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R A G G E D S C H O O L S :

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Laid upon the Table by the Attorney-General, and ordered by the House to be printed, July 12, 1882.



REPORT on the HOBART RAGGED SCHOOLS, by T. STEPHENS, M.A., Oxon., Chief Inspector of Schools.

Hobart, 8th February, 1882.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to furnish a Report on the condition of the Ragged Schools in operation in Hobart during the year ended 31st December, 1881.

The three Schools at Cascades Road, Lower Collins-street, and Watchorn-street, respectively, are under the management of the Ragged Schools Association; St. Luke's School, near Cascades Road, is a Free School connected with the Church of St. Joseph's in Harrington-street, and under the management of the Sisters of Charity.

All the Schools were visited during the year as frequently as my regular official engagements allowed, and they were fully examined in detail between the 11th August and the 21st September.

CASCADES ROAD SCHOOL.

	Boys.	Girls.	TOTAL.
No. on Rolls	91	87	178
Average Daily Attendance.....	77	73	150
Present at Examination	66	70	136

The School is worked in three sections, each under the charge of a separate Teacher. There is also a paid Monitor employed whose work appears to lie chiefly in the Infant School.

In the highest section 36 children were examined in three classes. The class books in use are the Second and Third Australian Readers: the text is new to the children, and they have not made as much progress as was expected by their Teacher. But the teaching is careful and thorough, and cannot fail to produce a satisfactory result.

The Writing and Spelling, with scarcely any exception, are good, and the work neatly executed. In Arithmetic, the work of this section comprises the Simple and Compound Rules, with Reduction, and a few of the children were working in the higher Rules, all being well grounded so far as they have gone. The elements of Grammar and Geography have been well taught in the two highest classes, and the other incidental subjects of instruction are well attended to. The general answering and intelligence are highly creditable to the Teacher.

In the next section there were 43 children examined in three classes, the class books being the Second Primer, and the First and Second Australian Readers. The text had been well mastered by nearly all, the general answering was prompt and animated, and the intelligence fair. Slate writing good in style and execution, with a few exceptions. Arithmetic, from Simple Addition to Multiplication, fairly mastered, according to class standard, by five-sixths of the children; and the Multiplication Table generally well known. Other incidental teaching well up to average standard. The presence in this section of neglected and casual scholars, who are too old to be classed with the Infants, and too backward to keep pace with their fellows, is a special difficulty, and the general results achieved in the circumstances are very satisfactory.

In the lowest or Infant section there were 57 present, the attendance being, from various causes, much below the average. These were grouped in five classes, the highest of which had fairly mastered the First Primer. The letters and figures were generally well formed, and the instruction in Arithmetic comprised Simple Addition, oral counting, and the Multiplication Table. In the other classes, which are carefully graduated, the work ranges from the first beginnings to reading tablet lessons, and the early stages of writing. The common exercises, including oral repetition,

and drill, are performed with zest and energy, and the children are kept well employed without any undue strain upon their attention and general capability. The weak points of this part of the School are that many of the children acquire an incorrect pronunciation of common words, and a monotonous style of reading, which give some trouble when they are passed into higher classes; and that there is rather too much of the usual tendency to mechanical and rote work, which requires more than an average teacher's skill to counteract.

The condition of the out-offices of this School is much improved, but their position is still objectionable, the drainage of the whole area gravitating towards them, and causing much inconvenience in a wet season. Portions of the brickwork of the Schoolhouse, and of the spouting require repair, and the ventilation of the large Schoolroom would be improved by moveable sashes in the upper part of the gable windows.

LOWER COLLINS-STREET SCHOOL.

	<i>Boys.</i>	<i>Girls.</i>	TOTAL.
No. on Rolls	78	99	177
Average Daily Attendance.....	53	67	120
Present at Examination	58	60	118

The School is organised in three sections, each of them being in a separate room and under a separate Teacher.

In the highest section there were 23 children present in three classes; but, except in Reading, it could not be said that any regular gradation of proficiency was shown, nor that there was a greater difference than between an upper and lower division of one class. The Reading was generally fair; the writing in copybooks and on slates fair to good, but with defects in spelling which were often merely a result of habitual inattention in transcribing from books. The Arithmetic was generally weak. Two in the highest class passed in easy Money Rules: the rest were in various stages of the Simple Rules, and require more thorough grounding in elementary operations before anything else is attempted. Arithmetic cards, like those published by Messrs. Collins, are specially required in such classes as these to check copying, and promote intelligence. Principles will, of course, be taught in class before the black board. In the two highest classes some knowledge was elicited of a few isolated facts in Geography and Sacred History. Grammar has not yet been introduced. The discipline of the School is not at present satisfactory. The School had got thoroughly disorganised during the interval which occurred before the appointment of the present Master, and much has to be done in the way of securing quiet order and attention in the desks before much improvement in the standard of instruction can be made.

In the next section there were 38 children present in two classes. The Reading was very fair throughout; the answering and general intelligence satisfactory. Writing fair in the lower, fair to good in the higher class. The slate Arithmetic ranges from easy Simple Addition to easy Multiplication, and the work was fairly accurate. The oral exercises showed much careful instruction, but it will be necessary to restrain the habit of prompting in class when the answer to a question is not immediately given. The children should also be trained to do their slate work silently. The "hum of work," as it is called, is very apt to blend with chattering in an undertone, which is a special weakness in Schools of this class, and plenty of opportunity for the exercise of their voices may be given to the children in other ways.

In the lowest or Infant section there were 57 present; the number often reaches 70. In the highest class there were 10 reading the First Primer more or less imperfectly, writing from copies on the black-board, and working easy sums in Simple Addition, but unable to set down the figures without help. The rest of the children are in various rudimentary stages. The general management is satisfactory, and the exercises fairly done; but it is evident that the work is too much for the Teacher, without help, and that either the more advanced children must be neglected, or the majority must sit in stolid indifference on the gallery during a great part of their time. For the attempt which has been made to discharge a very difficult duty, and for what has been done, the Teacher deserves great credit.

The buildings are generally in good repair. The planning of the out-offices is not satisfactory, but it is not easy to suggest any great improvement where the space is so limited.

WATCHORN-STREET SCHOOL.

	<i>Boys.</i>	<i>Girls.</i>	TOTAL.
No. on Rolls	63	57	120
Average Daily Attendance.....	56	48	104
Present at Examination	49	41	90

The School is organised in two sections, each under a separate Teacher.

In the highest section there were 31 children present in three classes. The text-books are the Second and Third Australian Readers, and very fair general proficiency was exhibited. Intelligence moderate to fair. Writing and Spelling fair to good. Arithmetic from Simple Rules in the lowest to Compound Rules in the highest class, with a little higher practice, the work being for the most part well grounded and accurate. The outlines of Geography had been mastered by a few, and the rudiments of Grammar have been taught, but time has not been found for much beyond the essential subjects lately. The general tone and management are good; the children are manageable, and take an interest in their work. Prompting in class and mutual help in the desks require to be restricted; the habit of copying has been very materially checked.

In the lower section, which comprises the Infants and a portion of what is the middle section in the other Schools, there were 59 children present. The highest class were reading the Second Primer fairly well, transcribing on slates in a bold style of writing, and working sums in Simple Addition and Subtraction. The next class was reading the First Primer, and otherwise on a level with the highest class in the Infant sections of the other Schools. Below these there were 40 more children in various elementary stages. The singing and exercises are creditably conducted, and the tone and general management good. It must however be noted that the range of work in this section is far beyond the power of one Teacher. It is not so much the number of children, as the number of classes, or necessary sub-divisions, which is to be taken as a guide in determining the teaching staff of a School, and the anomaly will be evident when it is seen that Watchorn-street School has only two teachers to do the work for which three or four are provided in the other Schools.

The roof of the Schoolroom has long been in need of repair, and inside lining, and the work has been partially completed. The general condition of the buildings is fair. The planning of the out-offices is even more open to objection than in the case previously mentioned, and it is equally difficult to suggest a satisfactory remedy.

GENERAL.

The adoption by the Committee of a revised Standard of Instruction is an important step, and will both remove the uncertainty under which the Teachers have worked, and simplify future Examinations. The Registers of Admission and Progress, which I believe are about to be issued to the Schools, will supply another want, and prove valuable records of circumstances which could not hitherto be kept in view.

The personal interest taken in the children by members of the Committees of the Association, and by the ladies who so cheerfully give their practical help and co-operation, contributes largely to the success of the Schools, and if these were less efficient than they now are they might still be doing good work. There are questions continually arising as to the limits within which free education is properly admissible. It is argued that to relieve one parent from all responsibility for the schooling of his children, while his neighbour in similar circumstances is paying School fees, is to put a premium on parental neglect; and also that it is unwise to allow Ragged Schools to enter into competition with the Public Schools, which are specially intended for the poorer classes. But until the distinction between the parent who *cannot* pay, and the parent who *will not* pay, has been officially defined, the Association cannot be blamed if it considers the children's welfare in the first instance, and does all in its power to make the Ragged Schools as efficient as the means at its disposal will allow.

ST. LUKE'S SCHOOL.

	Boys.	Girls.	TOTAL.
No. on Rolls	36	42	78
Average Daily Attendance	27	23	50
Present at Examination	26	39	65

The School is organised in two sections, each in a separate room, and under the charge of a separate Teacher. A great improvement has been made by removing the gallery from the class room, which is now occupied by the elder children, the juniors being taught in the large school room, where ample space is available.

In the upper section 13 children were examined in three classes. The reading was fair, with one or two exceptions. There was hardly sufficient difference noticeable to constitute three grades of proficiency, and an unnecessary multiplication of classes causes waste of time and teaching power. The Writing was, on the whole, very fair. The Arithmetic in this section was very weak. One girl showed creditable proficiency in elementary work up to the Compound Rules; the rest require to be well grounded in the principles of Notation, and the elements which are included under the term Simple Rules. Some have gone beyond this stage, but their work has been too mechanical to leave

any lasting impression. An attempt has been made to impart a little knowledge of the elements of Grammar and Geography; but the irregularity of attendance, the backwardness in more important branches, and the limited time available for instruction, render it undesirable to lay much stress at present on anything but the development of intelligence, and thorough grounding in elementary subjects. Prompting in class, and copying in the desks, require to be checked.

In the lower section there were 52 children present, 10 of whom were reading easy narrative, and 8 monosyllabic lessons, very fairly, and showing satisfactory intelligence. The Writing in these two classes ranges from the formation of the letters and figures to transcription from books. The highest class professed acquaintance with Simple Addition and Subtraction, but their answering in the easiest questions that could be given did not show very good grounding, or accurate work. The rest of the children were in various rudimentary stages, the regular attendants appearing to make satisfactory progress.

The children have been trained to repeat collectively, with fair tone and expression, several well selected pieces of poetry, and the school songs are given with much animation, and in a good style.

The irregular attendance of many of the children is a serious obstacle in the way of progress, and the absentees do not only lose ground themselves, but they throw the classes into confusion by their casual attendance, and the whole School suffers. The zeal and patient labour of the ladies who conduct the School cannot be too highly estimated.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

T. STEPHENS, *Chief Inspector of Schools.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.