimportant if we can arouse the interest of our pupils in the story of their country. What we want is fact touched by patriotism" (Mr. Stewart). Civic instruction is not now receiving the attention which it deserves, and which it received in many schools a year or two ago. The "Citizen Reader" is rarely seen in a pupil's hands. In all schools the Inspectors will expect to be shown the teacher's notes of lessons on this subject and also on health.

Nature study and science are seldom taken up in the smaller one-teacher schools, though I consider it desirable that some work in nature study should be undertaken in all country schools. Its scope need not be extensive, and it should aim at giving precision and something of system to the common knowledge of nature and her ways that all rural children acquire. In the larger schools a good deal of fairly promising work in nature study is being carried on. "This subject," writes Mr. Stewart, "is in its infancy. The great want is a well-graduated course, and one that does not show too much repetition. In many cases the scheme presented has been almost identical for several classes; while the oral examination did not in successive classes show any great advance. If the children have done practical work out-of-doors in a satisfactory manner, and if their note-books contain original drawings from natural objects, we are justified, I believe, in concluding that good must result. The scheme set out in 'Watts and Freeman' affords a good basis of work for the senior classes, but most teachers need more definite guidance for the work of the younger children. There are two little books I feel justified in bringing under your notice; they would, I think, prove very valuable to country teachers—viz., 'Nature Study and the Teacher' by D. C. Williams, and 'Observation Lessons in Plant Life,' by F. H. Shoosmith. The preface to the latter is admirable, and might with advantage be read by most teachers. School gardens are becoming more numerous; both teachers and children are taking an increasing interest in them." It is most desirable that a serious effort should be made to provide school gardens in connection with all schools, and I would urge head teachers and School Committees to take this provision in hand without delay. In connection with nature study and agricultural knowledge the pupils should always keep a special note-book, and drawings by the pupils should be freely entered in its pages. Besides these drawings—often rough ones—that pupils make themselves, there might sometimes be better copies of the teacher's blackboard sketches. It is pleasing to find a growing number of our younger teachers able to use blackboard drawings and sketches effectively in connection with various lessons.

In the larger schools science lessons of a suitable kind have been satisfactorily given, and these are illustrated by suitable experiments, which are not infrequently carried out by the pupils. The courses vary a good deal from school to school, and it would be an advantage if there were more uniformity in this respect, seeing how pupils move about from school to school. New books dealing with science for elementary schools are constantly appearing—among them one that is rich in suggestion as regards methods of work, Heller's "Elementary Experimental Science."*

The matters to be taught under the heading of "Health" are detailed in the syllabus, section 57. As a rule, the lessons given dwell too much on formal physiology and the details of the function of alimentation. While a general idea of the build of the body and of the position of the chief internal organs should be given, stress should be mainly laid on the external conditions of health, and especially on the topics enumerated at the end of the syllabus outline beginning with "Air, Ventilation, and Respiration." It is in the directions of hygiene and first aid that this teaching can be best developed. The functions of the internal organs, other than the lungs and the circulating system, need hardly be touched on. There are small schools in which this subject has been too much ignored.

Various branches of handwork are now widely taught, even in the smaller schools, and the benefits resulting therefrom are generally acknowledged. Paper-folding is not always sufficiently associated with drawing, and the exercises are seldom used as means of getting pupils to talk of and describe the forms produced. Brush-drawing meets with great favour, and in the larger schools much excellent work has been done in this department. In some daubing is too noticeable.

* Blackie and Son. 2s. 6d.

Singing and sewing show no special improvement. Except in the primer classes of the larger schools, singing is still too much exotic in school life. The varied burden of work imposed on the modern teacher is no doubt largely responsible for this, but teachers, I feel sure, greatly undervalue the refreshment of spirit that a few minutes devoted to singing every morning and every afternoon can give.

Teachers of needlework would confer a favour on the Inspectors if they got each pupil to prepare a neat sample of all that is prescribed for each class, worked out on a piece of calico about the size of a small apron. For showing the various stitches clearly, coloured sewing-cotton should be considered indispensable.

Though physical instruction generally receives careful attention, it would be much more effective if the exercises used were practised for a short time once or twice a day. The special lesson for this is for teaching new exercises and movements, and cannot alone be considered sufficient to meet the requirements of physical exercise. Deep-breathing exercises are now used in a good many schools. I have not heard of any ill effects therefrom, but evidently such exercises need to be used with caution. Skipping and games involving running and s. art exercise are the natural means of securing deep breathing. All such active games are to be encouraged.

Wherever the number of boys of suitable age is sufficient, male teachers, and occasionally female teachers also, give satisfactory instruction in military drill; and when a cadet corps can be kept up it is taken up with great spirit. At all the larger schools a very good training is given in this direction.

In general, good order and discipline prevail in the Board's schools, and in quite a large number they are excellent. Every year sees some improvement in the attention and working spirit of the scholars, though there are still schools where the discipline is unsatisfactory, as there will be until we have reached Utopia. For this very-satisfactory condition the teachers deserve very great credit.

Throughout the year there has been a pronounced scarcity of qualified teachers, and quite a large number of inexperienced and uncertificated persons have had to be taken into the service. This is partly due to the opening of the Auckland Training College, which has withdrawn from service for a time a considerable body of ex-pupil-teachers; but it is in large measure due to the profession's being relatively unattractive. Where, as in this district, the number of small schools is very great, the great mass of the teachers must be inadequately paid so long as the average attendance forms to any large extent the basis of payment. The claim, now vigorously put forward by teachers, that payment should be determined mainly by teaching-efficiency, and not by the average attendance at the schools at which teachers happen to be placed, is well founded, and will ere long be recognised. Great modification of the existing system of classifying teachers will have to be made before such a change becomes practicable, but this should not be allowed to block so needful and just a reform.

During the present year (1907) the system of examination in use for the past few years will be continued. I have little sympathy with the present-day outcry against examination by Inspectors as it is now carried out in all our larger schools. Not a few of our most thoughtful head teachers entirely disapprove of the discontinuance of such examination. It makes in a high degree for thoroughness and intelligence in teaching, and these are ends of the very first importance. The present position of the schools of this district, one in which the teachers and all connected with their administration may take a modest pride, is, I believe, mainly due to the effects of a judicious system of examination. Apart from this, it is impossible for Inspectors to form and express, as they are required to do, any independent opinion as to the discretion and soundness of a teacher's classification of his pupils without undertaking much careful examination of the work of the pupils. It seems to me preposterous to ask Inspectors to express an opinion on this fundamental aspect of school management, and at the same time discourage them from using the only means available for forming a trustworthy opinion about it.

I add, from the Inspectors' reports to me, an extract or two that have not conveniently found place elsewhere.

" Bearing in mind that the syllabus requirements are not to be interpreted too rigidly, and making reasonable allowance for the numerous disabilities of the Northern District in school matters, I think I may state confidently that a good year's work has been done. On leaving the district I would assure the teachers of my appreciation of their unvarying courtesy and loyalty, and their readiness at all times to give due weight and consideration to my instructions and suggestions " (Mr. Grierson).

" I trust I am not unduly optimistic, but I am convinced that the spirit of work among our pupils is perceptibly improving. In almost every school the attitude of the great bulk of the pupils towards their teacher is one of co-operation and towards their school-work one of earnest endeavour " (Mr. Purdie).

" The teachers of the district (the S.E.) as a rule are zealous and industrious. Many are enthusiastic. The quality of the work in some country schools has surprised me: it has been characterized by intelligence and thoroughness, and has reached a high standard of merit. I desire to express my indebtedness to the teachers for the way in which they have co-operated with me, and for the spirit in which my suggestions have been received " (Mr. Stewart).

The teachers throughout this large district are as a rule painstaking, zealous, and eager for improvement, and many show most praiseworthy devotion to their work. Many of our largest schools are well directed, and the assistant staffs are receiving a fine training under their able headmasters. Many of the younger teachers are doing very creditable work in the smaller schools, and are earning solid claims to promotion when the opportunity offers.

Yours, &c.,

D. PETRIE, M.A., Chief Inspector.

The Secretary, Education Board, Auckland.

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.

In writing, a high standard has been aimed at, and as a result the general clerical work has greatly benefited, a considerable number of the papers handed in by the pupils being of exceptional merit. In a few schools the writing suffers considerably from the careless scribbling permitted on slates and paper, from the attitudes assumed by the children while writing, and from the lack of regular pen drill. In all written exercises only the best effort of the pupil should be accepted—"quality, not quantity," should be the motto of every teacher.

The drawing varies considerably in quality. The drawings done by the children during the year are generally well done, but a considerable falling-off is shown in the examination test. This remark applies particularly to scale and geometrical drawing.

In the majority of our schools the tone prevailing and the general demeanour of the children are all that can be desired—the teachers fully recognising that a literary training is only one phase of education, and that true education consists in developing the moral as well as the mental and physical side of a child's nature.

Elementary handwork was taken in thirty-nine schools, and sewing under the Manual Regulations in thirteen. In addition to the above, manual work as defined by clauses 22 to 27 of the Regulations for Manual and Technical Instruction was recognised in thirty-seven cases, the subjects embracing woodwork, botany, dairying, advanced needlework, elementary agriculture, swimming and life-saving, elementary measurements, chemistry, and elementary physiology.

The privilege of allowing Catholic schools to be visited by the Board's Inspectors has been in force for the past three years, and I am pleased to report that during that time the teachers have shown a praiseworthy desire to profit from these visits, being ever ready to adopt suggestions offered by the Inspectors. The work of these schools has in consequence shown steady improvement. With the increased efficiency of these schools the attendance has increased, and new schools have been established, the pupils for the most part being drawn from the public schools in the neighbourhood.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman Education Board, Taranaki. W. A. BALLANTYNE, B.A., Inspector.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Education Office, Wanganui, 4th March, 1907.

We have the honour to present our report for the year ended 31st December, 1906.

One hundred and fifty-one schools were inspected, and annual visits were paid to 181; thirty were visited once and 151 twice. Now that the Main Trunk Railway is piercing the extremities of the northern backblocks, it will presently be possible for the Inspector to visit each school in the district twice each year.

The following is the annual summary for the whole district :—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Visit.	Average Age.
Standard VII	242	224	Yrs. mos. 14 11
" VI	875	848	13 8
" V	1,190	1,136	12 11
" IV	1,440	1,398	12 1
" III	1,556	1,508	11 0
" II	1,511	1,483	9 11
" I	1,572	1,511	9 0
Preparatory	4,259	3,867	6 11
Totals	12,645	11,975	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

As compared with last year the roll-number has increased in every class except Standard VII, in which are included the pupils of the district high schools. The total roll has increased by 315. The mean average age, eleven years three months, tallies exactly with the mean for the colony last year. The average age of the pupils in classes P, Standards I, II, and III, is slightly under the average age of the same classes for the colony last year, while in Standards IV and V it is slightly over. In Standard VI it is under and Standard VII well over, a feature in every respect creditable to the district.

At the Roman Catholic schools there were 811 pupils on the roll, 790 were present at the Inspector's annual visits, and fourteen certificates of proficiency and twenty-eight certificates of competency were awarded.

For the coveted prize of the primary school, the proficiency certificate, 875 pupils presented themselves. 349, or 40 per cent, were successful, while 263, or 30 per cent., obtained certificates of competency. The relatively small number gaining the certificate as compared with previous years is accounted for by the Department's raising the standard of qualification, candidates being now required, in order to secure the certificate, to obtain 60 per cent. of the aggregate marks, and at least 40 per cent. in English and arithmetic severally. The new regulation, while it may possibly be the means of postponing, with little advantage to themselves, the admission of some pupils to secondary classes, will certainly tend to increase the efficiency of secondary departments.

Touching the subjects of instruction we observe that reading, the most important of all, is uniformly satisfactory, sometimes indeed surprisingly good. The effect of the increased attention given for some years past to oral expression is now beginning to manifest itself in every department of school-work, and not least in reading, to which it has in large measure contributed the attributes of fluency and natural utterance. Not a little of the improvement in this subject is of course directly due to the new methods of instruction. Teachers have occasionally been taken to task by parents because the infants do not know their letters. This, however, is not now the test of progress, which is to be judged by the extent to which the children can express themselves orally and in writing, modelling, and drawing, using meanwhile words standing for things with which they are familiar. A knowledge of the letters, reached by a process essentially educative and interesting, will come in good time. At our annual visits we required the children of all classes to read books at sight, with results for the most part eminently satisfactory.

Spelling, as was to be expected, is somewhat less accurate than it was in the days when each subject was exclusively studied for its own sake. Some useful, if not really educative, work might be done in the direction of teaching the principles of the subject as apart from mere word-building; and more might be done in the direction of teaching incidentally the spelling of the words used in connection with nature study, agriculture, and physical geography, and indeed with every other subject in the school course. The accurate spelling of a term may not be a clue to its meaning, but with the comprehension of the meaning of a term there usually goes accurate spelling. Should teachers keep lists of such words we shall be glad to include a certain number of them in our tests at the annual visits, it being of course understood that the teaching is incidental and not systematic.

Composition is being taught on the whole on rational lines. No subject enters more largely into the warp and woof of school-work—a sufficient justification for the large amount of time devoted to it. Some dissatisfaction was expressed with the Department's tests in English for Standards V and VI, and it must be admitted that now and again there were put questions which in expression seemed to part company with strictly primary work. The conversion of phrases into clauses and *vice versa* may be a serviceable exercise if the language be understood; but, if not, the result may be extremely bizarre and yet the answer be correct. Not all the shortcomings of many of the pupils in English are to be set down to the nature of the Department's tests. In not a few schools we found that the subject had not been so earnestly grappled with as its importance warrants. Our pupils should be able not merely to express themselves readily and well, but also to understand the merits and demerits of various modes of expression, and it is the power to do this that the study of formal composition secures.

Handwriting, though sometimes exceedingly good, is like spelling, exposed to the risk of deterioration. Not that modern methods necessarily involve less rational treatment. On the contrary, it should be possible, in view of the large amount of handwork done in the lower classes, to treat the subject more effectively than ever. What is required in order to avert disaster in the upper classes is patient insistence at all times on careful work. In connection with this subject there are two matters that claim the serious attention of teachers, and these are the pupil's posture while writing and his method of holding the pen. Too often both are alike bad.

We must confess to no little disappointment with the results in arithmetic in Standards V and VI. The tests were admittedly fair, and yet the subject was a fruitful source of disaster to many a pupil seeking the proficiency certificate. It is perfectly clear that the teaching of the subject is not all that it should be in the lower classes, and that many teachers set themselves too low a standard throughout. Short methods are either neglected or eschewed, with the result that, for instance, a sum which could easily be worked in a line or so by the application of decimals, is made the object of a preliminary transformation into vulgar fractions. There is again in some schools an omission which is always fatal: arithmetic is not correlated with other subjects in such a way that its principles are made to live by being realised in practice.

Much really good work has been done in some of the branches of drawing. In some cases scale and geometrical drawing have not received the attention they deserve. In their schemes for the present year due provision will doubtless be made by teachers for the inclusion of these parts of the subject.

Nature study has some ardent votaries, the women teachers—to their credit be it said—taking the lead in this respect.

The teaching of elementary science in primary schools and departments is by no means on a satisfactory footing. In what may be described as city schools, where the teaching of agriculture is sometimes impossible, the teachers would do well to take up the subject of physical measurements which, while it lends itself to correlation with cardboard-work and woodwork, furnishes an admirable training in accuracy, so essential to a youth's success in actual employment.

The teaching of physical and mathematical geography on the lines indicated in the syllabus has been by some regarded as not merely difficult, but well nigh impossible. Such a view is, perhaps, inci-

dental to a transition stage in the history of method, but with further experience of the work there will come the desired change of view-point, when it will be found that not only is such teaching possible, but natural, easy, and interesting.

The view of primary education towards which we appear to be tending is that the school is all in all, individual subjects and individual pupils being, by comparison, of secondary importance. If the school is good there need be no undue solicitude on the part of educational authorities or the public as to the subjects or pupils. The standing of the school, again, depends on the character of the teacher, his qualifications, efforts, and influence. Within the school the pupil's activities—physical, æsthetic, intellectual, and moral—would have free play, the whole being by the teacher directed towards useful and worthy ends. The care of each subject and each pupil is cast upon the teacher, whose part it is, on the one hand, to see that the best methods are employed and the fullest advantage taken of each pupil's bent and disposition, and, on the other, to see that the corporate life of the school lends itself at once to the development of pure minds and robust bodies. Moreover, the teacher's mission should transcend the limits of the present. He should see in each child, from his first appearance at school, the coming pupil of the upper standards—the district high school, technical school, secondary school, or university; nay, more, he should see in him the coming citizen—the artisan, farmer, business or professional man. He should accordingly watch over his preparation, not for this or that standard, but for all that lies before him. On this view the subjects of instruction would not be regarded as ends in themselves, but chiefly as a means of developing alert and open minds. A child should not, for instance, be required to make an elaborate study of the words and expressions in his reader: his studies in other directions should enable him to bring to such work both knowledge and interpretive skill. If the teacher takes full advantage of the unifying principle of correlation he will find that the different subjects of instruction will, so to speak, find their own way home.

The work of examination is passing more and more into the hands of the teachers, who generally perform it with discretion. The Inspector is thus set free for work of a more important description, such as an investigation of the teacher's methods, an inquiry into the general content of the pupils' minds and their ability to deal intelligently with any new problems which present themselves. It may occasionally be desirable or even necessary for the Inspector to examine an entire class in a subject or series of subjects, but such procedure is becoming the exception rather than the rule. The chief object an Inspector has in view when visiting a school is to discover whether the children in it are taking the initial steps of the educative process in an approved way, to discover in short whether hand, and eye, and brain are so trained that the pupils will become efficient citizens, and feeling, intellect, and will so trained that they will become thoughtful and honourable men and women.

The Board promotes the cause of education not alone by establishing schools and seeing that all schools are properly staffed, equipped, and administered, but also by taking other less obvious though none the less effective measures. In June last a winter school was held for the benefit of uncertificated teachers and teachers of remote schools. In July observation schools were established at convenient centres, to which any teacher desirous of improvement in method or management might resort. In October a highly successful exhibition of school-work was held at Palmerston North. The travelling scholarships were not awarded, but it is the Board's intention to make the awards annually hereafter. Instruction-classes for pupil-teachers and teachers were held at Palmerston North, Marton, Wanganui, and Hawera, the teachers taking drawing and agriculture. Next July a number of certificated teachers will, in accordance with arrangements made by the Board, proceed for three weeks to the training college, with the view of studying recent developments in primary-school work. Another factor contributing greatly to the efficiency of the schools is the very liberal allowance of material and apparatus granted by the Board. Used by capable teachers the apparatus supplied is in itself sufficient to introduce the pupils to scientific methods of investigation. The Inspectors have endeavoured to contribute something to the general weal of education by meeting the teachers collectively and talking over matters appertaining to the theory or practice of teaching.

The pupil-teachers are trained partly at their own schools and partly at central classes. The central classes having been established for a year only, one can hardly express a definite opinion as to the merits of the arrangement. So far as the teaching of drawing and science is concerned there cannot be two opinions, for it is happily possible to secure highly trained instructors in these subjects at all centres.

It appears that only four of the candidates have attended a secondary school. This is a matter for extreme regret, for if there is any sphere where it is desirable to have the best that the secondary school can give, it is the schoolroom. Were free places awarded on a more liberal scale in the district it is reasonable to suppose that we should have a greater number of applicants with the desired training.

The results of the examination of the secondary classes at the district high schools, notwithstanding the extreme difficulty of the special assistants' work, show a great deal of ground has been covered for the most part in a very satisfactory manner. In a few months laboratories will be at the disposal of the secondary pupils at Feilding, Marton, and Eltham, so that at each of our five district high schools it will be possible to make the course of instruction not merely liberal, but in the best sense modern.

Compared with 1905 the average roll for 1906 has increased by seventeen; a much greater percentage of district high school Sixth Standard pupils joined the secondary classes; twenty more pupils came from the schools surrounding district high schools; a greater proportion of pupils remained for a second year's tuition in the secondary classes. All this affords elements of hope, but the fact remains that of the pupils joining the secondary classes at the beginning of the year over half dropped out either during the year or at its close.

Regarding the school handwork classes, Mr. Varney reports as follows: "That much progress has been made in this very important branch of education is evident from the fact that, whilst in 1905 recognised classes were conducted in eighty-nine schools, in 1906 no fewer than 120 schools earned capitulation under the Manual and Technical Regulations."

During the year an important change in the method of distributing material was decided upon. Instead of forwarding this material through local tradesmen, as was done previously, the Board decided to stock its own supplies at the office, whence teachers will in future receive what they require. Mr. P. H. Bell, of the office staff, has been appointed clerk of the manual and technical department, and he will take charge of the distribution of all material.

In October an exhibition of manual and technical work was held at Palmerston North. The work displayed, especially the plasticine-modelling, the brushwork, and the design, was distinctly in advance of the previous exhibition. The cardboard-modelling exhibit was rather disappointing both as regards quantity and quality, but now that teachers' central training classes are being organized under Mr. E. H. Clark, a decided improvement should be made. My sincere thanks are due to the local teachers who, with Messrs. Clark, Grant, and Bell, worked together splendidly and brought the exhibition to so successful an issue.

The increase in the number of woodwork and cookery classes has necessitated the employment of second instructors, Mr. Bannister, of Wellington, and Miss Fergus, of Dunedin, having been appointed. During 1906 the average attendance at the woodwork classes was 299, and that at the cookery classes 253, exclusive of the Palmerston North High School. Both Miss Mollison and Mr. Clark, who succeeded Mr. Ritchings Grant, have been most enthusiastic in the conduct of their classes, and some excellent work has resulted.

We desire to place on record our appreciation of the work done by Miss Mollison and Messrs. Varney, Grant, and Clark, whom we have found at all times willing to co-operate with us in furthering the cause of education; and to Miss Fergus, Mr. Hintz, and Mr. Bannister, who have just joined the Board's staff of instructors, we desire to extend a cordial welcome.

Effective measures are taken to secure the health of the pupils. In the first place, they receive a continuous course of instruction on the principles of health, including lessons on the structure of the body, its organs (with their functions), and elementary ideas on sanitation. On the side of physical training there are for the upper classes of the larger schools military drill and cadet work, and for all schools whatever physical exercises, the most popular form of which at present is the breathing exercise. Everything possible is being done to make the conditions of the children's school environment conducive to the highest development of their bodies. The best forms of lighting and ventilation are carefully studied, and single desks are being introduced as rapidly as the Board's funds will permit. The class-rooms are, generally speaking, bright and cheerful, and suitable games are played during intervals. We are delighted to notice that one of our teachers is making arrangements for a supply of Arnold's "Pictures for the Schoolroom," which are a marvel of cheapness and artistic worth. Were the money that is sometimes mis-spent on prizes spent on such pictures the children's imaginations would be enriched and the sum of their happiness indefinitely increased.

Thanks to Mr. Grant's fostering care, the number of school gardens is rapidly increasing. These, apart from their being a means of mental training of the highest order, are a source of health and pure delight to the children, who long for the time when the school clock will point to the gardening hour. In this branch of school-work an immense amount of good has been done by several of the horticultural societies. The interest which these societies create by offering prizes for the best-kept gardens and the best garden-produce cannot fail to impress children as well with the best methods of work as with the beauty and bounty of nature.

The general tenor of this report will readily be accepted as a testimony to the zeal and ability of the teachers, who invariably receive our suggestions in the spirit in which they are made. As to the children, between whom and the teachers there appears to exist the utmost good feeling, their intelligence, animation, and pleasing manners encourage us to predict that when the time comes they will take their places in the State as efficient, honourable, and courteous citizens.

We are, &c.,

G. D. BRAIK.

JAS. MILNE.

T. B. STRONG.

The Chairman, Education Board, Wanganui.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Education Office, Wellington, February, 1907.

We have the honour to present our report on the condition of the primary schools in the Wellington Education District during the year 1906.

The number of schools in operation was 155, one more than at the end of last year. New schools were opened at Northland, Waterfalls, and Waimanu, and the schools at Pencarrow and Momona were closed. Akitio was visited by an Inspector, but as the school was closed no examination was held. A teacher has now been appointed, and another visit will be paid during the coming year. Wairere was closed before the Inspector's visit, and has not been reopened. With the exception of Waimanu, which was opened at the end of the year and after the Inspector's visit to the district, all schools in operation received an annual visit, and a further visit of inspection was made to all but two small aided schools representing twelve children. In addition to these, the secondary classes of ten district high schools were examined and inspected, and nine Roman Catholic schools received an annual visit.

The following summary is taken from the annual return forwarded to the Education Department:—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	573	541	Yrs. mos. 14 7
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	1,386	1,343	13 8
" V	...	...	...	...	...	1,680	1,638	12 9
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	1,948	1,872	11 11
" III	...	...	...	...	...	2,017	1,946	10 11
" II	...	...	...	...	...	2,032	1,953	9 10
" I	...	...	...	...	...	1,957	1,859	8 8
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	5,216	4,589	6 11
Totals						16,809	15,741	11 2*

* Mean of average age.

These totals show an increase for the year of 304 on the roll-number, and of 231 present at the Inspector's annual visit. There is a very slight shrinkage in Standard IV, but with this exception the increase is spread over all the classes, the greatest advance being in the Preparatory classes, in which there was a slight falling-off last year.

In the nine Catholic schools visited, the roll-number was 1,296, and the number present at the annual visit was 1,186. This brings the total number of children inspected during the year to 18,105.

We are pleased to be able to report a steady improvement in the average attendance.

	Average Roll.	Average Attendance.	Percentage.
1903	15,496	12,801	82.6
1904	15,886	13,462	84.7
1905	16,235	14,071	86.6
1906	16,415	14,356	87.4

There has been an increase of nearly 5 per cent. since the appointment of a Truant Inspector, and, though the improvement is very satisfactory, we have reason to hope that a further increase will be recorded next year. There is still a large percentage of parents who are injuring the prospects of their children by want of interest in their educational welfare. The effect of the dairying industry on the attendance and work in the school has been referred to in previous reports, and if no remedy can be found in legislation, the rousing of public opinion should not fail to improve the condition of many of those children who have to do hard work in the morning and evening on the farm or dairy as well as attend school during the day. Cases of boys playing truant to go round with the drivers of tradesmen's carts are not so frequent as formerly in the larger towns. In many country schools, owing to bad roads, more especially in the winter, the average attendance is low; but there are signs of improvement as the districts become more settled, and as the roads are improved by metalling. This appears to us a proper occasion again to refer to the anomalous and unfair system of payment on average attendance. Reference to the Truant Inspector's report shows a variation of from 65 to 91 per cent. of attendance—that is, while some teachers are paid for nine-tenths of the children in the school, some, through no fault of their own, are paid for only about two-thirds of those they have to present to the Inspector at his annual visit.

Additional accommodation has been provided for the secondary classes at Masterton and Carterton; and in order to replace schools burnt down new buildings have been erected at Hukanui, Wellington South, and Alfredton. Northland has been made a separate school district, and provided with a school of its own. Two other cases—Muhunua and Dyer—call for particular notice, as provision should be made at once for the education of the children in these two settlements. They furnish as good opportunities as can be found anywhere for putting into practice the plan of conveying children to a central school, for the roads are good, the distances reasonably short, and the numbers such as would gain a liberal subsidy.

In other countries, notably in the United States and Canada, the experiment seems to have been successful, and admitting that it does not follow that it would therefore be successful in New Zealand, still it should receive a fair trial. We are not aware that the experiment has been tried with success in the colony, but we believe that this is owing to the fact that the regulations issued by the Department in the first instance did not give the Boards an allowance sufficiently liberal, and although this allowance was increased it still left the Boards to take the risk of any deficit. The Department's latest offer, however, appears to us so liberal as to practically free the Board from any risk of financial loss.

We feel that the time has now come when all our larger schools should be provided with caretakers' residences. In recent years three of our largest city schools have been destroyed by fire. On each occasion the fire might have been prevented had someone been living on the premises. The new buildings at South Wellington and Thorndon must each be worth something like £10,000, and it cannot but be evident that greater care should be taken of such valuable property. This would probably mean some initial expenditure, but we think any money spent in the erection of such buildings could

be paid off gradually from the allowance made for cleaning; and even if that were not possible any additional expenditure would be justified, for, in addition to providing for the better supervision of the buildings, the Committees would be in a position to make better provision for cleaning than they are able to do in many cases at the present time.

In the matter of painting, repairs, and improved latrine accommodation, gradual improvement is being made, but as the details are furnished in another report we do not propose dwelling upon them here. Through no fault of the Committees or the teachers the offices in many schools are not kept in a sanitary condition. This is a very difficult matter to deal with, but very important for the health of the children, and we are pleased to see that the Board has been collecting information with a view to considering the whole question. We hope the result will be a considerable improvement in the sanitary arrangements of our country schools.

In the return regarding the general efficiency of the 152 schools visited, 117 are reported as satisfactory to good. Of the remainder, nineteen are classified as fair, and sixteen as inferior. Of these thirty-five it is only fair to point out that the great majority are in the lowest grades, where the salaries offer so little inducement to trained teachers that we have the greatest difficulty in finding even uncertificated teachers for the positions. The frequent changes which take place in the smaller country schools also militate very much against general efficiency.

In reviewing the condition of the more important subjects of the syllabus, we find that in reading improvement has taken place in a great deal of the faulty pronunciation formerly so prevalent. Lack of expression and slovenly enunciation and articulation are however still too commonly brought under our notice. While neglect in the preparatory classes of phonics and of systematic exercises in syllabification are no doubt contributing causes, the above faults are mainly the result of the abuse of simultaneous reading, a practice really forced upon teachers by the large and unwieldy classes which they are called upon to manage. The detection of the evils and their causes is an easy enough matter, but, in default of a reasonable system of staffing, the suggestion of a remedy is not so easy. How is a teacher, without an undue amount of simultaneous reading, to get a class of sixty or seventy children through two or three reading-books in the year? The Lancastrian system claims to have solved the problem by splitting up the class into sections of, say, ten pupils, each section being placed under a monitor, and the teacher exercising general control and supervision. But such a system bristles with practical difficulties and is of doubtful efficacy. A better plan would be to place the more satisfactory readers of a class in a division by themselves for practice in silent reading. This arrangement would enable the teacher to give more of the individual attention necessary for the weaker readers, who, as they improved from time to time, would be promoted to the upper division. The ordinary school editions of English authors would provide excellent matter for the silent readers, who, while receiving occasional individual attention from the teacher, would have their work tested mainly by questions on the subject-matter of the books they have been reading. The plan is by no means an ideal one, but in addition to the advantage of enabling the teacher to concentrate his efforts it would relieve the brighter pupils of the class from the boredom of listening to reiterated expositions of reading-lessons which they almost know by heart, and in which they consequently take little interest. Moreover, with a judicious selection of authors, the practice of silent reading might be made a powerful means of inculcating in the pupils some love and appreciation of good literature for its own sake. As a matter of fact we find that reading reaches the higher level only in those schools where the pupils are supplied generously with extra reading-matter, and are encouraged to make good use of the school library.

Spelling ranges from "satisfactory" to "good." Correct spelling depends on intelligent and thoughtful reading with careful enunciation; and, as we have said before, by strict attention to these important points spelling might practically disappear from the syllabus as a separate subject.

The composition tests usually consist of letters, short essays on familiar subjects, reproduction of stories or other matter, exercises in sentence-structure, and the correction of common errors in written and spoken language. Bearing in mind the limited vocabulary and the scanty stock of ideas with which the average child is provided, we are fairly satisfied with the results obtained, at least so far as the smaller schools of the district are concerned. In our large schools, more especially in the district high schools, we think the subject might well be treated on broader lines. In addition to aiming at grammatical correctness and accuracy of expression, there should be some attempt at cultivation of style. In composition-lessons children are too often asked to express their attenuated ideas in their own scanty vocabulary; not sufficient value is attached to the study and appreciation of the language of the masters of English prose. The average school letters submitted to us are apt to be too exclusively concerned with matters and details of a domestic nature. For the future in the upper standards we shall expect them to be of a more general character; and in deference to the requirements of the business portion of the community they should include letters of advice to business firms on simple transactions, applications for advertised positions, explanations of the writer's absence from his duties, and similar topics. In our last report we pointed out that though formal grammar as such had disappeared from the syllabus, teachers were not to suppose that nothing had taken its place. It is now more than ever necessary that the scheme of work-book should give full details with regard to the method of treating such an all-important subject as composition. Though the teaching of the technical complexities of grammar as a necessary part of composition is still discouraged by the regulations, the proposed rearrangement of the subject-matter of the syllabus will indicate more clearly the requirements in grammar as a branch of composition.

In our last report we drew attention to the many and diverse systems of handwriting taught in this district, and the consequent disadvantages under which both teachers and pupils laboured when the latter moved from school to school. As a means of remedying this the Board has decided that one style of copy-book (Vere Foster's Medium Series) should be used in all schools in the district, and we are looking forward to beneficial results from a course which has already been adopted with success.

in other districts of the colony. The handwriting and composition of our schools have lately been subjected to unfavourable criticism from both responsible and irresponsible sources. Now it is generally admitted that the excessive number of children which teachers are individually responsible for and the extent of ground to be covered in the syllabus are both causes which prevent handwriting as a subject receiving at the present day that attention and consideration that it was given, say, a generation ago. We have, however, made special efforts to meet the requirements of the business part of the community in this respect; and while we are far from maintaining that writing is in every instance as efficiently taught as it might be, still, taking the district as a whole, the subject is fairly satisfactory, and in any case there has been considerable improvement during the last few years. Critics must remember that the average age of pupils who pass Standard VI is thirteen years eight months, and it is folly to suppose that at such an age the average boy is educationally equipped for a merchant's office, and it is quite conceivable that many of them may even prove unequal to the task of writing a business letter "in terse and forcible English." During his school course his instruction in composition has been on the lines already indicated. He writes a strictly formal hand, which, under the supervision of his teacher, is as a rule neat and legible, but it is not a formed hand, still less is it a commercial running hand, and moreover it will take a certain amount of time and patience to make it one. It must not be forgotten that primary education has other duties and aims besides that of preparing the youth of the colony for a strictly commercial vocation. Had we no other aim beyond the writing of good business letters and expertness in arithmetic our task would be easy! But there are other requirements and activities to consider: handwork, drawing and manual instruction to train the head and eyes of the pupil, and so prepare him for industrial pursuits; nature study and instruction in elementary agriculture, to fit him for country life; these and other subjects all demand their share of the teacher's and the pupil's time and energy. The truth is our boys are taken away from school when too young; the primary school should be a stage, not the terminus, in a lad's education; a two-years' course at a technical or continuation school should follow, where he could specialise in those subjects required in the particular sphere of life—commercial or otherwise—which he intends to enter. During the year the Chamber of Commerce, for the purpose of encouraging the study of commercial subjects, very generously devoted some £25 as prizes for the city schools. The subjects of competition were composition, writing, and commercial arithmetic. The prizes will be awarded, we understand, at the next meeting of the Chamber, when members will have an opportunity of inspecting the papers of the various competitors. We cannot but feel that if a few of the members of a representative body, such as the Chamber of Commerce, were to visit some of our schools and express their opinion after actual observation of the work being done there, it would at least be a fairer and more reasonable way of passing judgment on our primary schools than sweeping generalisations based on the unsatisfactory letters of a limited number of applicants for some advertised position.

In arithmetic good work is done in Standards I to IV, and fair work in Standards V and VI. This estimate, so far as the standards above Standard II are concerned, is based on the results of the tests supplied by the Department. We have in previous reports stated our opinion that the tests in Standards V and VI are too exacting. In any case five sums is a narrow field in which to examine a whole year's work. The minimum of marks in arithmetic for Standard VI certificates of proficiency is 40 per cent. We should much prefer to see the tests made easier, the number of examples in a card doubled, and the minimum requirements raised. In mental arithmetic a considerable improvement is desirable, and we hope that the prizes offered by the Chamber of Commerce to our city schools will stimulate the teachers to pay more attention to this branch of the work.

The requirements in political geography (Course B of the syllabus) have been met by the use of the New Southern Cross Geographical Readers, and Nelson's "The World and Its People." We have as a rule found the work intelligently treated, but in the case of Course A (physical and mathematical geography) our experience has not been so satisfactory. According to the regulations the treatment of this portion of the subject should be based on the actual observation of natural phenomena by the child, and the study of the physical features in his particular neighbourhood. The scope provided for the resourceful teacher is ample, but as yet the supply of teachers who are able to find "sermons in stones and books in the running brooks" is very limited. Here again the large classes make anything like regular field excursions and observations a difficult matter. A school paper will shortly be issued by the Department, which we have every reason to believe will remove many of the thorns which at present beset the teacher's path in this subject.

The instruction in history and civics is good in the majority of cases. An intelligent knowledge is shown by the elder children of the system of electing members for Parliament and local bodies, the functions of these bodies, and the work and duties of various Government departments and officials. We should like to see more attention given to those incidents in the history of our race which are calculated to foster in the younger generation a proper spirit of patriotism and national pride. It is rather the fashion in these superior times to sneer and laugh at old-fashioned school-histories in which doughty deeds and personal achievements figured so prominently, but so far as children are concerned we are not at all certain that they did not approach the subject in a truer philosophical spirit than do many of the cold-blooded critical analyses that have taken their place. They at least fed the spirit of hero-worship that every healthily minded boy possesses, and it is to this spirit that some of the noblest qualities in human nature owe their inspiration.

In many of the senior classes of our schools programmes of elementary chemistry, physics, and physical measurements are carried out in the true scientific spirit. A great advance has been made in the nature-study work during the last year, more especially in the classes up to Standard IV, where we find children now studying actual objects for themselves instead of listening to the "information" lessons of a teacher. The zeal and enthusiasm of the teachers are worthy of all praise, but we sometimes find teachers who are apt to confuse the aim of this work, which is quite definite, with the

scope, which is infinitely wide. Here "the method counts for everything, the information imparted very little." Is this natural order not reversed when we find included in our programmes lessons on the moa, the kiwi, the kauri pine? That our children should have some knowledge of such remarkable features of our fauna and flora is right, but such knowledge can form no part of lessons primarily intended to link the formal work of the school with the child's ordinary out-of-door life. For this reason we expect much from our school garden, where should be found a wealth of material illustration for nearly every lesson on the time-table. A circular on nature study and elementary agricultural knowledge was issued by the Board at the beginning of the year. In the latter subject, which has been placed under the supervision of Mr. W. C. Davies, considerable progress has been made, and as the work is of such importance we have asked him to make a report, which we append.

During the year 120 schools earned capitation under the Manual and Technical Regulations. The subjects which find most favour with our teachers are brush-drawing and modelling in plasticine or flexine; but nearly all the subjects for which grants are given under clauses 19, 20, and 21 of the regulations are represented and in addition grants have been earned for elementary agriculture, elementary physics, elementary chemistry, elementary physical measurements, elementary botany, swimming and life-saving, physiology, and "first aid," dressmaking, and cookery. When manual work was first introduced into the syllabus the subjects taken were often treated as isolated and complete in themselves, but a better knowledge of correlation has gradually spread, and we now seldom find schools where the programmes in drawing and handwork are not co-ordinated with other subjects of the syllabus.

The cookery classes have been continued as before under Mrs. Neeley in the city and Miss Talbot in the country. The latter succeeded Miss Millington, who resigned to take up similar duties elsewhere, after several years of successful and arduous work in the districts of Wairarapa North and South. The centre at the Terrace has been removed to the Normal School, and when the South Wellington building is finished the Newtown centre will be removed there. An excellent cookery room has been added to the Masterton School, and provision has been made for one at Carterton. One of the rooms of the old Greytown School should also be fitted up for this purpose, and when this is done children from other schools in the Wairarapa might very easily be taken to one of these three centres for lessons. A centre will shortly be established at Levin, and provision should also be made to give the girls at Petone and the Hutt an opportunity of obtaining lessons in cookery.

The Department made grants for the establishment of woodwork centres at Thorndon and South Wellington. An instructor has been appointed, who will shortly be at work. Similar centres should be established in the Wairarapa.

In practically all our larger schools military drill is marked "very good." Physical exercises with clubs, wands, and dumb-bells, and deep-breathing exercises, are also regularly taken throughout our district, and we are pleased to note that more attention is now devoted to the last and what we consider the more important branch of physical culture. We would strongly recommend the practice of taking a few minutes every day for free-arm and breathing exercises in lieu of the old method of a weekly hour or half-hour lesson. Teachers should also recognise the fact that physical training should embrace such matters as general carriage, posture at work, personal cleanliness, ventilation, and the general tidiness of schoolroom, offices, and playground, all of which have a most vital bearing on a child's life. We are quite in accord with the proposal for the medical examination of children, and we hope the Department will be able to publish such general directions as may best guide the teacher in assisting the expert in this part of his work. Swimming, which counts as physical instruction, has been taught in several schools, some of which have earned capitation, but others have not claimed it. The thanks of the Board are due to Mr. Shields, of Wellington, who has devoted his Wednesday afternoons to the instruction of boys. We regret that the City Council has not been able to adopt his admirable suggestions, but we hope headmasters will take every advantage of the valuable instruction which he so readily places at their disposal. The interest taken by many headmasters and assistants in such outdoor games as cricket, football, hockey, and tennis is very commendable. They have readily given many hours of their time and devoted their Saturdays to work of this nature, and have thus shown that their interest in the welfare of the children under their charge is not confined to the schoolroom.

Saturday classes for teachers in drawing and handwork were held at the Training College, and in elementary agriculture at Masterton. Mr. Gray, Principal of the Training College, kindly gave a course of lectures in nature study, which were much appreciated by those teachers who attended.

Of the eight-nine pupil-teachers in the service of the Board, all, with the exception of four, have passed the examinations required, and as one of these four failed at the examination last year her engagement is terminated by the regulations. Two others who received unsatisfactory reports during the year sent in their resignations. The pupil-teacher regulations recently adopted by the Board have received the sanction of the Minister of Education.

The Board's Junior Scholarships were awarded on the results of the examination for Junior National Scholarships. Our small country schools are not as well represented in this competition as they ought to be. It is difficult for scholars from some of these schools to reach an examination centre which is thirty or forty miles distant. The establishment of a few more centres would give more encouragement to our country teachers to prepare children for these examinations, success in which may mean a great deal to a child above average ability living away in the backblocks. This year Senior Scholarships were awarded for the first time, but the competition was not keen. Only seventeen candidates entered, and all succeeded in passing the examination. Scholarships were awarded to all who were under the age of sixteen, and those over that age qualified for a senior free place. The new Scholarship Regulations which have now received the sanction of the Minister are published in an appendix.

In our reports for 1904 and 1905 we wrote at some length on the special problem presented by the district high schools—namely, the determination of the curriculum—and we do not propose to repeat those remarks here. The work in these schools is not yet of such a practical nature as we should like to

see it, but those are signs of improvement, more especially in those schools situated in the country, where the work in elementary agriculture is being taken up with enthusiasm. At Masterton and Greytown provision has been made for individual work in science, and at Carterton and Levin arrangements have been made to fit up rooms for this purpose.

The two district high schools in the city have been following a grammar-school course, and designedly so, for they were established merely as temporary expedients for a high school, which we are glad to see the Government has now decided to erect.

Advantage was taken by the Board of Mr. Robert Lee's visit to England to commission him to procure a supply of art photographs and engravings for distribution among the schools of the district. Excellent selections were made by Mr. Lee. They have been suitably mounted and framed by the local Committees, and throughout the district the varnished daubs which have so long done duty for pictures in our schools have been replaced by representations of ancient statuary, scenes and incidents of historical interest, masterpieces of Old-World architecture, and objects in natural history, which, both as subjects of interest and works of art, are an education in themselves.

Last year we drew attention to the fact that some teachers did not pay sufficient attention to Regulation 5, which states: "The head teacher shall draw up for each term or quarter schemes of work for all classes of his school, &c." To assist teachers in observing the above requirements the Board issued a scheme of work-book, which has already been found very useful in curtailing the clerical work. The "Suggestions to Teachers," issued by the English Board of Education, have also been sent to all schools, with a hope that they will be carefully studied, though not necessarily rigidly followed. We recognise that these suggestions, admirable as they are, cannot be fully put into practice unless the classes in our larger schools are much smaller than at present, but they contain so many valuable hints that teachers will derive much assistance from them "in keeping abreast of current changes in the conditions of the service and with the latest developments in theory and practice." †

The requirements formerly laid down by the regulations for a certificate of proficiency were so low that in this district many children who would not have passed Standard VI under our old system were obtaining certificates which qualified them for "free places" in secondary schools. Inspectors in other districts met with a similar experience, and representations were made to the Department to raise the standard. This was done, with the result that last year the percentage of children who obtained proficiency certificates was considerably reduced. The recent Conference of Inspectors has recommended that the standard in English be still further raised. We purpose putting this recommendation into effect.

All standard passes having been abolished, promotions from class to class are made by the head teachers. In determining such promotions, weakness in reading should be made an absolute bar, careful consideration should be given to composition and arithmetic, more especially to the former, and pronounced backwardness in both should be fatal. A teacher who has a child under his eye all the year should be able to form a better judgment of his capacity than an Inspector who sees him for one day only, but some of our teachers seem to forget that the work of the syllabus is a year's work, and we often find children whose attendance has not been satisfactory receiving undue consideration when the classes are reorganized. The average ages of the children in each standard this year are much the same as in 1905, with the exception of Standard V, which has been reduced from thirteen years to twelve years nine months. This may mean very little; but as this is the standard immediately below Standard VI, and as the minimum requirements for a proficiency certificate have again been raised, our teachers must recognise the necessity of using extreme caution in exercising the responsibility which has now been placed upon them.

Teachers are now beginning to realise the greater freedom that is allowed in the syllabus in drawing up programmes of work; and while we have nothing but praise for the earnestness and conscientiousness of our teachers as a body of workers, we have found in many cases that their mistaken anxiety to take up too many subjects has induced them to overload their programmes, with the result that in some classes important subjects such as English have not received sufficient attention. In our report when the syllabus was first issued we endeavoured to impress upon teachers the necessity of clearly recognising that quantity was not asked for, that the programmes in the syllabus—except in English, arithmetic, and part of geography—were suggestive merely, and that the method of teaching was to be such as to arouse the power of thinking and independent judgment, and to incite the development of self-activity in the child.

A great deal has been said about the overloading of the syllabus, and though many teachers have so dealt with it as to overload their programmes, it is quite feasible to draw up a scheme of work which will not put an undue strain on the pupils—most certainly will this be the case when the proposed rearrangement of the syllabus is brought into effect. If any teacher finds otherwise then let him at once remove the strain by curtailing his programme and concentrating his efforts on the more important subjects. If he is earnest and proves successful in arousing a true scientific spirit he will be doing what is required of him. A new spirit has been breathed into educational aims and methods—it is "a spirit of search as contrasted with the spirit of believe and ask no questions."

In any transition stage from an old system to a new, there is certain to be want of balance in the arrangement of curricula, but we are pleased to note that this error is gradually being recognised. In some cases the claims of those subjects such as nature study, elementary agriculture, elementary science, or handwork "have been pushed," as Professor Sadler says, "so hard as to defeat the purpose of scientific education by depriving the pupils of their necessary training in other subjects, and especially in the power of expression in their own language . . . what is most to be aimed at is not the mature accumulation of scientific knowledge, but the cultivation of an attitude of mind which is interested in the study of nature, and the training of the habit of accurate observation and of the power of investigating the relation between cause and effect."

The principles which should guide the teacher in his methods of work have been ably emphasized and summed up by the same writer in a recent article. "These are that the physical side of education is basal to mental and moral training; that child-nature must be studied in order that all instruction may be adapted to the learner's stage in mental development; that sense-perception and practical work should have a place, though not an exaggerated place, in all education; that the latter should as far as possible be a course of self-development, that the course of study, while enforcing accuracy, patience, and endurance of discipline, should also cause a due measure of pleasurable excitement in the learner; and that the teacher should endeavour with all his power to train his pupils in the habit of tracing connections between cause and effect, and to inspire them with a real desire to get to the bottom of things. Thus the fundamental issue of that is truthfulness—easy to speak about, most difficult of all to practise in some of the intellectual questions with which the teacher deals and in the circumstances in which the teacher has to work. And yet the touchstone of the noblest and of all memorable teaching is unflinching veracity. This it is that forms character, because it is the expression of the sincere character of the teacher—character, as Goethe said, forming character."

We have, &c.,

J. R. FLEMING,
F. H. BAKEWELL, } Inspectors.
J. S. TENNANT, }

The Chairman, Education Board, Wellington.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 11th March, 1907.

During the school year that closed on the 31st December last a good deal of educational activity was shown throughout the whole of this extensive school district, and an important advance was made in the erection of school buildings, in the increase in the number of schools, and in the furtherance of manual and technical education.

The destruction by fire of the Gisborne District High School buildings, disastrous though it was to the educational progress of the town for a time, has resulted in the completion of a handsome block of brick buildings of modern type and adapted to meet the school requirements of that rapidly growing town. The other school buildings and additions that were completed during the year are: Kaiti (near Gisborne), Tokomaru Bay, Mohaka, Mangatu, in the Poverty Bay or North Ward; Tipapakuku (near Dannevirke), Lindsay (near Waipawa), and Hopeland, between Kumeroa and Woodville. Enlargements have also been carried out at Frasertown (near Wairoa), and at Mahora (near Hastings).

In most of the districts ample school places are now provided, and I do not anticipate any new applications for additions or for new buildings except in the following places: Mangapapa (near Gisborne), Mahora which is again over-full, Tipapakuku, Woodlands Road, near Woodville, where new buildings are badly needed, and a small school at the Blackburn Ruahine Special Settlement.

The grants recently made for the erection of a school at Paki Paki and for residences in several of the smaller outlying districts will meet a great want in those districts, but it would be well if similar help were granted to provide accommodation for teachers in a number of the places where it is found difficult for teachers to obtain board and residence, such as Port Awanui, Tokomaru Bay, Mohaka, and Mangatu.

Ninety-six schools, with a staff of 249 teachers, were in operation at the close of the year. The pupils numbered 9,057 as at the date of my annual visits to the schools, of whom 8,455 were present at examination. These numbers are exclusive of 517 Catholic children who were present in the five schools examined by me. Thus the total number of pupils in the Board and Catholic schools of this education district was 9,574, exclusive of a few pupils belonging to what are known as "household schools."

The 249 teachers who were in the service of the Board are classed as ninety-six head teachers, 102 assistants, and fifty-one pupil-teachers. One hundred and fifty-two of the 198 principal and assistant teachers hold certificates of competency from the Department of Education, and seven others have special licenses to teach. Thus, excluding the pupil-teachers, there are thirty-nine teachers employed by the Board who hold no qualification in the way of technical efficiency, and of these twenty-eight are actually in charge of schools. The fact that more than one-fourth of the schools in the district are in the hands of teachers without certificates is not a satisfactory state of affairs, but at present the position cannot be altered. Fortunately all the schools held by them are small, varying from three or four in average attendance to an outside limit of twenty-five.

The salaries paid to the teachers in the small schools are not sufficient to command the services of fully qualified teachers, and unless some form of help can be given by the settlers themselves, as was so common in this district in years gone by, I fear even greater difficulties will be experienced in obtaining the services of any one willing to exist under such isolated conditions as many teachers do now. The settler goes into the bush, or the country, prepared to "rough it," but his possessions are constantly improving under his vigilant care. Not so in the case of a teacher. Though in charge of an important State industry the prospects of country teachers are by no means bright unless sympathy and consideration are shown to them by the settlers. In some of the settlements I fear that the demand

for a school is not always associated with the best interests of the children. Only a few weeks ago I visited a new settlement where a school had just been opened, ostensibly for the benefit of a dozen or more children in the district, but although the school had been in operation for seven or eight months two of the principal settlers had not even taken the trouble to send their children to school. At the same time these settlers were clamouring for a school building in a place more convenient to themselves.

The classification of the pupils at the date of my visits to the schools will be seen from the accompanying table, which gives the roll-number for each standard class, the number present at my annual visit, and the average age of the pupils:

Classes.							Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	134	124	Yrs. mos. 14 11
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	490	481	14 0
" V	...	...	...	...	...	868	825	12 11
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	996	959	11 11
" III	...	...	...	...	...	1,159	1,114	11 1
" II	...	...	...	...	...	1,154	1,111	10 1
" I	...	...	...	...	...	1,162	1,103	8 11
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	3,094	2,738	6 10
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	9,057	8,455	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

The results here given, except in the case of Standards VI and VII, are based on the promotions made by the principal teachers of the different schools.

It is difficult to show how wide the differences are between the old methods of examining and the new. The teachers carry on their own work and hold term or quarterly examinations, and the records are kept for the information and guidance of the Inspector at the time of his visit to a school. Detailed examinations by an Inspector are discontinued, his attention being more directed to methods of instruction, to general progress, to new needs, and to the conditions prevailing for the betterment of education in a district. Standard VI alone has been left for the Inspector, but there is no reason whatever why even this standard should not be examined by the headmaster in schools where the mark "efficient" has been earned. Certificates are issued by the Inspector alone, these being either certificates of competency or proficiency, as defined under the regulations. Unfortunately the opening of small schools in the remoter places of settlement has brought into existence again the uncertificated teacher, and schools in charge of such must be controlled and examined, and in fact the school-work generally must be directed by the Inspector, if the syllabus of requirements is to be carried out with even fair hope of success. It is manifestly wrong to intrust the advancement of children from class to class to those who know very little of the art of school-teaching and nothing of departmental regulations.

In the matter of certificates of proficiency the plan of holding a synchronous examination early in December in a number of centres was carried out, and the results warrant a continuance of the plan. For the first time in the history of the district all promotions in all schools were made in December, in anticipation of the work to be commenced at the opening of the schools in the New Year. This important step will unify the work of the schools in the matter of promotions from class to class, so that in future there need be no complaints about the weakness of children when moving from school to school in this educational district.

In connection with the work of the schools it is necessary that attention be called to certain desirable alterations in the staffing. Some of the schools, owing to inelasticity in the regulations, work under conditions that ought not to be permitted either on account of the pupils or the teachers. It must not be supposed that because the average number of children to a teacher is between thirty and forty for all the schools that therefore there is no cause for complaint as to the staffing. An average does not represent in a proper light the working-conditions as they exist in different schools. Thus in this district the Wigan School has seven pupils, Arowhana three, Rakauoa five, Te Aroha ten, Patoka seven, Pohui fourteen, Patangata fourteen, Ti-tree Point nine, Mangatuna eight, Makaretu School eight—or an attendance of eighty-five pupils for ten schools. In other words, ten teachers have each on the average 8.5 pupils to instruct, whilst the average number of pupils for each teacher at the time of my annual examination was—at Gisborne District High School 73.2, at Napier Main School 63.5, and at the District High School, Hastings, 65.3.

Attention was drawn last year to the interest shown by an increasing number of teachers and Committees in the school grounds and general surroundings of the schools. It seems to me a pity that so little actual encouragement is given by educational authorities to what may appropriately be called "school externals in relation to education." Apparatus and appliances—scientific and modern—are deemed indispensable for children in the schoolrooms, but outside little or no provision is made for them, although the physical, the æsthetic, and the observational sides of training and culture are to be developed and encouraged in the playground and surroundings, if anywhere. School games constitute in a large measure the basis of all the higher forms of government. In fact, they are the

first forms of government that are intrusted to the direction of future citizens. In the *Nineteenth Century and After*, of the 1st May, Mr. Michael Conway has a very suggestive article entitled "The Individual *versus* the Crowd," in which he deals with the education of children in the following pregnant words: "What we call education is really much more the drilling of a child into the crowd organization than the equipment of an individual with the means of pursuing an individual career." This is an aspect of school life, the importance of which is hardly perceived at the present time by school authorities. Much is to be said in favour of new forms of instruction in the schoolroom, but intercourse among the children in the playground in relation to games, to ground-planning, to nature study, and to behaviour and conduct generally is as important an aspect of training in a democracy where numbers predominate as any course of instruction in the schoolroom. The connecting-link between the child as an individual and the child as a part of society is formed in the playground. Pupils learn to control themselves and to consider the full rights of their fellows when at play. Tyranny hardly dares to assert itself among companions when at play. Each boy is hedged in by the opinions and actions of his fellows. Public opinion is, in fact, absolute in the place where the freest conditions of school life are formed—that is in the playground.

The introduction of subjects of instruction like woodwork for boys, and cookery and dressmaking for girls, into the larger schools, whilst beneficial in many ways, has certainly tended to lessen efficiency in essential subjects like reading, writing, and arithmetic. All the subjects that have to be taught in the schools cannot receive the same amount of attention as formerly. In the case of schools where there is a limitation of the instruction in what are known as additional subjects, the results are better than in most of the larger schools. When new subjects are added to the requirements it is often found that teachers are not prepared to give the necessary instruction, and little can be done to help in such cases owing to the distance of most of the small schools from centres of population. A school cannot rise above the teacher in charge, and unless opportunities for improvement are possible in the case of teachers in the more remote places of settlement the education of the children must suffer. Educational rust soon sets in, and, instead of thoroughness, the tendency is towards mediocrity. Whether it is better to widen the school-subjects at the expense of superficiality, or limit their number in order to aim at thoroughness, is a question difficult to decide, but Arthur Shadwell, in his work on "Industrial Efficiency," remarks that "slovenliness may become a national habit. Slovenliness is something more than a violation of good taste, it is indifference to the best way of doing things. It is a kind of easy-going morality in matters of method, it involves a low standard, and its influence upon children is in the last degree disastrous." The subjects like woodwork, cookery, and dressmaking, wherever taken, are certainly appreciated, and it may be that the decline in thoroughness as pointed out is the result of the initial work in these subjects, and that when the schools are fully organized the old standard in reading, writing, and arithmetic will be maintained. The instructors in woodwork, cookery, and dressmaking—viz., Mr. Gardiner, Misses Ivey and Lousley, and Mrs. Thomas—have sent in reports on the special work done during the year, from which the following summary is made:—

Mr. Gardiner says that "Classes in woodwork were held throughout the year at Napier and Hastings as centres. Two hundred and twenty pupils received instruction in nine separate classes. Two special classes were carried on, also a teachers' Saturday class. Owing to the lack of adequate accommodation and appropriate equipment the classes were conducted under extremely disadvantageous circumstances. The attendance and progress at the special evening classes in mechanical and architectural drawing has been very encouraging, but these classes will never fulfil their legitimate functions until the school is provided with sufficient and suitable models to enable the teaching to be from the concrete to the abstract, from things to principles. In view of the erection of a new technical school for Napier, and the extension of manual, training, and technical classes in other centres, proposals will be submitted for realising in some measure one's own ideals in this direction.

Mrs. Thomas reports having given instruction to 321 girls in eight schools in the southern portion of the district during the first six months of the year, and to 209 girls belonging to the Gisborne District High School and certain country schools in the Poverty Bay district during the second half of the school year, alternating her instruction with the instruction in cookery. She points out certain inconveniences in several schools, and considers that schools where dressmaking-classes are carried on should be provided with a separate room and such necessary materials as paper for drafting, tape-measures, tracing-wheels, scissors, and sewing-machines, all of which are necessary for progress of work.

It will be observed that the special instruction, important as it is, benefits but a comparatively few of the senior boys and girls in the district. Under present arrangements much difficulty is experienced by instructors in visiting even the larger schools, but the difficulties will be minimised when the technical-school buildings now in course of erection are finished at Napier, Dannevirke, Waipawa, and Hastings. It is doubtful, however, whether more pupils will be instructed under the improved conditions. The smallness of the country schools presents a difficulty to the introduction into them of manual and technical training. It would be a very good thing to foster in all country schools a knowledge of elementary agriculture, including soils, rocks, native plants, and common weeds as far as each district is concerned. But specialists must do the work in the country just as they do in the towns. If education is to have a utilitarian bias in the schools it should be in the direction of adaptation to environment and probable future needs. Itinerant teachers could do the work in the country, and by a slight modification in the present manual and technical regulations dealing with "school classes" it would be possible for a teacher to instruct the senior pupils belonging to twenty or more schools during the year.

The large attendance of teachers at the Saturday classes in elementary agriculture, such as were held in Napier at the beginning of the year, shows that the teachers are alive to the importance of this subject as a branch of instruction in the schools. Conditions have not been favourable for the carrying-

on of Saturday classes for teachers, nor was it possible to hold a winter school for teachers, although an application was sent to the Board by the Poverty Bay branch of the Teachers' Institute, asking that such a school might be held.

[E] The cost of a winter school is somewhat heavy, as the educational district is so extensive, and pecuniary help must be given to those teachers who live in the more remote parts of a district. I am satisfied that it would pay the country well to give a little more heed to the claims of teachers, especially those living in the country. A teacher in these days must be in advance of his environment, and a school should represent to children more than mere environment if the aim is to widen the bounds of knowledge of those taught within its walls. The teacher ought to be a specialist so far as his knowledge of the district in which he works is concerned, but his horizon needs to be much wider if he is to help his children to grip things that are beyond their experiences, and the State should help the teacher by providing him with opportunities to extend the circle of his knowledge. Thus, during one of the vacations teachers ought to be drawn together to study new methods and discuss plans for the introduction of subjects that may be deemed necessary for children. The long vacation should be spent in travel for the storing of knowledge. Modern needs of living demand modifications in the training of those who are responsible for the education of the future citizens. Practical experience, exact observation, and a large acquaintance with the outside world must run hand in hand with text-books in these days of scientific training, and that country will be best served in the schools whose teachers realise that the school typifies progress, and represents not a past but an advancing present and an anticipatory future.

It is not necessary to refer to the schools in detail. Separate reports on each have been submitted, and Committees are aware from the reports furnished to them what is being done in their several districts in the furtherance of education. Complaints about the condition of schools where certificated teachers are employed are becoming fewer and fewer, and there is a buoyancy among teachers that is certainly a new feature in the district. The superannuation scheme may have something to do with this, and I think the older teachers are beginning to realise that although the work of teaching may be onerous the prospect is not a blank. The examination records in the public examinations are a sufficient testimony that good work is being done throughout the district, and I am pleased to certify to the high character of an increasing number of the teachers, and to the faithful and good work done by them in the schools.

An Inspector's work, in the case of a large number of the schools, gives little cause for anxiety, as the teachers are skilful and capable and can be trusted to do their work well. The small schools are the spots where help is wanted, and it is in these that much extra time will be spent now that the Board has provided an assistant to meet the increasing needs of this growing district.

Equally with the Board schools, it must be stated that the Catholic schools that were examined by me are advancing steadily, and much careful and good work is being done. The staffing is more generous than is found in the Board schools, and the enthusiasm and spirit of inquiry shown by the Sisters make up for deficiencies in technical training. As yet, the girls' departments acquit themselves better than the boys', from causes beyond the control of the Brothers in charge of the latter, but in each class of school the tone is good, and training in manners is satisfactory.

The four district high schools that were in existence last year are now reduced to three by the establishment of Dannevirke District High School as a secondary school under an elective Board of Governors. The numbers in attendance at the Woodville and Gisborne District High Schools are disappointing. The cause is difficult to discover, as the staffing, particularly in the latter school, is unusually strong, and the honour results good. Mr. Mann, who has done much satisfactory work since the opening of the Gisborne District High School, has resigned to begin a professional career as barrister. I can only express the hope that he will be as successful as a lawyer as he has been as a master of a secondary department. The Hastings District High School has a large attendance of secondary pupils, and has made a good beginning in the public examinations. The teaching, however, has been carried on under many difficulties, but these will shortly disappear, as a building is now in progress that will provide accommodation both for ordinary instruction and technical training, so that the prospects at this school are decidedly good.

Military drill continues to receive special attention in the large majority of schools. Many of the teachers are well qualified to instruct the children in this important aspect of school training. The cadet companies already established bear as large a proportion to the pupils attending the Board schools as do the companies to the children in any other educational district. In some cases the girls are trained to march with the boys, and they acquit themselves with equal credit. Of course, calisthenics form a special occupation for the girls, and in most of the larger schools the subject is excellently taught.

As a whole the progress in education for the year 1906 gives evidence of much improvement along new lines of preparation, and the outlook for the current year is of much promise.

In conclusion I should like to say that the retirement, through increasing infirmities, of Mr. Fannin from the Secretaryship makes the first break that has taken place in the office for the long period of twenty-seven years. I can only say that Mr. Fannin has well earned his retirement, and my regret is that the superannuation scheme does not benefit him to the extent merited by his constancy and attention to duty.

H. HILL, Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Hawke's Bay.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Education Office, Blenheim, 26th January, 1907.

I have the honour to present my third general report.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.—At the close of 1905 there were sixty-six schools on the list. The number had increased at the close of 1906 to seventy-seven. Those at North Bank, Grassmere, Ward, and Sea View are new buildings erected in the midst of recent settlements, due to the subdivision of large estates. The Blenheim schools were amalgamated early in the year, and the school so formed is working in departments.

INSPECTION.—Seventy-three visits of inspection were made during the year. In nine instances there were slight inaccuracies in the registers which appeared in no case to be wilful, yet which again call for notation. It is necessary that the time-table should accurately reflect the school-work; several times in small schools the time-table of the previous year was exposed, although some of the standards had disappeared and considerable changes had occurred in the time allowed to such subjects as geography and history. Committees are requested to see that the clocks in the schools are kept in good working-order. At inspection a considerable portion of the time was spent in showing practically how, by means of correlation, time might be saved without detriment to the work and even with advancement. The schools in the northern region during 1905, and those in the southern region during 1906, have been much improved by painting and repair, so that it may be hoped there will be some funds released for the provision of more modern furniture. The gallery in the infant division at Blenheim School has been removed, with a view to substituting dual desks. A number of schools, having been painted in the interior, present a much more pleasant and attractive appearance. Additional accommodation is urgently required at Marlboroughtown and Spring Creek, where in each case increased attendance has led to an increase of the staff. The capitation grants under the manual and technical system are gradually enriching the larger schools in apparatus. The teachers are permitted to spend a limited amount of these grants on books that assist them in dealing with handwork. In this way valuable reference libraries should in course of time be formed. The schools would benefit if some of the moneys devoted to libraries were spent in purchasing single copies of arithmetic showing short methods, of commercial geographies—such as that lately issued by Blackie (Rev. F. Smith)—of books on nature study and agriculture. The teacher's slender stipend cannot be expected to keep him abreast of these without assistance. Belgium has, at various centres, libraries established by the State for the use of teachers; correspondence between teachers and the librarian is franked, and also the sending and return of books. Belgium knows that the root of the matter is the teacher.

EXAMINATION.—Sixty-nine public schools and five private schools were examined. The total enrolment at private schools was 169, and 158 pupils were present at examination. The number on the rolls in public schools at times of examination was 2,030, and the number present at examination 1,925.

The increase in the roll for the year is 117. This is due partly to the subdivision of large estates, and partly to an increase of the population—an increment so diffused as to cause the opening of a considerable number of small schools.

At thirty-five schools all the pupils attended for examination, the largest being Grovetown, with 114 pupils.

The following schools of Grade 1 and upwards attained 90 per cent. of attendance for the year: Marlborough Town, 96 per cent.; Onamalutu, 94 per cent.; Waitaria Bay, 92 per cent.; Okaramio, 91 per cent.; Havelock, 90 per cent. Only Seddon (78 per cent.) fell below 80 per cent. It is worthy of note that the city schools of Otago all record over 90 per cent., indeed the whole province last year reached 89 per cent., yet the Blenheim School stands at 81 per cent. A community is justly proud when its schools maintain a high standard. The parents will best strengthen the teachers' hands by seeing that their children are regularly present for instruction. There appears to have been comparatively little sickness during the year, and the weather was favourable for a good attendance. Though not altogether reliable as a sole index, owing to epidemics, &c., I think it may fairly be assumed when a school shows 90 per cent. of attendance that the pupils are being trained in regular habits, that they like their school, that discipline is not weak, and that in this the Inspector has some sort of criterion by which to catch some of the elusive elements that examination on conventional lines does not reach. According to the latest report of the Commissioner of Education in the United States, each and every division of the German Empire (in Europe) records 90 per cent. This covers an enrolment of 9,256,731 children. New Zealand's attainment of 83.9 per cent. (1903) appears in the same table to our disadvantage. Andrew Carnegie, speaking on the liberation of slaves in America and the necessity for educating them, says "He only is free whom education makes free." There are fathers who, by undervaluing the opportunities of childhood, are preparing shackles for the feet of their sons and yokes for their shoulders.

Summary of the Truant Officer's report: Forty-five informations, three dismissed, one withdrawn, forty-one convictions. Fines, £4 10s.; costs (twenty-five cases), £8 15s.

The roll-number of Standard VI was 175, and of these 168 were present. Certificates of proficiency were awarded to fifty-seven, and certificates of competency to thirty-eight pupils. The smaller number of certificates of proficiency is due to the change in the regulations under which the minimum mark was raised. The total number of certificates is reduced, because under the former regulations some gained the proficiency that would not have gained the competency certificate. In private schools eight certificates of proficiency and ten certificates of competency were awarded. The total number of Standard VI certificates awarded in the public and private schools of Marlborough during the past three years was 116, 127, and 113 respectively. Subject to an age-limit the proficiency certificate carries free education at a high school. Now, however, that the minimum has been raised for proficiency, I think

the age-limit should be done away with, and that the Standard VI competency certificate should be the qualifying test for a free place. The Standard VI competency certificate represents a substantial measure of attainment—a higher one than that usually required of paying pupils. The barrier of age should not be permitted to prevent any one from reaching the higher walks of education. Mr. Foster Fraser ("Pictures from the Balkans") informs us that in Servia (three millions population) education is free from the elementary school to the university. New Zealand may learn from even reputedly backward States.

The following is a general summary for the district :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	42	36	14 9
" VI	...	...	...	...	175	168	13 9
" V	...	...	...	...	224	220	13 0
" IV	...	...	...	...	275	270	11 9
" III	...	...	...	...	251	246	10 11
" II	...	...	...	...	262	259	9 8
" I	...	...	...	...	243	237	8 11
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	558	489	7 1
Totals ...					2,030	1,925	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

At the close of the year twelve small schools were without teachers. The chief hope of these schools must lie in trained monitors, for they will always be too small to attract qualified teachers. In this direction the teachers of the larger schools may and do help the outlying parts of the province. There were also seven pupil-teachers.

That the improvement looked for in the work of the pupil-teachers at the time of last report has come about is shown by the fact that all of those who sat locally improved their standing. The criticism lessons, while not yet quite satisfactory, revealed a higher measure of skill. There is manifest also among the adult teachers a widespread effort either to obtain a certificate or to improve the one already held. There have been many changes of the staff during the past year, quite a third of the schools being affected. The causes are various—marriage, retirement, promotion, and travel with a view to greater efficiency, all contributing. Three of the older teachers have retired on superannuation. It is grateful to think that their country has recognised their life's work, and has given a solace to their declining years.

READING.—In the definition of reading for the teachers' D certificate, the following aspects of the subject are referred to: Enunciation, pronunciation, tone, inflection, fluency, expression, character, and intelligence. The teacher would do well to keep this list of characteristics before him during the reading-lesson, and to study the efforts of the children from each point of view. Insufficient advantage appeared to be taken of the privilege of selecting a number of lessons from the reading-book for special study. Those teachers that did make selection sometimes chose too few. The syllabus suggests six of the best prose lessons and the pieces chosen for recitation. The trouble with "h" was less pronounced this year, and there was evidence of an organized attempt to deal with it. There was also noticeable in some schools a more careful syllabification, accompanied by a slow and clear enunciation; a number of schools might benefit by giving attention to the rate of reading. On several occasions pupils pronounced "saw" as "sor," "idea" as "idear." No one who has listened attentively to the rich tones of the Maori speaking English would like to reduce their vocalization to the thinner mode of some other parts of our nation. It is questionable how far the use of "oi" for "i" comes under this head. The dropping of "h" and the use of "sor" for "saw" are a different matter, being simply barbarisms.

In the upper standards there might be more correlation of reading and spelling under the head of "Word-building." Some teachers seemed to have a wrong notion of what was required in regard to prefixes and suffixes. It is the meaning of these particles that should be emphasized. Their origin is of merely third-rate importance. It is much more to the point that the pupil should understand that "ex" in "expel" and the first "e" in "eject" mean "out," and that "pro" in "propel," means "forward," than that they should know that these prefixes are of Latin origin.

Six schools made considerable additions to their libraries. £47 12s. 6d. was granted by the Board in pound-for-pound subsidies on libraries and apparatus.

SPELLING improved considerably, especially in Standard VI, where the percentage of success was 66 as compared with 60 of the previous year. Of the larger schools Renwick and Blenheim girls may be noted, and of the smaller ones Ugbrooke deserves mention for skilful treatment of this subject.

WRITING.—Seventy-three per cent. of Standard VI met the requirements in 1905, and 84 per cent. in 1906—a very satisfactory result. There are, however, still several comparatively large schools that leave something to be desired. The neatness of the general writing improved greatly. Transcription usually consisted merely in writing a passage from a book. To write out the advertisements of the itinerary of the leading shipping companies as seen in the chief papers of the colony would be a useful correlation. This would give an idea of trade routes as well as practice in transcription. By exhibits in writing at the New Zealand International Exhibition, Tira Ora obtained two gold medals and Okaramio a bronze one.

COMPOSITION.—This is the single subject in which Standard VI did not show advancement in percentage of success during the year. The reasons are two—(1) the increase in the minimum required (to 40 per cent.); (2) the weakness in grammar. Again and again pupils were unable to distinguish phrases from clauses, or to pick out such relatively easy grammatical distinctions as adverbs and adverbial phrases. The teachers do not always sufficiently differentiate the formal part of composition from the material part. If they get an essay in which keen observation is shown, their natural delight should not obscure to them defects in grammar and easy spelling. The cards issued by the Department were distributed among the schools. Some teachers saw that each child was provided with a booklet containing a complete set. Such schools made manifest improvement, because to them the intention of the Department in the syllabus became more clear. In quite a number of schools the composition showed throughout all standards a great improvement, both in freedom and in originality. This was especially true of such as had given much attention to gardening or to nature study. It is evident that these subjects provide many topics that interest the child. Just as the very sight of appetising food makes the mouth water and the glands function more freely, so an interesting subject unties the tongue and sets the pen moving. This progress was especially noticed at Tuamarina, Waitaria, and the Convent Schools. Oral composition in Standards I and II is still capable of development. On the time-table of these standards in larger schools two half-hours for “conversation” may very well appear.

RECITATION.—Of the sixty-nine schools examined, fifty took place from “satisfactory” to “excellent,” a favourable summary compared with last year when forty out of sixty were so estimated. The thought was intelligently expressed, and the pieces had been more carefully studied as examples of English. By careful selection of matter the smaller schools may yet introduce more grouping of classes, and so save time. Here, as in reading, there were many signs of a diligent grappling with the “h” difficulty.

ARITHMETIC.—In Standard VI a slight improvement was observed, but there is still scope for great advancement. The lower standards continue to achieve much more satisfactory results. It must ever be understood that reading, writing, and arithmetic are the backbone of the school-work, and that handwork fails to justify itself if it fails to strengthen these three. Handwork is supposed to add delicacy to the fingers, precision to the observation, and keenness to the judgment. It is obvious, therefore, that if it attains its end it must react favourably on the three Rs. Probably much more may be done in the way of oral discussion of the method of working easy problems.

GEOGRAPHY.—The mathematical geography prescribed for Standard V was not always sufficiently taught. Some teachers practically discontinued map-drawing under the impression that maps were not required. This is a mistake. Map-drawing should still be regarded as an important part of geography, but children will not be required to produce at examination memory maps with minute detail. Then, again, such detail as is shown should be in accordance with the modern view—railways, large centres, produce, telegraphs, trade routes, distribution of animals and races of men, the regions traversed by navigators and discoverers. As the chemist distils the pure spirit from its gross admixture, so the teacher must distil his geography from many books and papers. For this subject, more than for any other, the teacher must be widely read, not that he may cram the child, but that he may know wisely what to reject. It may be remarked that the child’s natural desire for information need not be stifled altogether in the teaching of principles. The mind, like the body, has its appetites, and these are especially vigorous during the growing-period. Youth has a hunger for facts, and the teacher’s chief care should be to provide a sufficiency of the kind to thoroughly illumine his principles. Most of the schools have been furnished by arrangement of the Department with maps of the region within a radius of five miles of their location. These should be used to verify maps made to scale by actual measurement or calculation along the roads. It would be well if the larger schools could be provided with good boxes of labelled minerals to assist in the identification of rocks in their neighbourhood.

DRAWING.—The attention of teachers is called to the requirements under instrumental drawing. Model-drawing showed signs of strengthening. With reservation in respect of these two divisions, the subject merits nothing but praise, and where suggestions are made in regard to branches of this work it is rather with a view to indicating fresh lines of advance than by way of criticism. Pencil-work improved very much in firmness and vigour of outline, in design, and in correlation of nature study with drawing. There is a general consensus of opinion that children should be taught from the earliest stage to draw objects and not abstractions. In this respect many of the schools showed progress. Teachers may, however, make more of design with simple geometric forms such as the square, triangle, hexagon, &c. In this connection it may be noted that a design based on squares should not be necessarily made of squares. It is wonderful how far in matters of design some teachers (compared with others) will lead a child—just because they do not begin with the notion that a child’s size is an exact measure of its ingenuity. It is true that his intellect is not mature, nor his experience large, nor are his reasoning-powers fully developed, but the child can do an unexpected amount with his little capital. The Board has a number of small books of squared paper suitable for children in Class P; in these, work of the above description may be done. The books are available on application. Some of the designs may be made in pencil and others in crayon. A box of greasy crayons is best, because the colours do not readily “smudge.” A. W. Seaby’s book on Blackboard Drawing (Nelson and Sons) is suggestive as giving ideas, *inter alia*, for filling a given space with ornament suited to or modified to suit the shape of the space. During the past year brush-drawing was much more extended in practice, and in several schools really creditable work was done, but as a rule children were limited to comparatively few elements. There is possible, especially in the higher classes, a greater use of natural objects as elements in brush-drawing and design. More use may also be made of tinted paper. Scale-drawing should not be treated too ponderously—*e.g.*, draw the plan and elevation of a brick or other model to scale; draw a triangle, and increase its sides to double by scale; draw a plate, its rim, and cross-section.

HISTORY.—More attention was paid to this subject during 1906 than in the previous year. The tragic death of Mr. Seddon at the height of his career afforded an opportunity for the inculcation of many a noble and inspiring lesson. When great men die their country takes them into its keeping that their memory perish not. He had small advantage of education in his youth, and so he valued it the more. His works stand for him. He was the greatest Minister of Education New Zealand has yet known.

Much more may be made of social history and civics. A suggestive book for teachers is "Test-papers in General Knowledge," by H. S. Cooke (Macmillan and Co.). In this connection more may also be made of the daily papers. Strikes bring up the subjects of employer and employee, of Arbitration Courts, of wages and capital, of division of labour, of labour organization, &c. The earthquake at San Francisco disorganizes the mail-service, and the teacher is enabled to throw into prominence alternative routes, and so on. Social history and geography both take account of these events. In this treatment of history, Blenheim Boys' stood well.

SINGING.—In fifty-two schools of the sixty-nine this subject was taught. During 1905 the number was forty-one out of sixty—a distinct advance.

NEEDLEWORK continues steadily to improve. Some splendid exhibits were sent to New Zealand Exhibition. The Fairhall pupils gained eight silver medals in needlework. Springlands, too, although it had a change of teacher, gained a silver medal and a certificate.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION was well taught in all the leading schools. Only four teachers have to be reminded that physical instruction is not optional. It need not be of a military character, but should be directed at least to strengthening muscles and lungs, and to developing an upright carriage. Breathing-exercises were practised in eighteen schools. These exercises not only strengthen the lungs, but improve the bearing of the pupils. The teacher may well give this part of physical instruction still more attention. No first-class school produces boys and girls with stooping forms or awkward gait. Sweden, apparently taking the cue from the great English public schools, has for some years systematically taught the organization of school games. As Sweden has, however, taught the rest of Europe how to use some forms of handwork for educational purposes, especially woodwork, it may be possible that the value of school games is arrived at by deduction. Germany has caught the enthusiasm, and conferences of teachers are frequently held to discuss play as a part of education, and to learn how best to organize games. This has reacted on England, so that the last code for primary schools includes permission to devote one afternoon a week to organized play, which afternoon shall count as an attendance for each pupil present. It is thought that the elementary-school pupils will learn from this "to 'play the game,' to 'give and take,' to devote themselves to and efface themselves for a common cause, to feel pride in the achievements of others, to accept victory with becoming modesty and defeat with due composure, and, speaking generally, to acquire a spirit of discipline, of corporate life, and of fair play." In the schools around Havelock, without encroaching on the school time-table, the teachers have greatly interested themselves in the children's games, and an amiable spirit of rivalry finds expression in the annual sports. We have not yet, however, reached the stage of the English code.

Moral instruction receives fair attention. A teacher who sends forth his pupils without ambition and moral earnestness cannot be considered efficient. There is a right ambition which undermines inertia and leads along the line of progress and reform, which makes the pupil discontented with what is mean, and anxious to realise the best of which he is capable. The tone and the discipline of the schools are, in general, good.

HEALTH.—In the larger schools this subject received fair treatment. Several teachers reinforced the lessons by bringing them into relation with first aid, and others found in this a variety of topics for essay-writing. The smaller schools may do more in the latter direction. The Board considered Dr. Mason's scheme of medical inspection of school-children, and generally approved of his suggestions, but could not see its way to provide the funds necessary to engage a medical officer.

NATURE STUDY.—References to this subject appear under the heads of "Handwork," "Drawing," "Composition," &c. Much progress has been made during the year.

HANDWORK.—Forty-one schools undertook handwork of some description. There were eighteen in 1904 and twenty-nine in 1905. The remaining schools are very small. It may, however, be observed that there is no school too small to use concrete methods in teaching. To omit handwork is, therefore, to show that its idea is not grasped—*e.g.*, to use plasticine in order to plot a map in relief is surely a pleasing and instructive variation on the usual drawing of a map, and the mere fact that plasticine is used instead of the pencil cannot constitute this a new subject; so also when plasticine is used to illustrate the mensuration of walls or cubic content, or when bricks are used in drawing plans and elevations, and in illustrations of scale-drawing.

Ambulance and First Aid.—An incident of the past year is worthy of inclusion here; a child had fallen into a water-race, and after several minutes' immersion was recovered unconscious. Among the bystanders was a schoolboy who had been taught first aid, and under his direction the child was brought round. Some consider that but for the presence of that boy the accident would have ended fatally.

Elementary Agriculture.—In 1904 there were six school gardens; in 1905 the number had increased to seventeen, and now there are twenty-four, including three at private schools. The teachers have taken a keen interest in this late departure, and, as Mr. Bruce, our specialist in agriculture, says, they realise that it affords much help in dealing with the other work. Through the study and cultivation of plants the children acquire habits of observation and orderliness—the causal idea, the idea of planning work to ends, the idea of their inevitableness of natural results—which also tends to affect conduct in the schoolroom. Objects are taken from the garden to be used as studies in drawing; topics for essay-writing also abound. Diseases of plants are studied, and indirect lessons on human health taught. The school garden is a laboratory where many experiments are made. In short, the teachers find that

agriculture is not only a technical science, but that it can be made a valuable means of education. The teaching in general also appears gradually to become more scientific. The total grants for the year by way of initial capitation for tools amounted to £60. It were well if the Department could see its way to grant capitation for this branch of science in Standard III also, as that class naturally goes with the upper standards in schools staffed with two teachers. This ought to be readily granted, for, as mentioned above, we do not propose to teach agriculture as a technical subject, but as a concrete medium of education. Viewed in this way the subject has claims for capitation from the lowest class. The London *Times* during 1905 interested itself greatly in "rural education," and obtained among others a special report on "Developments in England." According to the writer, "From an educational point of view it seems unfortunate that the Government grant is only given for boys over eleven years of age, and that it is only possible for so few boys to learn. Gardening should be a part of the general curriculum of the rural school, as it is in the Macdonald schools in Canada, not a subject for the few." The Board recognised that a school does not do its duty to the community in which it is situated if its curriculum tends to divorce the feelings of the pupils from the calling of the locality. Hence its ready support of the proposal to join with Nelson, Grey, and Westland in engaging an expert to foster the teaching of elementary agriculture. This led to the appointment of Mr. Bruce, who has expressed himself highly pleased with the progress made and with the spirit manifested by the teachers in the attempt to adapt the science to the ends of education. The annual report (1906) of the Board of Agriculture, England, which has been kindly placed in my hands by Mr. Chaytor, refers to school gardens. According to this there are upwards of four hundred scattered over thirty-two counties. The gardens vary from one-eighth to half an acre, with, roughly, 1 rood to each pupil. The largest number learning gardening at any one school was fifty-six, and the smallest five. Two hours a week were said to be devoted to gardening. In various places throughout the Kingdom are also evening-school gardens. Many universities and colleges provide teachers' courses and extension lectures. The experience of other countries is valuable, for it frequently gives us suggestions for our own use.

School classes in *Cookery* were successfully continued at Fairhall and Marlborough schools. The former captured five medals at the New Zealand Exhibition, one exhibitor—a boy—taking first prize in an open class.

During the past year the technical school in Blenheim was opened, and school classes in cookery organized under the capable management of Miss McIntosh. The Department arranged for passages on the railway, and thus pupils were enabled to come from Picton, Waitohi, and Tua Marina to Blenheim. Springlands, Blenheim, and Marlborough High School also sent classes, and the cookery room has thus made a prosperous beginning.

Woodwork.—Difficulties in regard to an instructor hindered the opening of the woodwork room, but this subject, too, is now making headway.

Other Classes.—Evening classes in arithmetic, English, book-keeping, brush-drawing, commercial arithmetic, commercial geography, algebra, and singing were held at two schools.

Marlboroughtown excelled during 1906 in the handwork exhibits of the agricultural and pastoral show. Not only brush-drawing, plasticine, &c., but cookery and many varieties of preserves made an admirable collection.

THE NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.—Sixteen schools sent a representative collection of exhibits, including photographs of school-gardens, and specimens of drawing, penmanship, handwork, needlework, and weather-charts.

M.H.R. MEDALS.—It was noticeable that this year the marks gained were higher than usual. This was according to expectation, and was doubtless partly due to the winter school and the Saturday classes, which latter enable teachers to meet and discuss difficulties and thus become mutually helpful.

STANDARD VII.—In a number of schools excellent progress has been made during the past year. Three pupils from Blenheim Girls and one from Canvastown succeeded in passing the Civil Service Junior Examination. The efforts of teachers, especially in Standard VII classes beyond a reasonable radius from the high school, deserve more recognition than the Department yet accords them.

The London School Board's letter scheme appears to be bearing better fruit than I had anticipated at the time of my last report.

The Training College authorities in Wellington, with a view to assisting teachers whose experience has made them feel the need of specific training, have decided to arrange special classes to meet special needs. They will be held during the latter half of July and the beginning of August.

From what has been written above the Board will understand that progress has been made in a number of directions. The teachers have loyally co-operated in any scheme for the betterment of the education of the province. Their sympathy and their earnestness form a circle of inspiration of greater radius than they sometimes imagine. The Inspector finds a large part of his duty and his pleasure in carrying round from school to school the original and effective ideas of the different teachers. In this way he correlates the energies and organizes as it were the mind of the province in its bearing on education. Each teacher, in proportion to his earnestness, his originality, and his sense of responsibility for the future of the child brings his quota to the common stock; hence the advancement of the province is as much the work of the teachers as the advancement of their own schools. No teacher should feel that because his school is remote, or its attendance small, his work counts for little. This report shows that even the smallest schools afford samples and ideas that are found valuable and suggestive in the largest.

D. A. STRACHAN, Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Marlborough.

NELSON.

SIR,—

Education Office, Nelson.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the schools of the Nelson Educational District for the year 1906.

One hundred and eight schools were at work during the last quarter of the year—one, Newton Flat, being temporarily closed till a competent teacher could be procured. Oparara, Anatoki, and Shaggery have been removed from last year's list, as the children are now being conveyed to or are able to attend at a larger school in the neighbourhood. Gibbs' Town and three small household schools—Golden Downs, Hope Valley, and Pakawau—have also, through lack of pupils, been closed during the year. Eastern and Western Infants have been formed into side-schools to the Nelson Boys' Central and Toi Toi Valley respectively. Globe and Matiri are again being treated as separate schools, and new household schools have been established at Messrs. O'Rourke's and Drummond's, whilst Hilldan has been re-established as West Takaka School. Pangatotara has been formed into a side-school to Whakarewa, the control of which has recently been undertaken by the Board, a change which effects no alteration in the number on the list, which stands at 110, or five lower than that of last year. The children of two of the smaller schools failed to attend for examination, and Maitai Valley, which has since been closed, was among those examined by us, the total number of which was 107.

The following schools, not under the control of the Board, have also been examined this year: Miss Hooper's, Nelson (nine pupils); St. Canice's, Westport (160); Sacred Heart, Reefton (ninety-six); Whakarewa Home, Motueka (thirty-eight); the Preparatory Divisions of Nelson College (thirty-three), and Nelson Girls' College (twenty-seven); St. Mary's, Nelson (146); and Cabragh House, Nelson (nine). The total number of the scholars was 522, of whom 507 were present. The number of certificates gained was: Standard VI: proficiency, 26; competency, 29; Standard V: competency, 18. These schools, in accordance with the general character of the work presented, were classified as follows: one good, one satisfactory to good, four satisfactory, one fair to satisfactory, and one fair.

Four special examinations have also been held at different times. Forty candidates presented themselves, and the following certificates were gained: Standard VI: proficiency, 25; competency, 9.

One hundred and one public and seven private schools were also inspected by us during the first half of the school year.

The average weekly number on the rolls for September quarter was 5,595, or thirty-eight lower than for the corresponding quarter of last year. At the time of our examinations the number on the rolls was exactly the same (5,595), and of these, 5,335 were present.

The average attendance for the year has been 4,838 (4,827 in 1905), or 86.4 per cent. of the average weekly number on the rolls (5,592). It is very gratifying to find the attendance still improving, the percentage now standing at a higher figure than any previously attained, yet in spite of the continuous improvement of the last four years the district is barely keeping pace with the rest of the colony, the colonial average for last year being 86.9. Our percentages for the March, September, and December quarters of this year, 84.6, 88.3, and 86.4 per cent. respectively, are considerably higher than those for the corresponding quarters of any previous year.

The proportion of uncertificated teachers is, we regret to say, rather increasing than diminishing, though they are almost entirely confined to assistantships or to very small schools.

The scholarship and *personnel* of our pupil-teachers have improved, but unfortunately their numbers are too few to enable them to sufficiently recruit our teaching-staff, which in our smallest schools is deteriorating. It is here that the weakness of our system lies. On this account we last year pointed out the advisability of having as few small schools as possible. But in the interests of settlers in the backblocks, who are at least as much entitled to consideration and to their share of the education vote as the dwellers in populous centres, some such schools must exist, for conveyance to a centre is not practicable in all cases. The difficulty of providing competent teachers for small schools of Grade 0 will still exist—that is, if the interests of the few as well as those of the many are to be considered—and we should be able to boast that no children in this favoured land of ours are neglected, but that every one has the opportunity provided for acquiring the rudiments of an elementary education; none who are capable should be allowed to grow up without learning to read and write. Instead then of attaching no value to a teacher's experience in such a school, it should be estimated as at least on the same footing with that of a pupil-teacher, and every encouragement given to promising teachers who have suffered the personal disadvantages and discomfort of having to spend their time in lonely parts. After two years of good work a promising candidate for the profession should, on the recommendation of an Inspector, be eligible for, say, a third-year pupil-teachership (at assistant's salary), and on completion of a year's such service for the training college course. Without depreciating in any way the value of the theoretical training in the making of teachers, it must be admitted that many endowed with intellectual capacity and sympathetic nature have learnt more from experience, and that some without other special training than that of experience have deservedly acquired such reputation as teachers that they are even regarded as geniuses. An amalgamation of two low-grade schools into a main and side-school could often be more readily effected if the distance-limit between them were extended to, say, five miles, half an hour's bicycle ride. If the combined school at a minimum of thirty-one average attendance, instead of the present forty-one, were allowed a teacher and an assistant, without the addition of a pupil-teacher, both schools would benefit in staffing, and the side-school become a better training-ground.

The following summary for the whole district has been, as usual, compiled for the Inspector's annual return :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mós.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	103	88	14 8
" VI	...	...	...	...	490	485	13 8
" V	...	...	...	...	519	506	12 11
" IV	...	...	...	...	659	646	11 11
" III	...	...	...	...	691	676	10 11
" II	...	...	...	...	638	630	9 8
" I	...	...	...	...	649	632	8 10
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	1,846	1,672	6 10
Totals	...	...	...	...	5,595	5,335	11 2½*

* Mean of average age.

Included in Standard VII are sixty pupils attending one or other of our three district high schools. In connection with these pupils, we think they could with advantage begin to specialise in the direction of studies particularly suited to their environment.

The Preparatory class again shows an increase of forty-five, and Standard IV of forty-one, whilst Standards VI and VII are higher by twenty-six and eight respectively; but Standard II and Standard V are much smaller by seventy-six and eighty-five respectively. The total, though higher than in 1904, is thirty-seven below last year's return.

It is a curious fact that as usual the number of boys in this district, as well as in other parts of the colony, greatly exceeds that of the girls. The last report of the Minister of Education—that for the year 1905—states: "The proportion of boys to girls is almost the same as for the previous five years, 52·28 per cent, as compared with 47·72 per cent. Taking the average for the last five years, it is found that for every 100 boys on the roll there were ninety-two girls." On the roll for our September quarter we find only eighty-nine girls to every 100 boys.

The average age in Standard I and Standard V is the same as that recorded last year; in all other classes it is one or two months younger, so that the mean, eleven years two months, has fallen by one month. The average for the colony for the last two years has been eleven years three months.

The number present at our examinations, though not so high as last year, was exceedingly creditable—95·3 per cent. At forty-seven schools again every child on the school-roll was present. The number of proficiency certificates issued at public-school examinations was 195, and of Standard VI competency, 162 (last year 249 and 125 respectively). Fifteen schools, all under sole teachers, had no pupils in Standard VI, and in thirty-three that presented candidates no certificates of proficiency were gained.

In accordance with Regulation 18, twenty-one candidates in Standard V, and one in Standard IV, sat for certificates of competency.

The average age of those that obtained the proficiency certificate was thirteen years six months. The examination-time extends from the 1st July to near the end of November, or five months at most; so that those of average age that passed earliest are still one month under fourteen years of age on the 1st December. Clearly, then, the great majority of certificate-gainers have qualified for free places at secondary schools, awards that are evidently within the reach of all possessing more than average ability. Only 40 per cent. of these sitting obtained the certificate, the requirements for which were, since August, 1905, more exacting, while the nature of the tasks set for composition this year added fresh difficulty to that part of the examination.

In estimating the general efficiency of a school we have attached a definite value to every subject taught in a school of that grade, and the conclusion we arrive at is based upon the average mark assigned to each of those subjects. In schools under sole teachers the compulsory subjects only are exacted, so that work done in any of the additional subjects brings extra credit, as it increases but cannot diminish the average assigned for the compulsory subjects. Many causes may contribute to the inefficiency of a school, for to fulfil our idea of efficiency a school must have been satisfactorily conducted throughout the whole of the year. Sixteen schools in all failed to attain a satisfactory standard; but in only five cases can we attribute the blame to the inefficiency of the present experienced teacher. In all others the inexperience of the teacher, a change of teachers in the course of the year, or loss of time on the children's part, has had a deleterious effect. It might be argued that where the Inspector gives greater attention to the method of teaching than the knowledge acquired by the children, causes such as these should have little effect. But, unfortunately, we find that a change of teachers often reveals glaring lack of method. For example, subjects of instruction or branches which should have been begun at the commencement of the school year and systematically co-ordinated with other branches, have been entirely omitted with the intention possibly of rushing through them at the close of the year. A teacher with such methods has evidently failed to keep faith with his own time-table, and probably neglected to adhere to or perhaps to draw up quarterly programmes of work. Given such conduct one cannot reasonably expect the pupils of the school to be receiving the highest moral training.

ENGLISH (COMPOSITION, ETC.).—The following figures give a comparative estimate of the work done for the last two years in this branch of English in Standards III to VI. The figures indicate the per-

centage of schools in the district in which the subject was deemed by us to have been treated with satisfactory results.

		Standard VI. Per Cent.	Standard V. Per Cent.	Standard IV. Per Cent.	Standard III. Per Cent.
In 1906	..	.. 37	35	58	74
In 1905	..	.. 72	43	61	81

In Standard I the subject was usually taken orally by us, and we were pleased to notice signs of considerable improvement. The reserve in answering, which is too often in evidence, might to a great extent be broken down by dealing freely with well-known subjects and with events of everyday occurrence in the life of the children. A skilful handling of the composition, especially in its early stages, is a distinct call on the resourcefulness of the teacher.

In Standard II very commendable progress was evident.

From Standards III to VI we used the tests supplied by the Education Department, supplemented for the last question by an essay or letter on some familiar topic, or reproduction of a story read.

In Standard III we found the tests referred to as being somewhat easy, the pupils on the whole finding but little difficulty with the cards. Nevertheless the figures we give indicate a rather lower state of efficiency. This is accounted for by a more searching test in the essay, the subjects for which were as a rule taken from the course in nature study.

In Standard IV the percentage of satisfactory schools remains much the same as it was last year.

Coming now to Standards V and VI a very considerable drop is noticeable. The greatest weakness still exists in Standard V, which stands at a very low figure, only 35 per cent. of the schools being considered satisfactory.

In both of these classes the essay-writing was quite up to the usual standard of efficiency, but there was a very general breakdown in the part of the work dealing with sentence-structure and grammar from the tests provided by the Education Department.

Much difficulty arose from the form in which these cards were set, the chief, as far as came under our notice, being—(1) the undue length of questions; (2) too numerous directions and hints, which seemed to create confusion rather than conduce to clearness; (3) many of the questions dealing with the synthesis of sentences contained too many clauses to enable them to be readily combined even by persons of mature intelligence. While recognising difficulties like the above we think a great deal more requires to be done in training pupils to a fuller knowledge of the functions of phrases and clauses. No better means to this end can be suggested than a systematic use of the ordinary school reading-book, abounding in examples only waiting to be taken advantage of. With the exclusion of formal grammar from the syllabus it would seem that there has been a great tendency to ignore grammatical usages and constructions of all kinds.

Oral composition has been practised very generally, but in a somewhat indiscriminate manner. Regarding this division of the subject we quote as follows from "English Code Suggestions": "Oral composition is at the foundation of teaching in English. Practice in speaking English, whether incidental or systematic, should be directed upon four distinct objects: (1) Readiness and fluency; (2) clearness of utterance; (3) taste; (4) grammatical accuracy." If in the teaching of this subject these aims were kept in view much good would result both in the spoken and in the written language.

WRITING.—This subject is on the whole very satisfactorily taught, for though in our estimate few schools (seventeen in all) receive high commendation the number of inefficient is decreasing considerably and is relatively small. We are always looking for improvement and so apt to think that the standard attained is not a high one, but a comparison with the work of the private schools this year—over which we have no jurisdiction—is flattering, for we find that not one of them can compare favourably with our better-class public schools in penmanship, although in drawing two of them excelled. Collins' Graphic (Semi-Upright) is the copy-book now most commonly employed, though some teachers adhere to Jackson's Vertical. In the higher numbers an attempt is now being made to supply business forms, but it is still a matter for regret that the series is not exactly on the prescribed lines, and in the transcription papers teachers are not always careful enough to supply the missing links.

For a school to gain a name for good writing—that is, to have the majority of its scholars good writers—is the result of the well-sustained efforts of years rather than of one year, of strict discipline, and of persistent correction. An eye for form combined with good control may work wonders, but if one judged solely from the way in which mistakes in dictation are marked by some teachers the first essential must sometimes be lacking. The control should be such as to insure the correct position of holding the pen and proper posture of the body at all writing-exercises.

ARITHMETIC.—Judged by the results of the tests applied this subject has again made a distinct advance, the number of schools doing satisfactory work in every class being for the first time for some years in the majority, fifty-seven to fifty. Last year the numbers were on the other side of the dividing line, fifty-six to fifty-eight. In all classes 67 per cent. of those examined by us would, according to our standard (usually half-marks), have qualified for promotion, as against 60 per cent. last year, and 53 per cent. previously. The percentage of individual successes in the different standard classes was as follows:—

	Standard VI.	Standard V.	Standard IV.	Standard III.	Standard II.	Standard I.
1906	67	60	66	77	79	56
1905	45	54	64	78	81	56

Improvement is most noticeable in Standards VI and V. The work in Standard I is not yet entirely satisfactory. In the Preparatory classes progress is being made on the new lines of work, but many teachers would do well to ponder carefully the directions given in last year's report. A little book, "How to teach Arithmetic," by Levi Seeley (Kellogg and Co., New York), would probably also

prove helpful to many. The lightening and remodelling of the syllabus and the power of classifying separately for arithmetic have probably now had some appreciable effect, whilst the fact that the tests set this year were, generally speaking, of a more even character than formerly may also have conduced to better results.

Of 3,646 children in the six different standards, 228 were placed in a lower class for arithmetic, distributed as follows: Standard VI, 53; Standard V, 53; Standard IV, 43; Standard III, 44; Standard II, 27; Standard I, 8. Four pupils in Standard IV and one in Standard III were placed in a higher class for the same subject.

It is noteworthy that the classes that receive most frequently our highest commendation or gravest censure are respectively Standard II (thirty) and Standard VI (nineteen). Last year they were Standard III (twenty-four) and Standard I (eighteen) respectively. Before thorough efficiency is attained considerable improvement must be made in Standards I and VI. Into the latter there is a great temptation to promote undeserving pupils, but this should not apply to Standard I. Success in arithmetic is generally a proof of high teaching-power, and the weakness of many teachers of very small schools (we have forty-one in Grade 0) is clearly seen when we find that only six of these produced satisfactory Standard I work.

GEOGRAPHY.—Though in many of our larger schools praiseworthy attempts have been made in the method of treatment of the A course in geography, still, taking the district as a whole, we are disappointed with the general quality of the work submitted to us, which hardly comes up to last year's standard. One cause of defect would seem to be too great a reliance on mere memorising from a text-book. This failing existed mostly in our small schools. Such treatment, instead of using the subject as one of our greatest educative factors, is rather intensifying evils that existed under the demands of our former syllabus. We admit that under present requirements some of the inferences to be drawn by children from their own observations for certain natural phenomena are perhaps too obscure for the child mind; still, the initial training is absent—viz., instruction in the subject under the methods of observation and experiment. Of course, the observation referred to does not necessarily mean simply a departure from the schoolroom to view local surroundings and natural phenomena. The training must be carefully supervised along correct lines; the observations, in the first instance at any rate, must be special and systematic. "Where the actual phenomena themselves do not come within the range of the children's observation, models should be used if possible"; so reads part of the general directions in the syllabus. A great many of the actual phenomena are necessarily quite outside the children's local horizon; where this would tend to a limited training much can be done with suitable models and with up-to-date illustrations and diagrams, which may nowadays be readily obtained or which are easily constructed. With this advocacy of recent methods we hope to see the text-book laid aside as much as possible as a means of teaching geography. To those not already acquainted with the book we should recommend the perusal of an admirable work by Professor Gregory, entitled "The Teaching of Geography."

READING.—Satisfactory work continues to be done in most of our schools, two literary readers being in general use throughout the district. The chief source of weakness is still the comprehension of the language of the reading-lesson, without which intelligent reading cannot exist. This failing was accentuated and made more evident in the written work in English, where one of the questions dealt specifically with the meaning and use of words. In estimating the work of the standard classes we find in general that the reading of the lower classes is more uniformly good than it is in the higher classes. In the Preparatory classes the reading too often consists in the mere utterance of detached words. We think that almost from the beginning strict attention should be given to "phrasing" and to the intelligent grouping of words. In the higher standards of the school we once again lay stress on the benefit of as wide a reading-course as possible. To this end we are pleased to notice that a number of our schools are furnished with well-equipped libraries. As many of the chief works of our best authors are now obtainable at small cost a small standard library, even if just for purposes of reference, might be established at every school. Committees, if desirous of assisting in the educational progress of the children, can greatly help towards the attainment of this object.

RECITATION.—This subject receives fairly satisfactory treatment, the selections usually being from the reader in use. Too often, however, the mere repetition of the lines learnt seems to be all sufficient. We note from the syllabus: "There is such a wealth of simple and beautiful poetry in English literature that there is no reason to select for repetition verse that is not worth the trouble of learning by heart." Once again we would like to give prominence to the selection of verses for their literary merit.

SPELLING.—Very satisfactory work is still being done in the majority of schools, though the results are again lower than last year's in spite of the fact that more commendation is bestowed for this than for any other subject, thirty schools being marked "good" and four "excellent." It is questionable whether the practice of preparing from only one book has not, by limiting the scope of the work, counteracted the benefit derived from the introduction of word-building, which in the higher standards might well be more systematic. The formation of words from Greek and Latin roots by the addition of prefixes and affixes is too often neglected. A suitable text-book setting forth in well-graduated lessons such work as is suggested in the syllabus for the different classes would be very useful.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—Physical instruction was well carried out during the year, the work in seventy-eight schools being marked as "efficient"; of these, twenty-nine were good and four were excellent. The exercises in most general use are those laid down in the syllabus, though in some of our schools exercises based on the Sandow system of physical culture have been adopted.

We report with much satisfaction that deep-breathing exercises are practised in almost all our schools. If what is now being done in this direction serves to impress upon our rising generation the

great value of correct breathing, we feel sure that not only will immediate good result but that much advantage will eventuate to their physical well-being in after life.

Since our last report cadet detachments have been established at Stoke, Hope, Spring Grove, Riwaka, and Whakarewa, while the companies in and around Nelson have been formed into a battalion.

HANDWORK.—Some form of handwork has been undertaken in forty schools. Included in this number are all the schools in each of which two teachers are employed, and eight under sole teachers, who as a class have shown commendable zeal in attempting one or more of the additional subjects. The treatment was considered satisfactory in thirty-five of these, and good in nine. In thirty-four schools the courses chosen embraced modelling in plasticine, brush-drawing, elementary design and colour work, brick-laying, stick-laying, paper-folding, or modelling in carton.

In fourteen schools (two more than last year) swimming and life-saving are taught, and in fifteen elementary physiology and first aid. The former might well be more general, and more attention should be given by lady teachers to the instruction of the girls. The bulk of the twenty lessons required could be easily got in by giving a half-hour lesson every afternoon during the first month of the school year, thus leaving but few to complete in November or December. A circular from the Department dated the 8th November calls attention to the urgent need for more general instruction, and we hope that the appeal will not be in vain. One form of encouragement given by the headmaster of the Nelson Boys' School is well worthy of imitation. He has of late years made a practice of bestowing upon each swimmer among his pupils a certificate stating the distance—25 yards, 50 yards, 100 yards, &c.—that the recipient can swim.

ELEMENTARY AGRICULTURE, formerly cottage gardening, has been attempted at five schools. Under the supervision and direction of the newly appointed Instructor in Agriculture we expect to see considerable extension and development under this head. All the above-mentioned classes are conducted by school-teachers.

Girls' school classes in cookery and dressmaking were conducted in Nelson, Westport, Reefton, Richmond, and Wakefield by special teachers who are not on the permanent staff. Classes for boys in woodwork have been similarly conducted at Nelson and Reefton. In expectation of botany and agricultural chemistry classes being formed, classes for the instruction of teachers in Nelson were limited to freehand, model, blackboard, and brush drawing, elementary physics and chemistry, and wood-work.

A technical school has been established at Wakefield, and there, or at Nelson or Reefton, manual and technical classes—that is, classes which are not confined to school-children—were held for instruction in wood-carving, mechanical drawing, woodwork, dressmaking, painting, architectural drawing, drawing from casts, modelling, plumbing, cookery, mathematics, and a commercial course (shorthand, book-keeping, and typewriting).

Continuation classes, which, as the name implies, are intended to enable children who have just left school to continue their studies in school subjects, of a Standard V or higher character, have been held in Nelson for arithmetic, English, book-keeping, French, and shorthand. The public-school teachers are best qualified for work of this character, and that they have not undertaken it more generally may be due to lack of enterprise or a disinclination to tax their spare time.

In fifteen schools conducted by male sole teachers, needlework has been taught as a subject of manual and technical instruction. Needlework is in the ordinary school course universally taught to girls, and in a few instances to boys, and with considerable success, the great majority—eighty-six schools—doing very satisfactory work in all classes. Of these twenty-nine were commended as good, and two excellent. Whatever deficiencies were noticeable were discovered rather in the quantity and variety of the selections than in the quality of the sewing. For example, the cutting-out prescribed for Standards V and VI had received sometimes but scant attention. Excellent samples of individual work were seen in many schools, some of the smallest comparing favourably with the largest. The exhibition of these has done much to encourage both teachers and children to put forth their best efforts, and the comparisons have had a stimulating effect upon the quality of the following year's productions. One hour and a half weekly is the time usually given to this useful branch of instruction in our most successful schools.

NATURE STUDY AND SCIENCE.—In sixty-two schools a course of work in nature study or science has been taken up, in forty-two of these in a satisfactory manner. In forming our judgment we have paid attention more especially to the method in which the subject was treated. In this connection some schools had well-arranged apparatus, showing in a graphic way the stages in the development of insect-life, while others devoted their attention to the study of local plant-life. Among the latter some of the schools had made very elaborate and comprehensive collections of the plants of the district. The science usually taken up was physics, on the lines of the syllabus.

DRAWING.—Though, according to our figures, improvement in drawing is apparently slight, the subject is as a rule satisfactory, and we are pleased to find that this year a larger number than usual have reached the "good" limit, although we have certainly been more exacting in expecting the full requirements of the new syllabus to be carried out. Many have made very laudable attempts to cover all the varieties of work prescribed, a task which for sole teachers requires considerable skill and discretion to insure each division receiving fair attention. The different branches of freehand have all received consideration. Small copies have been but little used, and where large copies, as for example those set on the blackboard, have been fully employed, there is no great loss, as the training of the eye is more likely to be secured by the latter system. Drawing from actual objects and from nature was very fully practised, to the great delight of the children, but memory drawing, which might with advantage have followed, so that the form might be distinctly stamped upon the mind, was too rarely in evidence. In drawing from memory we advise only those objects to be chosen whose shapes are worth remembering, and thus drawing can well be correlated with nature study. In some few schools excellent work in pattern

and design was exhibited, so that it was quite a revelation to find what beautiful original designs could be produced by the children, who had had little more than two years' training and experience. Both natural flower and geometric forms were effectively used, especially in two of the private schools—Sacred Heart and St. Canice's. As a rule, though, there was a lack of system in this work, which was too often neglected in the lower classes, as the straight-line work of Standards I and II was rarely picturesque. The development of taste and originality should be systematically encouraged from the beginning. Sometimes these varieties of freehand would dwarf the instrumental drawing (geometry and scale) into insignificance, and in future more attention will be expected in this quarter. Where, as in Standard VI, model-drawing is taken with freehand, the former should have bestowed upon it at least as much time as the latter. Partial neglect of the former was a frequent contributor to failures in Standard VI. Many of our teachers, too, would obtain benefit from further lessons in drawing from models, as well as in the principles of design.

SINGING is generally, but not universally, taught, fourteen sole teachers lacking the ability or the confidence to make any attempt to train their pupils. We have considered the treatment efficient in seventy-five schools, seventeen of these having shown good results.

HISTORY is very generally alternated with geography B course, so that this year only seventy-six schools have taken up the subject. Of these, forty-three treated satisfactorily the topics selected, in ten instances a commendable knowledge being displayed. We rather doubt the efficacy of the generally adopted plan of teaching history merely by way of teachers' lectures. The different facts, events, and topics, even with the enlargement of detail, come to be regarded as detached incidents, administered like separate pills, once or twice a week. True, a skilful teacher may do much to supply connections in the sequence of events, but only in the hands of a born enthusiast can the dead past be made to live again in the minds of present hearers, effects be seen to follow causes, the noble deeds of the illustrious dead be brought to stir the imagination, to quicken the pulse of a listless modern race, to enthuse zeal, patriotism, and lofty ideals.

We have little to censure and much to commend in the general conduct of our schools. On the teachers' part anxiety to learn, a desire to improve, and a willingness to undertake new methods of treatment and courses of preparation have been often apparent, and we are pleased to find a large number this year attempting to improve their status by entering for the C certificate examination.

We cannot refrain from expressing our gratitude to the Wellington Education Board, and especially to the Principal of the Wellington Training College, for their offer to throw open the college for a fortnight to any teacher who, in his holidays, desires to visit it to obtain the benefit of its instruction. The winter and spring college holidays (last week in June and first in September) are, of course, excepted. The time suggested for such visits is the last two weeks of July and the first two of August, and, by arrangement with the Board, the winter holidays might be easily adapted to the time suggested. Many, however, in this district have their long vacation in February and March (hop-picking), and should that time suit the Principal a large number of our teachers would probably be delighted to spend a part of their holidays in the profitable manner suggested.

The order and behaviour of the pupils are usually good, though some few teachers, mostly beginners, fail in the first essential of a good teacher—the maintenance of discipline. In some of the small schools teachers might well pay greater attention to the cleanliness and neatness of the schoolrooms and apparatus, as well as to the tidiness of the grounds, and in no single instance should the necessary facilities for the cleanliness of the children's hands be absent. The pupils should be encouraged also in the formation of flower-gardens and in the ornamentation of schoolrooms, so that the school and its precincts may have upon them that refining influence that is the natural accompaniment of order, cleanliness, and beauty.

We have, &c.,

To the Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

G. A. HARKNESS, M.A. } Inspectors.
A. CRAWFORD, B.A. }

GREY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Greymouth, 11th March, 1907.

I have the honour to present the following report on the schools for the year 1906, based on my observation and examination of those schools which were left unexamined by the lamented death of the late Inspector Smith. As the inspection visits for the year were made by the late Inspector, and the material available to me for forming a judgment on the work done was limited to that provided by my examination of only a portion of the schools, my remarks on methods and on the state of education in the district generally will necessarily be contracted and brief.

Besides examining the secondary class of the Grey District High School and candidates for scholarships—regarding which reports have been already presented to you—I examined sixteen schools. In all the smaller schools I examined all the standards and classified them myself.

Of the teachers, so far as the schools examined by me are an index, it may be said that, generally speaking, there are no drones, and in the great majority of cases what is needed is guidance rather than a spur. In some of the country schools an extraordinary amount of hard work has been done, and there can be no doubt as to the earnestness and energy displayed. In most cases, however, the zeal has not been "according to knowledge," and the programme of work attempted has been out of all proportion to the requirements and reasonable possibilities of the case.

In some small schools—attended perhaps by a score of children—programmes have been adopted which were long enough for schools of five hundred. In most cases, too, these elaborate programmes have been faithfully and exhaustively carried out—every jot and tittle has been religiously gone through—but such a result has only been achieved by an altogether undue pressure and strain upon both teacher and pupil. The syllabus was not devised for the purpose of killing off our teachers. Quality, rather than quantity, is the thing to be desired, and it is infinitely more important that the programme should be of practical dimensions and intelligently carried out than that teachers should attempt to cover the whole range of the syllabus in a brief twelve months.

It is fitting that expression should be here given to the great loss to education sustained by the deeply lamented death of the late Inspector Smith. Well-merited tributes to his memory and his work have already been paid by the Board, the teachers, and the Press. I need only place on record here—what has been so often stated before—that he loved his work and threw himself into it with whole-hearted enthusiasm, and that he carried out the difficult and delicate duties attaching to his position with a tact, considerateness, and sympathy that made him esteemed by all.

The Chairman, Education Board, Greymouth.

I have, &c.

E. A. SCOTT, Inspector.

WESTLAND.

SIR, —

Education Office, Hokitika, 12th February, 1907.

I have the honour to present a report on the general work of the schools for the year 1906. The tables attached to the report embody information relating to the examination of thirty-three public schools and five Catholic schools. Separate special reports have been presented with reference to the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School, the pupil-teachers, the candidates for the Board's scholarships, two school classes in woodwork, and special classes in woodwork and commercial subjects.

The following table presents information relating to annual examinations:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	48	48	15 9
" VI	77	73	13 5
" V	100	95	13 2
" IV	91	90	12 2
" III	108	106	11 6
" II	116	115	9 9
" I	128	126	9 1
Preparatory	379	347	6 8
Totals	1,047	1,000	11 5*

* Mean of average age.

The number of pupils in the Preparatory classes over eight years of age is sixty-three, a reduction of eleven on that of the previous year. The pupils in standards have in general been promoted in the whole work of each class, and the only variation that appears is the retention of seventeen in a lower class in arithmetic.

In the report for the previous year reference was made to the necessity for maintaining a fuller school year, and it is a subject of regret to find that the conditions in this respect are for the past year still more unsatisfactory. If the vacations allowed by the Board's regulations are deducted, a school year of 440 half-days remain. This number must be further reduced by a reasonable number of single holidays, and a net school year of 420 half-days may be considered satisfactory. The laxity disclosed in the returns of some of the schools points to the necessity for drawing the attention of a number of the School Committees and teachers to the urgent necessity for improvement. The inference is either that the regulations relating to the allotment of vacations have not been followed or that the number of single holidays have been far too numerous, and the result must of necessity be injurious to the welfare of the pupils. The reduction in the annual time given to school-work must cause difficulty in covering the requirements of the course of instruction, and when failure in this is not the result, overstrain in the daily work and an undue reliance on homework must characterize the operations of the year. The evil that calls for special emphasis is the granting of holidays on every pretext. This has the effect of unsettling the minds of the pupils, and produces deterioration in the power of concentration and in the habits of industry that is detrimental to true education. It is only the very satisfactory regularity of the attendance that renders possible the commendable degree of efficiency maintained in the majority of the schools. The estimate of the true value of the training of the pupils cannot, however, be based solely on the results of the annual examination. The conditions under which those results have been achieved must also be taken into account, and every effort should be made to avoid the evils of over-pressure.

The work of pupils preparing a course beyond the requirements of the Sixth Standard has been confined to nine pupils in the ordinary schools and forty pupils of the secondary class of the only district high school of the district.

Of the seventy-six pupils that composed the Sixth Standard, fifty-nine obtained certificates of proficiency and ten certificates of competency. The numbers for the previous year were seventy-five pupils, forty certificates of proficiency, and twenty-six certificates of competency. An important improvement is therefore apparent, as the number of full certificates has substantially increased. The proportion of the two kinds of certificate is now more satisfactory, as it is not intended that certificates of competency shall form an important part of the scheme of classification. There is no reason, in view of the care bestowed in the classification of the pupils in the lower standards in nearly all the schools, why the value and number of the certificates for the Sixth Standard should not be maintained or increased in future.

The work of the sole teachers demands more than passing reference, as a very important part of an Inspector's duties in districts such as Westland consists of the superintendence in an especial degree of schools where the difficult task of instructing numerous classes has to be met in many cases by sole teachers without certificates or training. Of nearly forty schools inspected half the number are in this position. While almost all the teachers are conscientious, energetic, painstaking, and, in consequence, largely successful in the instruction of their pupils, it is not to be expected that without experience or special study they can of their own accord apply the principles of education to the thorough training of the pupils in their charge. In their case, therefore, an Inspector has to enter more minutely into the work and to supervise fully the classification, the methods of instruction, the course of study, and even the conduct of the individual pupils. In short, he has to perform for these small schools the function of a headmaster. This entails frequent consultation with the teachers by correspondence, and where possible more comprehensive inspection and examination. It is fortunate in this district, where the number of pupils is small and the Inspectorship is only one of several positions held by one officer, it is possible to devote the individual care required. It is pleasing also to record as a result that in only three of the schools here referred to is there failure during the past year to achieve at least satisfactory progress. It is worth of mention, further, that practically all the teachers of these schools voluntarily include a special course of nature study, and that several add handwork, although these subjects are not part of the minimum course prescribed.

The chief difficulty in small schools under untrained teachers, and, indeed, in a few schools where the recorded qualifications of the teachers warrant the expectation of different results, is to secure attention to the necessity for maintenance throughout the school-work of an intimate connection between thought or action and expression. In almost every exercise of each school day, opportunity is given to practise the interpretation of direction by action, and ideas or processes by language. Sufficient attention to this principle is still the most serious omission in the methods employed. Lessons in lecture-form and repetition and recapitulation by the pupils do not occupy the subordinate position their comparative utility demands.

In view of the general efficiency already indicated, it is hardly necessary to advance commendation or criticism in detail on the work of the year in regard to the various subjects of the course of instruction. The introduction during the present year of the school paper suggests, however, special reference to reading. The two main purposes of this subject are—first, to afford practice and training in expression of language, and, second, to develop in some degree appreciation of literature and ability to acquire information. The first object is gained by the adoption of a course including matter suitably graded and selected with a view to the maintenance of interest. The lessons should embody ideas within the comprehension of the pupils, and the language should be, in words and form, well within their power of expression. It is then possible to expect full understanding and adequate rendering of the passages forming the oral exercises. Experience proves that in one or two of the chief reading-books in use these qualifications are not present. In general, the information is presented in an interesting form, and in the use of these books silent reading enters more readily into the methods of study. The school paper is calculated to serve both purposes, as it lends itself to the provision of lessons suitable both to oral practice and to the study of subjects of wide interest that will correct the narrowing tendency of the scheme of instruction followed by some teachers.

One good result of the adoption of a school paper will be the reduction in the amount of study, in one subject at least, that lends itself to an excessive amount of revision at the end of the year, as the paper for each month should be the work for each such period, and the estimate of the value of the preparation should be based on that condition. The maintenance of annual examinations is rendered necessary by the existence of the "leaving certificate" in the Sixth Standard. The grant of this record by Inspectors is of important benefit to the schools and to the community, but its retention is still proving detrimental in many schools by producing overpressure during two or three months immediately preceding the annual examination. Every effort should be made by teachers to remove this evil as far as possible by arranging the course so as to require even application throughout the school year.

The examination of the Catholic schools shows a gratifying increase in general efficiency. The scope of the English lessons and the method in their treatment still present the least adequate aspect of the year's work, although there is improvement that suggests greater success in the future.

I venture before closing this report to express sincere appreciation of the consideration shown by the Board in the grant to me during the year of extended leave of absence, and of the sympathetic attitude of the members with reference to the necessity for such absence from duty.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Hokitika.

A. J. MORTON, Inspector.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Christchurch, 31st January, 1907.

We have the honour to submit our general report on the working of the schools of the district during the year 1906.

At the close of this period the number of schools under the Board's control and dealt with by us as separate units was 208, the total varying slightly from quarter to quarter through the temporary closing or temporary reopening of a few conducted in private houses. Within the year practically all the schools of the district have been visited twice, an exception being made only with regard to some two or three where the small number of children, and the very rudimentary stage of attainment to be dealt with, rendered the inspection-visit a matter of minor importance. Fourteen denominational schools, located in various parts of the district from Kaikoura to Ashburton, again claimed our services as examiners; a fifteenth, opened at Woolston and not brought under our notice prior to the compilation of our time-table, had to await its opportunity in the year now begun. With a feeling of self-satisfaction, not, we hope, wholly unpardonable, we refer to the fulness with which our ordinary routine has been overtaken during the year just ended.

In the routine of inspection-visits during the year it has been found practicable (as teachers became more familiar with the new departures permissible under altered regulations) to bestow more attention upon schemes of work, to the opportunities (whether utilised or neglected) for grouping classes, and to the keeping of prescribed records. In these matters it is satisfactory to note that in the great majority of the schools a distinct advance has been made, while in a goodly number the thought, the care, and the skill devoted to such details are worthy of all praise. There were, however, instances in which neglect of specific instructions and ignorance of plain regulations were entirely inexcusable, and for which no toleration is to be expected in the current year. In a number of schools, varying in size and in conditions generally, it was found that teachers had compiled programmes of work far in excess of all reasonable requirements. There were, for instance, cases in which a scrappy and perfunctory treatment of Course A geography became the inevitable consequence of too extravagant provision for Course B. In some the scheme submitted in nature study was unduly comprehensive, and in others civic instruction had been sacrificed to make room for features of less importance.

In the "annual" or "examination" visits we have, so far as it seemed consistent with safety, brought our practice into closer conformity with the spirit of the regulations, directing our inquiry more to the treatment of subjects and to the methods adopted than to the attainments of individual pupils. Our district is fortunate in possessing a number of schools where the management is so effective and the teaching so thorough that in their case we would gladly go even further in this direction, and occasionally exempt all classes below Standard VI from formal examination for a whole year, accepting with entire confidence the headmaster's judgment in awarding or withholding promotions in the lower standards. It is also a source of satisfaction to feel that in a large section of schools all necessary ends of examination can be fully served by merely sampling the work, without calling upon each pupil to undergo a formal test in every subject. The gratification arising from these considerations is, however, still tempered by the conviction that in a number of our smaller schools the best safeguard of reasonable efficiency lies for the present in the maintenance of formal and searching examinations. In committing ourselves to this statement we wish to emphasize the point that no shadow of reproach, no sweeping imputation of incompetency, is levelled against the general body of teachers employed in these schools. We find in their ranks, even in the remotest corners of the district, workers whose unflagging industry, originality, fertility of resource, and strong personal influence command the warmest admiration. But there are others; and it is sometimes a matter for wonder that the others are not far more numerous. Lower salaries, less attractive surroundings, dearth of congenial companionship, lack of opportunities for the improvement of status, and above all the uncertainty inseparable under present conditions from all prospects of promotion sufficiently explain the absence of any keen rivalry for appointments to these positions. When, therefore, vacancies occur in such schools the only expedient is to make the most careful selection possible from the material available, and to utilise to the utmost subsequent opportunities for the guidance and training of the chosen candidates. If these candidates enter upon their duties reasonably qualified in a few leading essentials, such as interest in their work, earnestness of purpose, and a fairly liberal education, satisfactory developments may be awaited with confidence; and in that development a thorough and sympathetic examination of their schools may be made a factor of no small importance. The training of teachers must, however, be a minor portion of our duties, and we disclaim all desire to encroach upon the sphere of influence in which normal colleges under their improved conditions are accredited centres of "light and leading."

The dearth of qualified teachers willing to accept appointment in the lowest grade of schools, and the inevitable lowering of the standard of efficiency attendant upon this dearth, lead to a matter which becomes increasingly urgent from year to year. We refer to the establishment of central schools. The general decrease of school-going population in so many of the earlier settled portions of the district, and the multiplication of household, aided, and other modest establishments have had effects that were not anticipated and that are but seldom fully realised. Larger and long-established schools have been depleted, masterships which at one time were important enough to be regarded as prizes by able and ambitious young teachers now go a-begging for candidates, opportunities for gaining promotion are fewer, and, worst of all, the educational interests of many children have been to a large extent sacrificed. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that in a number of small schools the training received by the children leaves much to be desired, while the shortcomings noted are frequently felt to be more the outcome of general surroundings than the result of neglect or of incapacity on the part of the teacher. In some Australian States, notably in New South Wales, the centralisation of schools in sparsely settled districts has now been carried beyond the stage of experiment, and the consensus of intelligent opinion is entirely in its favour. The Under-Secretary and Director of Education in that State in his report

for 1905 says: "During the past year the question of restricting the multiplication of small schools by the conveyance of pupils to existing schools has been kept in view. So far the system has been brought into operation in thirteen localities, and in the large majority of these has given general satisfaction to the parents concerned. As has been the case in other countries where this method of meeting the needs of sparsely settled areas has been adopted, considerable local prejudice against the system has to be overcome. The opposition rests partly on the desire of a small detached settlement for its own school, however small it may be, and partly on the objection (not always openly expressed) to taking the children away from home employment at an hour that will enable them to catch the school conveyance. The advantages that accrue from the concentration of educational work in country districts are such that the Department is called upon to persist in the endeavour to carry it out. Educational facilities, both in buildings and equipment, can be provided in a consolidated central school to an extent financially impossible in a group of very small schools. Moreover a better teaching-staff is rendered possible, and by a more complete classification which the larger school makes practicable, the instruction is better graded, and a higher range of instruction can be imparted. These advantages are recognised in several localities where the scheme is in operation, the residents now cordially supporting it, though at first inclined to oppose it."

The report referred to contains reproductions of photographs showing the types of conveyance used. In one case two drags, each capable of carrying sixteen to twenty children, are waiting outside a school. On another page there is shown a well-equipped motor launch which daily collects and carries some twenty to thirty children to the Bayview Public School. The Inspector for the Mudgee District expresses himself so forcibly on this subject that we are again tempted to quote. He says, "When the central-school system comes to be favourably viewed, several of these small schools will be closed, to the advantage of all concerned. At present, most people do not take kindly to the idea. They hold out that they are 'entitled to a school of their own,' and profess to be better pleased to send their children to a provisional school, under a raw and inexperienced teacher, than to a larger and more efficient school four or five miles away. . . . In the two instances where the system is at work the parents are not merely satisfied, but actually enthusiastic. They say that the children are not fatigued, and that there is a marked saving in clothes. Two or three live spirits in a community can make this system a reality; but when it is suggested to the average small-school applicant he gets his back against the nearest fence, puts his hands in his pockets, simply says, 'It cannot be done here,' and makes no further effort. The large number of languishing small schools in this district makes an officer cautious about bringing more into existence, as well as increasing expenditure."

The District of North Canterbury offers exceptional facilities for centralising schools; and, if reliance may be placed upon opinion gleaned in the course of conversation with parents and others taking an enlightened interest in education, there is already in some localities now served by small schools a disposition to regard with favour any scheme conducive to efficiency in working and economy in administration.

The statistical sections of this report present no new features of special importance. Some decrease is noted in the enrolment of Standard VII pupils, there is a slight increase in those presented in Standard VI, and a rising tendency is observed in the average ages for the three lowest standards. While indisposed to magnify the importance of the last item we think it well to remind teachers that unfriendly critics might take advantage of the fact, and indeed it may frankly be admitted that we do regard nine years as a regrettably mature age for First Standard. Of 1,468 pupils enrolled in Standard VI, 810 qualified for certificates of proficiency, the competency certificate was awarded to 442, and 178 failed to obtain either certificate.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	359	329	14 9
" VI	...	...	...	...	1,468	1,430	13 9
" V	...	...	...	...	1,904	1,834	13 0
" IV	...	...	...	...	2,362	2,295	12 1
" III	...	...	...	...	2,474	2,404	11 1
" II	...	...	...	...	2,300	2,246	10 1
" I	...	...	...	...	2,260	2,191	9 0
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	6,493	5,888	7 0
Totals	...	...	...	...	19,620	18,617	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

In the following paragraphs we propose, in compliance with the terms of Regulation 12, to discuss the work done in the several prescribed subjects of instruction.

READING.—As far as fluency and expression are concerned, the teaching of reading may be regarded as satisfactory, with notable strength in the case of some of the better schools of the district. During the past year more frequent use has been made of previously unseen reading-tests, with the more satisfactory results in the case of those pupils who had covered a wider course of reading than the minimum prescribed by the regulations, and who had availed themselves of the facilities afforded by school or district libraries. We are glad to note a disposition to add to the number of reading-books used by

pupils before reaching Standard I, a practice which might with advantage be extended to the lower standard classes. We have long felt that the introduction of one or more additional reading-books in Standards I and II—*i.e.*, altogether three or four books per year—would in many ways be of great advantage to the pupils. The demand made on children at this stage in comprehending the subject-matter of the lessons is not great, so that there is ample time to increase the amount of the reading-text. The wider experience thus gained would create greater interest both for teacher and pupils, and the beneficial results would be apparent at each subsequent stage of the school course. In the upper classes, more particularly in the country schools, the matter presents greater difficulty. In these classes it becomes necessary to study the text with some fulness, so that the amount of reading-matter it is possible to overtake is relatively limited.

Comprehension of the reading-matter varies considerably from school to school, and in the majority of cases still leaves much to be desired. The objective of all teaching, so far as reading is concerned, is, or ought to be, the interpretation of written or printed matter, and any training which fails to realise or attain to this cannot be deemed satisfactory. In a few schools most encouraging results are obtained, the pupils showing an intelligent appreciation of the contents of their reading-books, including the poetry selected for recitation, and are able, moreover, to find fitting language for the conveyance of their impressions and thoughts. In others, however, though the meaning of words taken singly is often well known, pupils seem unable to explain the gist of a sentence in clear and appropriate language. The special and growing importance rightly attached to this phase of the reading-lesson justifies us in again referring to what has so often been mentioned in previous reports.

As an aid to both reading and comprehension it seems necessary again to draw attention to the need and importance of utilising the blackboard—a piece of apparatus which might with advantage be more freely used. A few of the more difficult words, or those suggestive of matters to which attention is needed, written quickly on the blackboard during the progress of the lesson, would furnish convenient material for rapid revision at its close. If we are to succeed in cultivating a taste for good books it is of the first importance that pupils should understand and be able to express the meaning of what they read. Moreover, scarcely any feature of the school-work has a more direct bearing than this on the writing of composition.

SPELLING.—Improved methods of teaching spelling have received wider recognition during the past year, and the evidence supplied by the Inspectors' tests and by the written exercises in composition indicates that on the whole spelling is a strong subject in the schools of this district.

WRITING.—In the majority of the schools this subject has received its fair share of attention; in others the quality of the slate-work and the condition of the copy-books point to the need of improved methods and closer supervision. In the upper classes the style of work in the exercise-books and in the examination-papers affords the best evidence of the progress made. We would again emphasize the importance of insisting on a correct method of holding the pen, and of a proper posture at the desk.

COMPOSITION.—In the lower portion of the school oral composition continues to receive intelligent and for the most part successful treatment. It is not at all unusual to find pupils in Class P and Standard I who are able to discuss suitable subjects with ease and freedom; and in Standard II those who make a most gratifying appearance in setting forth their ideas in writing. The work in Standard III, moreover, is on the whole well done, the exercises being generally free from grammatical errors, and showing evidence of teaching-effort which recognises the importance of a correct use of words, and of viewing the grammar and analysis lessons in the light of composition aids. In the upper classes, however, especially in the smaller schools, the results are not always so satisfactory. The length of the composition exercises should naturally increase with the age and school experience of the pupils, for in the upper classes greater facility of expression is or should be gained, and hence greater power of amplifying a subject acquired. In view of the short exercises so frequently submitted, this aspect of the work does not appear to have received the attention it deserves. A very important test of efficient teaching, so far as the upper classes are concerned, is the power to discuss and expand a subject with some degree of fulness, and a satisfactory response to such a test may be fairly expected from the finished product of a course extending over some six years.

Scarcely any feature of the school-work is of greater importance than freedom and accuracy of verbal expression. If we wish to explain to any one a matter of difficulty and are not clear about it ourselves, the net result is confusion. Conversely, if we are able to offer a clear and sufficient explanation, the probability is that the matter is fully realised and understood. So with children, if the child can give definite and accurate expressions to his thoughts he must have a clear conception of what he is discussing. Hence fulness and accuracy of verbal expression make for clearness of conception, dispel or at least minimise confusion of thoughts, foster mental activity, and by demanding sustained and systematic mental effort, stimulate intelligence and thought-power. Many teachers, though recognising this, fail to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by so much of the school-work—*e.g.*, oral answering in arithmetic, reading, geography, and nature study. The following questions and answers given at a recent examination will serve to show what is meant. *Question*: What do you understand by "the decay of the Baronage?"—*Answer*: Dying out. *Question*: What is meant by "He was making spasmodic efforts to smile?"—*Answer*: Very hard. To give full, and, as far as children can, accurate replies to these and similar questions, not only demands a highly necessary mental effort, but also requires the pupil to find grammatical and correct English with which to clothe his ideas, and so provides a very direct and useful training in composition.

In small schools the difficulty of finding time for this work, though a very real one, is by no means insuperable. Teachers resolute to reject all incomplete and inaccurate answers, and determined to accept only those worded with fulness, will be surprised at the rapidity with which the power of verbal expression will grow.

ARITHMETIC.—Though classes and even schools are occasionally found in which this subject fails to escape criticism, the general tendency is towards improvement. Accurate results are secured more

frequently than in the past, and increased intelligence is shown in setting out the processes by which answers have been obtained. There is yet, however, in many cases a considerable margin for further development. The work of Standard I has not unfrequently proved disappointing. It ought not to be so in the larger and fully staffed schools. In the sole-charge school the difficulty of finding sufficient time for oral practice on the lines of the syllabus must go far to extenuate apparent weakness, and to justify some adherence to the practice previously followed. An honest attempt to combine the best features of both methods may, in the case of these schools, be accepted as a fair compromise. In dealing with the more advanced stages of the subject we strongly discountenance the idea that a working knowledge of formulæ constitutes sufficient training, or indeed deserves the name of training, and we deprecate the adoption of methods tending to perpetuate the belief that proficiency in arithmetic means the knowledge of a long list of separate rules. The unity of the subject and the essential identity of its rudimentary and fundamental processes should always be prominent features in the teaching.

GEOGRAPHY.—Course A: Though this branch is well taught in many schools—*i.e.*, taught with due regard to local conditions, and in such a way that pupils are trained to reach conclusions from experiment and observations—there still remains much to be done in utilising to the full our natural conditions and surroundings as a gathering-ground for material on which to work. Few districts in New Zealand are more favoured in this respect than our own province. The river in its work of vertical and lateral erosion, both river and sea as destructive and constructive agents, the circulation of water underground, the work of snow, ice, and rain in shaping the land surface, the manifestation of volcanic activity, the elevation of land areas, can all be studied within the limits of this district; and yet it sometimes happens that one finds pupils who apparently know more about the work of the Mississippi or the Nile than about that of the Ashburton or the Waimakariri. Some schools, in fact, have not yet broken away from text-book traditions, with the result that the subject becomes one of memorising, and hence loses much of its educative value. This to some extent has arisen from a misconception of the aims and intention of the syllabus, which has led to unduly wide and ambitious programmes of work being attempted. It is chiefly the effort to cover these which has caused attention to be drawn from the school surroundings to the text-book. If the subject is to become an educative medium of real value the work must not be hurried, but on the contrary must deal thoroughly and perhaps slowly with the various phases presented. It is manifestly one of those subjects in which the spirit of the teaching is of paramount importance, the question to be asked at the close of the year being not, How much has the class learnt? but, How has it been taught? and here it might be well perhaps to mention that programmes of work submitted in other subjects—notably in history, Course B geography, science, and health—are sometimes much longer than the time at the teacher's disposal warrants. The elasticity of the syllabus allows considerable latitude in plotting out schemes of work in order that the character and conditions of the school may be duly considered, and that the programmes adopted, whilst sufficiently liberal to require persistent and strenuous effort, are yet well within the limits of what can profitably be overtaken. The question of grouping for geography A in small schools is one about which there seems to be some difference of opinion. To take classes Standards II to VI or even Standards IV to VI together has always appeared to us to be a mistake, partly because the course is a progressive one and partly because of the wide intelligence-range between the extreme members of the group. A much better plan is to break ground with Standard II separated from the other standards, and take the four remaining classes in two divisions, Standards III and IV forming the lower group while Standards V and VI form the higher. Even with this arrangement considerable care is needed to avoid or at least minimise overlapping of work.

The requirements of Course B geography have in most cases been satisfied by the use of suitable reading-books, and, speaking generally, the subject has been well treated. We would like, however, to see more use made of picture diagrams, drawings, and specimens, in illustrating resources and products, and in expanding and impressing the subject-matter of the reading-book generally. It is not such a difficult matter to collect suitable pictures, and when once a beginning has been made it is surprising how a collection will grow under the stimulating influence of the earnest worker. The local papers with their many excellent illustrations of the colony's places of interest, beauty-spots, resources, and industries, picture-papers published in England and elsewhere showing life and scenes in other lands, advertising-sheets and guide-books illustrating routes of travel, picture post-cards printed in such immense numbers, are some of the sources from which supplies may be drawn. The pictures themselves should be mounted on brown paper—a matter of no great difficulty—otherwise they will soon come to pieces under the constant handling which must accompany their proper use.

DRAWING.—A good deal of unevenness is seen in this subject, the appearance made varying from good to moderate. In the lower forms the old traditions of drawing small patterns is still generally adhered to, whereas most authorities recommend free-arm exercises at this stage and the introduction of smaller drawings only as pupils gain facility in the use of pencil or brush. Design-drawing, which is compulsory in all standard classes, does not always receive the attention it deserves. The initial stages of the branch should find expression early in school life, and the subject should progress by easy gradations as pupils learn to apply some of the simpler principles involved. The introduction of original work invariably invests a subject with greater interest, and so supplies a powerful incentive to steady application. This in itself is a very real reason why this phase of the drawing syllabus should receive special encouragement. The co-ordination of drawing with other subjects—notably with nature study—might with advantage be more extensively and more universally undertaken. Many of the specimens collected would no doubt form excellent drawing copies, whose use would serve to link up the subjects and add to the interest created by each. The requirements of Standard VI make either freehand drawing from simple models or elementary solid geometry compulsory, in addition to the freehand drawing suitable to this stage, a matter which has apparently escaped the notice of a few teachers.

HISTORY AND CIVIC INSTRUCTION.—In all but a few schools suitable provision has been made for instruction in this subject. In most cases the requirements have been met by the use of suitable

historical readers, but in the larger schools direct oral instruction on carefully graded courses of lessons have been more frequently employed. During the past year an improvement has been noticeable in the method of dealing with civic instruction, and in several schools the treatment of this branch of the subject is deserving of commendation.

NATURE STUDY.—This subject, referred to at some length in our last year's report, still continues to grow in favour and in usefulness. Its value as an educative medium, and its possibilities in supplying a common fund on which to draw for so much of the other school-work, are gradually causing it to become one of the most welcome additions to the present syllabus of instruction. The necessity for co-ordination, however, does not yet seem to be fully recognised; and by this we mean not only co-ordination with other branches of school-work—*e.g.*, composition, drawing, arithmetic, geography—but the need for connecting the several lessons one with the other, and for making the work done in any one class or group prepare the way for what is to follow in the next higher class or group. This applies to work in all grades of schools, it being just as important that connection be made and overlapping avoided between classes in large schools as between those in smaller ones. In the course of our visits during the year we have had to draw attention repeatedly to programmes of work in which these matters were overlooked. Amongst the small schools there are still to be found some where Course A geography is made to serve for instruction in nature study as well. The wisdom of this step is not always clear; for although there are cases where the treatment of the geography course is sufficiently comprehensive and thorough to serve all the purposes of a nature-study programme, as a general rule the geography lessons are by no means so rich in supplying such material as is usually given under the name of nature study; and here we would like to refer briefly to the grouping in the case of sole-charge schools. We cannot think that to mass the whole school for instruction in this subject is likely to be followed by the best results; for such an arrangement must be attended by a good deal of inattention and restlessness in view of the varying range of intelligence between the classes. A better plan would be to divide the school into two groups, separating Standards IV to VI or Standards III to VI from the lower classes. In this way lessons could be given having due regard to the mental capacity of the pupil, with the result that the work in each division would be more satisfactory, educative, and thorough. For instance, the lower group might in a simple way examine the parts of a plant—root, stem, leaves, &c.—and find fitting language to describe the results of their observations, whilst the functions of these members and the processes by which their functions are discharged might with advantage be left for the upper classes to deal with. It is not unusual to find the structure of the flower studied with some fulness in the infant department or by the lower classes, occasionally indeed the function is similarly treated. We have grave doubts as to the wisdom of this selection; for quite apart from the difficulty, not to say irksomeness, which little children must experience in remembering long and unfamiliar terms, the questions involved and processes discussed are beyond the intelligence-level of this stage of school life. As the result of some experience we think it better to defer consideration of the functions of plant organs, except the most elementary and obvious, until the higher classes are reached.

Towards the middle of the year an instructor in agriculture was appointed, who since then has held weekly classes for teachers, and in other ways has been directing the work of rural science. We strongly recommend all teachers, the conditions of whose schools render the work possible, to take advantage of the instruction being given, and enter on a course of cottage gardening. This after all is only a more practical application of nature study, and one, moreover, which should in all cases either follow or attend the work done indoors. Sole-charge teachers need not be deterred by the thought of long and troublesome classes of instruction. The notes on agriculture issued by the Board set forth the kind of work which might be undertaken by the upper classes, and are intended to indicate the range of the subject rather than the amount to be done each year. This, as well as the details of the course, will probably vary with the school.

HEALTH.—Some misconception still exists as to the requirements of the syllabus in this direction. Lessons on health are compulsory in all schools in classes Standards III to VI, though the programmes of work will necessarily vary with the conditions under which the school-work is carried on. In the larger schools a short course in each class should be worked through from year to year, whilst in the smaller centres the subject-matter of the reading-books and the natural progress of school life will supply opportunities for the required instruction, which need not necessarily be of a formal character. In a few schools physiology was presented as the additional subject, furnishing a training in elementary scientific method in compliance with clause 33 of the Regulations for Inspection and Examination of Schools. This arrangement cannot be accepted as satisfactory unless the subject be treated in a much more practical and realistic way than that which usually—indeed invariably—obtains. During the past year a good deal of attention has been given to physical education, teachers more and more concerning themselves with the rational type of physical training which aims at “the increasing of human vitality under the guidance of scientific knowledge.” Breathing exercises, having due regard to physiological conditions, now form a part of the programmes of an increasingly large number of schools, and sets of physical exercises with some definite end in view are gone through at regular intervals in practically all schools.

MANUAL TRAINING.—In this necessary part of the school curriculum, which has attained such prominence in other countries and in other New Zealand centres, we hope to see a considerable advance during the forthcoming year. We refer more particularly to the work of the upper classes in woodwork, cookery, and cottage gardening. It seemed so highly desirable that all pupils in Standards VI and V should receive training in one or other of these subjects when conditions render their introduction possible, that the Board, in addition to an instructor in agriculture, has appointed Mr. J. H. Howell, Director of Technical Education in this city, to organize and direct the woodwork and cookery classes, and we have every confidence that under his able guidance the movement will make substantial and satisfactory progress. It is hoped that before the close of the present year there will be in operation a sufficient number of training centres to enable all pupils in the two upper classes of the city and

suburban schools to receive instruction under such conditions as will minimise the necessary absence from the class-room.

GENERAL.—The thanks of the community are due to Mr. J. Studholme for his generous action in donating prizes for the best-kept school garden and school grounds in the Ashburton County. Recognition on the part of our leading citizens of the importance of this and other phases of school life is of the greatest service in furthering the cause in which all have a common interest.

The order and discipline in our schools in the great majority of cases is highly creditable to all concerned, and pupils are almost everywhere well mannered and well behaved. In the service itself much earnestness and enthusiasm are shown in endeavouring to give expression to the spirit underlying recent developments and changes, and—sometimes under conditions of considerable difficulty—in the faithful, conscientious, and intelligent discharge of important and onerous duties.

We have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Christchurch.

THOS. RITCHIE, B.A.
T. S. FOSTER, M.A.
E. K. MULGAN, M.A. } Inspectors.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 13th March, 1907.

We have the honour to present our annual report for the year 1906.

At the close of the year there were seventy-six schools in operation. In addition to the public schools we examined the five Roman Catholic schools of the district.

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.
			Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	174	132	15 1
" VI	408	398	13 8
" V	514	490	12 11
" IV	605	579	12 0
" III	622	588	11 0
" II	609	588	10 0
" I	631	595	8 10
Preparatory	1,613	1,460	6 11
Totals	5,149	4,830	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

There is an increase for the year of sixty-eight in the roll-number. The increase is greatest in the Preparatory classes and in Standard I, while there is a falling-off of twenty-seven in Standard VII. Of the 147 pupils of Standard VII, 118 are on the rolls of the district high schools as against 130 last year. Only nineteen pupils of Standard VII are found in schools other than district high schools, as against forty-four during the previous year. The number of pupils present at our annual visit was 4,830, an increase of one from last year; but in explanation of this it is to be noted that owing to an outbreak of measles at Geraldine the number of absentees from that school alone was 119 out of a roll-number of 209. But for this the increase would have been something over one hundred instead of one, for with the Geraldine returns omitted the attendance throughout the district was 96 per cent. of the roll-number.

The following is a summary of results for the five Roman Catholic schools:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
			Yrs. Mos.
Standard VII	9	9	14 9
" VI	47	46	14 2
" V	50	47	13 4
" IV	71	69	12 7
" III	59	55	11 8
" II	61	60	10 8
" I	50	46	9 6
Preparatory	180	158	7 10
Totals	527	490	11 9*

Mean of average age.*

Of the forty-six pupils in Standard VI present at our annual visit fourteen gained certificates of proficiency and twenty-four certificates of competency. The roll-number in these schools is decreasing. In 1897 it was 731, and since then it has steadily declined.

In our report last year we took some trouble to make clear the distinction between the two grades of certificates obtainable by pupils of the Sixth Standard, the higher certificate being now known as the certificate of proficiency and the lower as the certificate of competency. At the same time we drew attention to an amendment of the regulations defining the standard of attainment for the certificate of proficiency, the purpose of which was to raise the standard, and, as we anticipated, in consequence of this change the number of certificates of proficiency obtained under the new conditions has been very appreciably reduced. In 1905, out of 378 pupils examined in Standard VI, 235 gained certificates of proficiency and forty-eight certificates of competency, whereas during the past year, out of 398 pupils examined, 182 gained certificates of proficiency and 145 certificates of competency. It is hoped that those who have this year qualified for the certificate of proficiency will be better prepared to take full advantage of a course of instruction in the classes of the secondary schools or of the district high schools, in which the possession of this certificate entitles the holder to a free place.

Our classification of the schools, according to the degree of satisfaction with which they are fulfilling their proper functions, is as follows: Good to very good, twenty-one schools with 3,181 pupils; satisfactory, thirty-three schools with 1,401 pupils; fair, nineteen schools with 499 pupils; moderate, three schools with 68 pupils. Of a total of seventy-six schools examined, fifty-four with 4,582 pupils are in a satisfactory condition, the remaining twenty-two with 567 pupils ranking below satisfactory. On comparing this general estimate with that of last year we are pleased to report that it indicates a gratifying measure of improvement; and we affirm this in spite of the fact that the number of schools ranking below satisfactory seems sufficiently large to arrest attention and to demand an explanation. The schools in this group are nearly all sole-teacher schools; there has been great difficulty in procuring teachers for such schools; the teachers employed in them are in many cases uncertificated and usually of very limited experience; and in more than half the number there has been a change of teacher during the year.

As in past years we have found the majority of the pupils in the larger schools and in a fair number of the smaller schools able to read with fluency from the books they have used during the year. But with this fluency there was not always a corresponding degree of intelligence and expression. In a recent novel this is the description of the reading in a small country school: "The familiar sing-song monotony of the reading-lesson was gone, and in its place a real and vivid picturing of the scenes described or enacted. It was all simple, natural, and effective." We are told of this teacher that she was accustomed "to arrest the attention of the class with the question 'What is the author seeing?' and 'How does he try to show it to us?'" Reading to her consisted in the ability to see what the author saw and the art of telling it, and to set forth with grace that thing in the author's words." This teacher had not been a pupil-teacher, a point worth pondering when we set ourselves to discover why we so seldom find the reading natural and effective and why the children so often fail to set forth with grace what the author has written. Wherever it is the custom to keep the children reading and re-reading from one or two books during the year till all the freshness and interest of the lessons have been threshed out, we shall look in vain for the development of the finer qualities of reading. Nor shall we be likely to awaken in the children the desire to read for their own enjoyment, and so acquire that facility in silent reading which makes the companionship of books a never-failing pleasure and furnishes them with the key that opens all the treasure-houses of literature. It is simply astounding to find how great is the number of children in our schools who have read little or nothing beyond what they have been compelled to read in their school-books. Most Committees spend yearly very considerable sums on books to be given as prizes or as gifts to the children before they disperse for their summer holiday. The practice has much to recommend it; but if a little of this money were held in reserve to purchase for use in the school the story-book readers that are now specially published to suit the pupils at all stages of their course, we are convinced their action would be appreciated by the teachers and would be in the best interests of the children.

The state of matters with regard to most of the subjects of instruction varies so little from year to year that it is unnecessary to go into details in every annual report. We desire again, however, to impress upon the teachers the very great importance pertaining to one form of handwork that stands a chance of neglect in the alluring pursuit of newer devices for the cultivation of accuracy of hand and eye and for the development of intelligence through the special forms of exercise adopted. We refer to handwriting, the attainment of excellence in which must always be a matter of supreme concern in the primary school. We have some schools where excellent specimens of writing are produced, but we have no doubt that with more skilful methods and untiring supervision a very great improvement might be made in many schools, the teachers of which show too much complacency with work that in its production has cost little concentration of effort on the part either of teacher or of pupil, and in its result is devoid of any features of merit. We would also point out in connection with the programme of English as set forth in the syllabus that, simplified as the demands in grammar have been, teachers must not come to the conclusion that the teaching of grammar has now no place in the scheme of instruction. Treated in the right way it has a very real place, and rightly so, not only for the fine intellectual training it supplies, a most desirable thing in itself, but also for the indispensable aid it affords in composition or essay-writing in the case of those children who are unaccustomed either in the playground or in the home to the correct use of their mother-tongue.

Some form of handwork is now practised in the majority of our schools; in the lower classes plasticine-modelling, brush-drawing, paper-folding, and carton-work finding most favour, and in the upper classes cardboard-modelling and more advanced brush-work. The Board employs a specially qualified teacher of cookery for the training of the girls of the Fifth and Sixth Standards in the larger centres, and purposes appointing a second teacher to cope with the increased demand for such classes. An instructor in woodwork is also employed in conducting classes for the boys of the same standards.

Classes for practical instruction in elementary agriculture are recognised in seven schools, part of the school grounds being laid out as gardens, in which experimental work is carried on.

Many of the teachers continue to display enthusiasm in the teaching of lessons that come under the head of nature study. In this connection it may be remarked that the splendid attendance of teachers at the series of twelve lectures delivered at Timaru by the Principal and staff of the Lincoln College of Agriculture was specially gratifying to the Board. By arrangement the lectures were very fully reported in the *Timaru Herald* and afterwards published in pamphlet form; and it is safe to say that a great deal of good must ultimately come from the fresh interest in agricultural science which the lectures aroused, not only amongst the teachers for whom they were primarily intended, but also among the farmers of South Canterbury, many of whom found food for reflection and discussion in what the lecturers so clearly set before them.

For regularity of attendance the district as a whole has for many years held a high place, and with the good roads and excellent climate for which South Canterbury has a reputation it would be a disgrace were it otherwise. Last year the district held third place. There is an aspect of attendance that the yearly returns do not give prominence to—namely, the number of days a school has been open during the year. Looking to the entries of attendance against the names of pupils on the examination schedules and the possible number of attendances in each school, we find very few schools have been open for more than four hundred half-days from the date of one annual visit to the next. The leakage is not in the undue prolongation of the usual summer vacation, but in too frequent single-day holidays that so far from being recreative are in reality vexatious and unsettling. It would be well for the Board to fix both the maximum and the minimum number of holidays to be observed in all schools throughout the year.

In a good many cases teachers have not fully complied with the demands of Regulation 5 in respect of drawing up for each term or quarter schemes of work for the classes; and the records of their periodical examinations in accordance with these schemes are not always presented to us with sufficient clearness. It is in the smaller schools that partial neglect of this regulation or incompleteness in the information supplied to us has been most noticeable, and in these very schools, on account of the frequent changes of teachers, the absolute necessity of strict adherence to the regulations is of the highest moment. We trust that those who have shown any remissness in this matter in the past will duly appreciate its importance and in the future give it their full attention.

We have much pleasure in reporting favourably on the order and discipline of the schools, and on the manners and general behaviour of the scholars.

We have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Timaru.

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A. } Inspectors.
A. BELL, M.A. }

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Education Office, Dunedin, 21st March, 1907.

We have the honour to present our general report for the year 1906.

The following table shows the number of pupils on the roll, the number present at the annual visit, and the average age of each class:—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	410	366	14 10
" VI	...	...	...	...	1,452	1,427	13 8
" V	...	...	...	...	1,996	1,952	12 10
" IV	...	...	...	...	2,287	2,227	12 0
" III	...	...	...	...	2,354	2,295	10 11
" II	...	...	...	...	2,264	2,221	9 11
" I	...	...	...	...	2,194	2,152	8 10
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	6,456	6,053	6 10
Totals	...	...	...	...	19,413	18,693	11 1·8*

* Mean of average ages.

As compared with 1905 there is a slight increase in three and a considerable decrease in five classes, the total decrease being 0·85 per cent. of the roll-number. It is perhaps a good sign that the increase is chiefly in the lowest class, where it amounts to 1·3 per cent. of the roll-number of the class for 1905.

We group the schools according to efficiency as follows: Good to very good, 50 per cent.; satisfactory, 42 per cent.; fair, 7 per cent.; weak or very weak, 1 per cent. The percentage in the second group is the same as that for 1905; but the third group has decreased by 3 and the fourth by 2 per cent., while the first group has increased by 5 per cent., a very satisfactory increase in the percentage of good schools.

The following table shows the mean efficiency marks in subjects: Compulsory subjects (English)—Reading, satisfactory; composition, fair; spelling, good; writing, good; recitation, satisfactory; mean of English, satisfactory; arithmetic, satisfactory; drawing, good; singing, satisfactory; physical instruction, good; geography, satisfactory; history, satisfactory; mean of compulsory subjects, satisfactory. Additional subjects—Nature study and science, satisfactory; handwork, satisfactory; geography, satisfactory; history, satisfactory; needlework, very good; mean of additional subjects, satisfactory.

A comparison of the results of this table with those of the corresponding table for 1905 shows a slight advance in the compulsory and a slight decline in the additional subjects. As a general rule the junior classes, Standards I, II, and III, did well in most of their work; but, owing to too easy promotion from Standard IV to Standard V and from Standard V to Standard VI, there was in these classes too often a long tail of weaklings that reduced the efficiency mark by a grade. We have no desire to return to the old vogue—namely, classification and promotion on the results gained in the Inspector's examination; but we are sure that the transference of the classification from the Inspector to the teacher has not made for thoroughness of work in the senior classes, and thoroughness of work is of the greatest importance in education. It is, we think, certain that a considerable proportion of pupils promoted from Standard V to Standard VI would have profited greatly by another year's work in Standard V, and that many who obtained the proficiency certificate and passed on to the high schools would have profited by another year's work in Standard VI. The pupils we are now sending to the high schools are greatly inferior to those of the days when the only avenue to free places lay through scholarships and the winning of 50 per cent. of marks in the scholarship examinations. Those sent up last year were superior to those of the previous year; for the Department, very wisely in our opinion, raised the standard of the test for free places; but the standard set is still too low as a test for fitness to enter upon secondary work. This is especially the case in grammar and arithmetic.

The number of schools presenting a Standard VII class fell from seventy in 1905 to forty-six in 1906, a drop for which we cannot certainly account; but we may, we think, venture to suggest that it is in part owing to the circumstance that teachers receive little encouragement to induce children to remain at school after winning the proficiency certificate, for a Standard VII class adds a great deal of work and brings with it very inadequate remuneration. If they do work of the same kind and quality as that of the district high schools, they ought, in our opinion, to be paid at the same rate per pupil.

Of the forty-six classes referred to above, four were absent on examination day, and nine had been instructed only in Standard VI work. The following table shows our estimate of the efficiency of the remaining thirty-three: Very good, 5; good, 9; satisfactory, 10; fair, 7; weak, 2. It is probable that had the absent classes been examined they would have found themselves in the category "weak."

Head teachers are required by regulation to draw up schemes of work in all subjects for the several classes of their school, to examine the classes periodically, and to record their estimate of the work done in the period covered by the examination. This requirement they do not all comply with as fully as they should. Moreover, they do not exact from their assistants a sufficiently detailed record of the work done day by day or week by week. In most subjects they have been exempted from the tyranny of the syllabus, but they have not realised that the exemption has brought with it the corresponding responsibility of careful arrangement and co-ordination, not only of the work of each class, but also of the work and methods of each class with those of the classes above and below. It is to his scheme of work and his time-table that we look to discover a teacher's conception of his responsibilities in this sense.

We now proceed to make a few remarks on some of the subjects of instruction. Reading is generally fluent, accurate, and expressive, though not seldom marred by indistinctness and faulty vowel sounds. The remedy for these defects has more than once been suggested in our reports. In deference to the teaching of the old saw, "Take care of the consonants and the vowels will take care of themselves," teachers belabour the consonants and pay scant heed to the claims of the vowels. The saw does not, we venture to say, express the experience of any careful observer. It is the vowel sounds that constitute the spoken music of a language; and if the vowels are well attended to the consonants will give little trouble. Still, judged from its elocutionary side, the reading of the majority of the schools is, for children, distinctly good. It is the intellectual side that is, except in a minority of the schools, wanting in effective treatment. How to train the child to realise mentally the images symbolised by the words, that is the difficulty. In the images themselves there is, in nine cases out of ten, little or no difficulty; for they have, in some way more or less perfect, come within the child's personal experience. Symbolised by words of the market-place, they would be mentally realised at once as old friends. It is their literary draping that is new; but their draping is precisely the draping with which the child must become familiar if the chief purpose for which he learns to read is to be realised. The teacher can do much to lessen the difficulty of reading with mental vision by keeping constantly before his pupils the fact that in most cases the images are the images of things that have come within their experience; and he can lessen the difficulties of language by using in his intercourse with his pupils less of the language of the market-place and the nursery and more of the language of literature, which is at bottom only the better sort of speech answering to the better sort of thought and fancy, and is therefore precisely the thing we have to make part of the texture of the child's mind if he is to learn to express himself with clearness and accuracy, and read with profit and pleasure. Language is primarily spoken speech, and therefore the spoken word should precede the written. Due recognition of this ought to suggest what should be the language of intercourse in the schoolroom. Little is gained and much is lost by talking down to children.

In arithmetic the mere working of examples occupies too prominent a place, foundation-work receiving too scant attention even in the best schools. The result is that children learn by dint of practice to work difficult examples without gaining a firm grasp of principles and without receiving adequate training in appreciation of reasoning. The attainment of facility in working examples is, of course, a proper aim; but it should not be placed before training in thought and expression. Indeed, to do so is in the long run but to retard the progress of the pupils, for it does not give them power, does not train them to do for themselves in unfamiliar cases. The general laws of arithmetical operations can easily be so illustrated as to enable children to realise that, even when dealing with particular numbers, they are dealing with principles that are applicable to all numbers alike. In every subject it is the general that should be kept in view, and no treatment of a subject that does not make ideas its ultimate aim is worthy treatment. The little text-books used by the pupils suggest and contain a large amount of experimental work in weighing and measuring; but, strange to say, this is generally

neglected or, if not neglected, done in so imperfect a way as to make it almost valueless. No experimental work is satisfactory that does not include (1) an accurate verbal statement of the principle the experiment is designed to demonstrate, and (2) the memorising of the statement. First understanding and expression, then remembering, these are the essentials of successful work in every subject. The truth is that the teaching of arithmetic should have two aims—namely, facility in the performance of arithmetical operations and development of thought and expression. It is unquestionable that continuous practice in expressing arithmetical operations in logical symbolism is of much greater educational value than is the example-mongering that too often goes by the name of arithmetic. Teachers sometimes complain that the text-books prescribed do not contain enough examples. In our opinion they err on the side rather of too many than of too few. If the examples worked were made to yield all they have to give, the books contain more than enough. Then, too, there is in this as in other subjects too much unnecessary explanation, difficulties being anticipated and removed by the teachers before they are encountered by the pupils. It cannot be too carefully remembered that what matters is not what is done for the pupil, but what they do for themselves; and of doing for themselves there is, we regret to say, too little in all our schools, but especially in those in which there is a teacher for every class. It is the case, not “of forty feeding like one,” but of seventy fed like one.

The reference to seventy reminds us of what we said in our last general report about the inadequate staffing of the schools. We do not intend to repeat here what we said there; but we cannot refrain from expressing our surprise that so serious an indictment should have been ignored by the Press and the teachers. Those who are curious to see the indictment will find it on page 35, paragraphs 4 and 5, and page 36, paragraphs 1 and 2, of our report. There never was a time when our schools were adequately staffed; and, owing to increase of work and changes in methods, they are less adequately staffed than they were.

We are seldom able to award the mark “good” to composition; for, even when the content is good, the form in which it is cast is too often marred by serious errors in grammar and setting. Grammar is the bed-rock of correct form in speech, and the time will never come when we can afford to neglect it. This, we regret to say, appears not to be the view of the Education Department, which now controls every detail of education, even to the books that may be used in the teaching of a subject and the kind of question an Inspector should give in arithmetic and composition.

We are glad to be able to report steady improvement in the teaching of geography and science. The facts of these departments of work may not be so well known as they used to be, but they are certainly approached and studied in a way that is more in accordance with the method of research. In this connection we would suggest that less money should be spent in wall maps and more in globes and pictures of typical geographical and industrial features. A Navy League map and a good physical map of New Zealand would be a sufficient equipment of wall maps, for the personal study of his atlas is the best form of map-study for the pupil. Every school should have a good globe and a set of stereoscopes and stereoscopic pictures. These would be of vastly greater service to the pupils than are the wall maps now so liberally supplied.

Handwork is practised in a large proportion of our schools, but it is our experience that too much attention is paid to mere doing and too little to the manner of doing and the expression of what is done and what the doing teaches. In the accurate expression of accurate impressions lies the chief educational value of this as of other work.

In elementary agriculture teachers have been feeling their way, doing a large amount of good work, but generally giving prominence to the craft side and the production of good crops of flowers and vegetables instead of to the training in habits of observation, experimentation, and inference that such work is designed to give; and what they set themselves to do most of them do well. It now remains to give less attention to craft and crop and more to observation, experiment, and orderly development of thought and expression. In gardening, observation best grows out of experiment, the experiment asking the question and the pupils watching for the answer. Here, accurate quantitative measurements and their accurate record are of great value. It is precisely in this department of the work that occurs our most signal failure, the records often being so imperfect, ill-written, and unmethodical as to be nearly valueless. In the majority of the schools insufficient attention is given to care of the tools, all of which should, after use, be cleaned and oiled, and neatly placed in the tool-house. On the whole, however, steady progress is being made; teachers, pupils, and parents show great interest and enthusiasm in the work; and agricultural and horticultural societies have encouraged it by instituting competitions for school exhibits. At the Dunedin Horticultural Society's last show one of our schools succeeded in winning in an open competition the second prize for vegetables.

The mean efficiency mark “good” for physical instruction is largely due to the military drill of the boys, which is generally very good in the large schools, and reflects great credit on the assistants who conduct it, often at considerable sacrifice of out-of-school time. The physical exercises of the middle and junior classes and of the girls of the senior classes are often so slack and slouchy as to have little or no good effect on physique and carriage. One of the chief aims of such exercises should be a good carriage of the body. Among the girls of our senior classes good carriage of the body is too often conspicuous by its absence. As a rule, ten or fifteen minutes a day should be given to physical exercises and drill; in addition, there should be a special lesson of about half an hour's duration once a week, and the purpose of every exercise should be explained to the children.

Last year we said that Albany Street School was the only Dunedin school in which wall decoration had been seriously attempted; this year we have pleasure in adding Union Street School, the Committee of which has done a fine year's work in this direction.

We have, &c.,

P. GOYEN,	} Inspectors.
W. S. FITZGERALD,	
C. R. RICHARDSON,	
C. R. BOSSENCE,	

The Chairman, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 13th March, 1907

We have the honour to present our annual report for the year ended the 31st December, 1906.

It gives us great pleasure to record our conviction that substantial progress has been made during the year, thanks partly to the adoption of more rational methods of teaching, partly to the adoption of clearer ideals of education. We cannot, however, shut our eyes to the fact that the stimulus due to the issue of the current syllabus and the mental activity evoked (or provoked) by it, have to some extent died away, and that there is a danger of relapse into the bad old methods of bygone years. This decadence or stagnation is, we think, to be traced to three distinct causes—to the inability or unwillingness on the part of some of our teachers to comprehend the newer conceptions of education, to the increased burden which these conceptions are supposed to throw upon the teacher, and to the incompleteness, the inconsistency, the utter ineptitude of the schemes of work considered as satisfactory by many of our weakest and least experienced teachers. A consideration of these three in order may be profitable to those concerned.

In relation to the first, the following passages from an American writer seem so apt that we quote them in full: "From earliest times down to a generation ago education was a breathing-in process that simply continued and expanded the original act of creation. Then there arose a new conception concerning the making of a man, and educational theory is slowly changing its form. Responding to influences from without, life is an unfolding process from within—this is the conception that is now shaping our methods of instruction. The old found satisfaction in a state of mind that was quietly receptive; the new sees hope in the turbulence of inquiry." "When the work of the children springs from their own initiative it will become essentially creative and not imitative. Creative work transforms the individual. Through it alone he grows and maintains a personality that makes him different from the others. Through it alone his generation rises above all that have preceded. Imitation is a training in conformity. It holds the creative instinct in abeyance until, at maturity, it is the exceptional man or woman who is not hopelessly bound by the shackles of convention. If he would ever create he must override the prejudices ground into him by the schools, and even then the daring freedom of childhood but rarely comes again. The gospel of conformity teaches that the best has been done—that naught remains for us but imitation. This, too, in face of the practical fact that the discoveries of to-day have sent to the scrap-heap the brilliant inventions of yesterday." And again, "All the activities of school are reduced as nearly as possible to that monotonous routine known to the devotee of system as regular work, which offers no place for the creative intelligence in either thought or deed. The constructive idea now being realised in various forms of handwork is the thin edge of the wedge that is opening the way to reform. Anything which involves the hand immediately arouses the creative instinct. Only when the dominant note of the school is clearly creative does it lay hold on the vital and continuous interests of the children and become essentially educative. Every creative activity will have its artistic aspect, for when the soul enters a creation, then and there, art is born." We make no apology for quoting so extensively—the extracts are so pregnant with wisdom, so charged with enthusiasm, as to merit their inclusion in full.

So important, indeed, does it seem to us that every teacher in our service should have a clear idea of the aim towards which he works that we venture another presentation of the modern conception of education. Three progressive stages may be recognised in this conception, which may be named for the sake of convenience the abstract, the material, and the ethical. Education in the first stage is concerned with facts as facts, with ideas as ideas—there is no correlation between these two sets of things; the pupil is essentially an imitator, imbibing the knowledge offered him in set lessons without satisfying himself as to its basis of truth; the knowledge acquired is mainly of words ("dead vocables") not of things; memory is cultivated almost exclusively to the neglect of the other mental faculties; and the result of the whole process is to be discovered in answer to the question, "What has he learnt?"

In the second stage, the material, to which, roughly speaking, general adhesion has now been given, the study of names has given way, more or less, to the study of things, the conning of lessons to the observation of phenomena; the teacher seeks to place the child within a suitable environment, the parts of which he observes and studies with a view to satisfying himself as to their true nature and operation, singly and in combination; the intelligence of the pupil is developed by mental operations aroused by stimulation from without but conducted by himself according to the laws of his own individuality; memory, always indispensable, though still cultivated, takes its proper place; the knowledge acquired at school has a direct reference to the realities of the field, the mart, and the workshop. In short, the pupil has become less an imitator than a creator. The success of the process of education is judged more in answer to the question, "What can he do?" than "What has he learnt?"

In the third stage of the conception of education, the value of the results attained in the first two stages is recognised, but their completeness is questioned. The questions, "What has he learnt?" and "What can he do?" are not sufficiently exhaustive. Both of them may be answered satisfactorily while as yet the child is imperfect as a moral factor in the evolution of his race. Learning is at best but fallible; material achievements, transitory. All things mortal have their appointed time and season—all but the moral will by which "man affirms himself amid the shows of things that change and pass alike within and without." The question, therefore, that concerns us at the close of a child's school career is not merely "What has he learnt?" or "What can he do?" but "What has he become?" For the last of these three questions we may substitute "What *will* he do?" with little loss of sense; indeed, with some added force of illumination. All the child's learning, all his power of action, must be under the denomination of a conscious purpose—the purpose, namely, to make the most of his life for his own and the common good.

The importance of this phase of education must be obvious to all. To neglect the moral training of our children is a suicidal policy endangering our very existence as a nation. As to the type of character to be aimed at, we have little love for the silly sentimentalism of the "goody-goody" books.

Our heart's desire is for something infinitely better—for the strenuous fervour of impetuous youth, pure, honest, brave, and generous. And first and foremost in this moral training should be inculcated the fact that labour is a blessing in disguise, the foundation of all true prosperity, the only valid plea for existence, the most potent protection from folly and vice. There is a growing tendency to regard work as a necessary evil to be shirked as much as possible, and to consider life tolerable only when spent in a constant round of pleasure and amusement, even at the risk of moral degradation. Far otherwise thought the poet who wrote

Is it so small a thing
To have enjoyed the sun
To have lived light in the spring
To have loved, to have thought, to have done ?

After this statement of the newer educational ideas, which we trust may be of benefit to some of our younger teachers at least—for what teacher worthy of the name does not crave an ideal?—we pass on to consider the question of the increased burden supposed to be thrown upon teachers by the newer methods. And here we should like to say that in our opinion these methods, far from adding to the actual school-work of the teacher, really render it lighter and more pleasant. There is now a greater sense of freedom in the general management of the school, more variety both in the subjects taught and in the manner of treating them, and a fuller opportunity of turning to the best advantage the predilections of the teacher and the circumstances of the taught than existed under former conditions. In one sense there is an increase of work, for which, however, there is compensation in the advantages enumerated: systematic preparation of work and of materials for illustration (hitherto, of course, indispensable to the genuine teacher) has now attained proportions formidable to the lukewarm or inexperienced teacher. That this point should be emphasized is no small good. The old system which made it possible for a teacher to go day by day through the same stereotyped routine without break or variety, without, in many cases, any preparation for the day's work as it came, was ripe for condemnation. Careful preparation no doubt calls for a slight exercise of self-denial on the part of the teacher, encroaching, as it may do, on the "honeyed indolence of evening hours" to which he has been accustomed; but it is well for him to face the question boldly whether the discomfort entailed by such slight self-denial is not to be preferred to the regretful sense of the fruitlessness of misapplied labour.

The style and quality of the annual and quarterly schemes of work presented to us are still, in a good many cases, unsatisfactory; though we gladly admit that there are many honourable exceptions which meet with our heartiest approval. Of the inferior samples, some are lacking in necessary detail; others are ill-adapted to the educational needs, and take little advantage of the educational opportunities, of the district; others do not show any principle of selection or make any use of correction; finally, some are impotent, scrappy, soulless transcripts of the printed syllabus. So much are we impressed with the advantages to be derived from good schemes of work in systematizing and correlating the work done in the various school-subjects, and in rendering easy and simple the estimation of each quarter's progress, that we would impress upon teachers the absolute necessity of giving the matter their utmost care and consideration. In connection with this subject, we have to express surprise that so little advantage should be taken of the privilege of grouping, liberally granted by the regulations. It is simply painful to contemplate the waste of energy involved in giving separate reading-lessons to each class in a school, the total roll-number of which is, say, twenty.

In connection with the quarterly examinations now conducted by the teachers we desire to point out, that, while the standard of the teacher and of the Inspector need not be identical, there is at present in some districts too great a degree of divergence between them. The teacher's optimistic nature may in some cases account for this; but in other cases we are inclined to suspect that the lowness of the teacher's system of marking is induced, either by purely local considerations affecting his position, or is adopted to avert for the time being the consequences of his own lack of energy or skill. However this may be, we have no wish to interfere with any teacher's liberty in the matter. We have simply to point out that continued disagreement between the Inspector's and the teacher's estimate of the work done in any school, and especially of the work done in the higher standards, must ultimately give rise to a suspicion that something is wrong somewhere, a state of things which the Inspector certainly is, and the teacher as certainly ought to be, anxious to avoid. When speaking on this subject we may be allowed to say that too frequent examinations should be avoided. It should be continually borne in mind that education, rightly so called, is a continuous process in which each almost imperceptible advance is the result of subtly working forces; not, as some seem to conceive it still, as a forced preparation, by unnatural leaps and bounds, for regularly recurring examinations.

In our judgment cram is a still-decreasing quantity in our schools. This is a matter, however, on which we scarcely dare to dogmatize since even such a weighty authority as Mr. Birrell declares that no one will persuade him that cramming has not become such a fine art as to enable a candidate "to simulate knowledge to an extraordinary extent." On one point we may reassure the public—that in none of our schools, in regard to the ordinary school-work, is there anything like overpressure; indeed, the main danger we apprehend (in the case of a few schools) is of an entirely opposite description.

In some of our higher grade schools the education of the infants is carried on in a most satisfactory manner, considering the meagreness of the staff allowed. It seems to be taken for granted that an infant-teacher can manage a greater number of children than a teacher of one of the higher standard classes can. We feel thoroughly persuaded that this is not the case. Even though it is granted that the course of instruction is simpler and makes less demand on the teacher's resources in an infant-room than in a higher class—a concession which, on psychological grounds, we are not disposed to make—it must be remembered that children coming for the first time under the influence of school discipline present very great difficulties indeed to the teacher in charge. Their native restlessness has to be checked; their undisciplined impulses have to be turned into profitable channels; and, finally, their attention, fitful and easily distracted at first, has to be cultivated till it becomes a powerful instrument

for good in the teacher's hands. For all these reasons we should hail with delight any alteration in the present scale of staff which would make it possible to ameliorate the hard lot of the infant-mistresses in such schools. In schools with but one teacher matters are still worse. Unless the teacher be specially gifted there is a danger of the younger children being to a large extent neglected, and thus acquiring habits of idleness and carelessness which will prove a perennial source of trouble in their later career. In the course of our visits to such schools in the incoming year we shall endeavour to mitigate the disabilities under which at present the younger children suffer. While on the subject of infant-classes, we should like to suggest that order and discipline are quite as essential in the infant-room as in the higher departments of the school, and that much yet remains to be done, by action-song, physical drill, and play, to brighten the long hours of the infants' school-day.

The practice of simultaneous oral repetition is, we are glad to say, falling into disrepute, though a good many teachers still seem to consider that the more noise is being produced the more progress is being made. The practice never had much to recommend it. It carries with it the semblance of vigorous work, seldom the reality. It interferes with ordinary school-work and consequently is sometimes conducted in draughty porches. It is highly inimical to natural expression in reading and recitation. It is a frequent source of injury, unless carefully managed, to the vocal organs of young people. For all these reasons simultaneous oral work ought, if retained at all, to be confined to the lowest classes and to be used with the utmost caution.

It seems strange to us that so many teachers should still regard the schoolroom as the only place in which education can be successfully carried on. It is odd to hear a teacher give a lesson on plateaux, and, on taking the class to the playground, to find that not one of them recognises the fact that the school stands on a plateau; or to see a teacher proceed to elucidate the nature of a river by means of blackboard sketches, while a notably complete example of his subject is no farther off than the playground. Neither in the case of nature study nor of geography can we find enough evidence of actual appeal to nature. Surely a ramble (with a purpose) once a week could be managed in the case of many country schools at least.

We have to suggest to our teachers the propriety of giving an opportunity for silent reading to such pupils as are likely to benefit by it. In all schools there are pupils who, by reason of liberal mental endowments, occasionally find time hang heavily on their hands. Why not remove from such pupils the temptation to idleness and mischief, and at the same time afford them an opportunity for self-improvement, by silent reading? Where there are good school libraries there should be no difficulty about suitable books; in other cases, spare magazines and papers might be requisitioned. This plan, it seems to us, would be an incentive to industry and self-reliance, and, in addition, would develop a taste for good reading which would persist after school days were over. All the pupils of the higher classes might well be engaged for a short time every week in the silent reading of an English classic fairly within the power of their comprehension and suitable as to subject-matter. An occasional short composition exercise would test the benefit derived in each case. One great advantage of some such plan as this would be that the pupils would feel in honour bound to show that the confidence their teachers had placed in them had not been undeserved.

It will be necessary before long to revise the list of school-books authorised by the Board for use in the district. The syllabus now in operation was launched with such suddenness that publishers found considerable difficulty in issuing school-books within reasonable time to meet its altered demands. Some of these books, prepared and adopted in haste, have proved on further acquaintance to be somewhat unsuitable for school use. An official *School Journal*, too, is to be issued on the 1st April, 1907, which is to provide, we understand, suitable matter in geography and history, and also to render unnecessary the use of additional readers in the lower standards. Under these circumstances, a revision of our list, say, before the close of 1907, is decidedly desirable.

Much yet remains to be done to beautify and render attractive our school grounds and premises. These, it seems to us, if the school is to be truly an educational centre, should be such as to serve for a model to the whole surrounding district, a pleasure to the eye and a stimulus to the taste of the community. If suitable works of art could be procured for the decoration of our schoolrooms, they would act (if we may be pardoned the expression) as powerful, though passive, agents in the creation and development of artistic sense. By these means and also by the establishment of various institutions in connection with the school—the library, the savings-bank, the flower show, the cadet corps, the athletic club, the swimming-class—the idea of the corporate life of the school might be fostered to a greater extent than it now is. We may be allowed a word as to two of the institutions we have mentioned. There are still several of our larger schools where cadet corps might be easily established, considering that the cadet drill can easily be undertaken in the time allotted to the present compulsory military drill, the only additional labour necessary being attendance at the nearest range for rifle-practice. We regret that the inducements held out by the Department to encourage the formation of swimming-classes have only in one instance been taken advantage of.

It affords us much pleasure to testify to the admirable work that is being done at the woodwork and cookery classes in connection with the schools in Invercargill and Gore. The display of woodwork from the former classes at Christchurch Exhibition was of high merit, and compared most favourably with similar exhibits from other districts with greater experience in the working of such classes. It is a matter of regret that the continuation classes, from which such good results were reasonably expected and the need for which is acknowledged by all authorities, have almost lapsed. The Saturday classes for the study of physical measurements (Mr. Stuckey) and agriculture (Mr. McIndoe) for certificated teachers, as also the classes for the study of drawing (Mr. Brookesmith) and physical drill (Mr. Hanna) for uncertificated teachers and pupil-teachers, were well attended and were beneficial in their operation. Especially was this the case with the classes in drawing, a subject which has for three or four years been a bugbear to prospective candidates for the D certificate. This year the results of the difficult examination in drawing disclosed very decided improvement,

Two features in the composition of our teaching-staff, unsatisfactory in themselves and sufficiently ominous as signs of the times, have to be noted—viz., (1) the large number of uncertificated teachers at present in the service of the Board, and (2) the undue predominance of female teachers. The latter feature is by no means confined to New Zealand. It is specially prominent in the United States, where 92 per cent. of the teachers are females, and in Germany, where the unique phenomenon has lately been witnessed of the female teachers driving the male teachers from the urban schools to the rural. The better social status and influence of the women, and the absorption of the more intelligent young men in commercial pursuits owing to increased industrial activity in Germany, are said to account for this curious change. In our own district there are faint indications of improvement in the matter of the proportion of men to women employed. Lately there has been a slight increase in the number of male applicants for pupil-teacherships. In regard to the dearth of certificated teachers, we note with pleasure that a fair proportion of our best pupil-teachers, on the completion of their course, have proceeded to the training colleges to complete their professional studies. From the training colleges we trust to have, in the course of a few years, a small but ever-increasing supply of thoroughly trained teachers to replace the uncertificated teachers now in temporary charge of many of our small schools. Under these circumstances it may be a question for the Board to consider whether uncertificated teachers holding good positions in the Board's service should be permitted to retain these positions indefinitely without some effort on their part to pass the prescribed examination.

A few brief notes on the various subjects of instruction follow:—

READING.—Many of the pupils, especially in the higher standards, read with little interest or intelligence. The monotonous use of the falling inflection is fairly prevalent.

SPELLING.—The introduction of word-building has improved the spelling of the lower standards. A similar result would follow if more systematic attention were given to the subject in the higher standards.

WRITING.—The writing in our schools is satisfactory. In spite of the remarks in last year's report, too much time is still devoted in some schools to formal lessons in writing in Standard VI. In a good many of these schools the writing is inferior. The inference is obvious—faulty supervision.

COMPOSITION.—Errors of common speech should be corrected from the very first—even an infant has no right to use such expressions as “you was,” “he aint.” The essays of Standard VI frequently show weakness in paragraphing, in vocabulary, and in complex sentence-building. They are, in short, Standard III compositions expanded.

ARITHMETIC.—The work in this subject was, as a rule, fairly well done. In a good many instances, however, common weights and measures had apparently no connection with realities. The Inspector's height was variously estimated at from 4 in. to 4 yd., and his weight at from 1 st. to 5 cwt.

DRAWING.—Though the results in this subject were generally creditable, considering the time devoted to it, too little work, as a rule, had been done in memory, design, and scale-drawing, and too much in drawing from copies. The use of the ruler in freehand drawing was inexplicably frequent. Ruled squares are unnecessary beyond Standard I.

GEOGRAPHY.—A reference has been made above to the teaching of physical geography. A considerable number of teachers are still making a bad use of text-books in this subject. The Geographical Readers should be so used that candidates for proficiency certificates will have a fair knowledge of the geography in Course B.

NATURE STUDY.—Meteorological observations are taken with considerable care in most schools; the proper deductions from them are in a good many cases neglected. In a considerable number of schools a scanty programme of morphological botany takes the place of nature study.

HANDWORK.—Some very good specimens, especially of brushwork, were shown; but there is still a good deal of room for improvement. The idea seems to be spreading that hand and eye work teaches itself; and thus is a convenient method of employing children who cannot conveniently be supervised.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—Whenever possible this subject should receive open-air treatment; otherwise the benefits to be derived from it are lessened. The exercises involving the use of the larger muscles should have special attention; aimless waving of the arms in the air should be avoided. The primary position should be carefully maintained; the exercises should be performed thoroughly with attention to details; and the aim should be to develop harmoniously the physical powers of the children, not to provide a pleasing spectacle to the onlooker.

SINGING.—Luther held that an unmusical teacher was “of no account”; we fear that there are not a few teachers in Southland “of no account.” We have already referred to the injurious effect of simultaneous oral repetition on the vocal organs of young children; if thought necessary, it should be practised as softly as possible so as not to spoil the quality of the voice in singing. For the same reason, no loud or, rather, coarse singing should be tolerated. Musical theory without practice is utterly useless; surely a little sight-reading might be attempted in most of our schools.

Our report is advisedly critical; we wish therefore to reiterate our statement that substantial progress in education has been made during the past year in the district of Southland; and to add that in the majority of cases where less satisfactory results have been attained, want of knowledge or of skill has been mainly responsible

The Chairman, Education Board, Invercargill.

We have, &c.

JAMES HENDRY, } Inspectors.
A. L. WYLLIE, }

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