

The growing importance of shorthand-writing in commercial and other occupations, and the great advantage those proficient in the art have over others not so qualified, seem to indicate that before long this subject must be added to our school course, although some class or additional subject must be sacrificed to make room for it. Stenography has been for some time past one of the extra subjects of the English code, and in a few years' time no youth will have much chance of promotion in any mercantile or official pursuit unless he is proficient in shorthand-writing.

In conclusion, I desire to express my satisfaction with the work of our schools in general. I believe all our teachers are actuated by a sincere desire to do their utmost for the mental and moral improvement of their scholars; and that on the whole the public is receiving full value for the expenditure involved. The conduct of the children out of school, so far as it comes under my notice, is indicative of a wholesome influence exercised upon them by their teachers.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Marlborough.

JOHN SMITH, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	48	...	...	...
Standard VI.	118	111	103	14 2
" V.	182	175	144	13 2
" IV.	269	253	202	12 4
" III.	341	331	282	11 3
" II.	295	283	262	10 7
" I.	317	307	295	9 0
Preparatory	599	...	...	...
Totals	2,169	1,460	1,288	11 9*

NELSON.

SIR,—

We have the honour to submit to you our annual report on the Nelson public schools.

In addition to the number reported last year, two new schools—Win's Valley and Griffiths' Mill—have been at work during the year, so that the total number examined was 109. Three others are being built, and will be opened in the first quarter of the coming year. Visits of inspection have been paid to ninety-nine schools. The growth of so many small and necessarily expensive schools in outlying settlements must, for the sake of more economic administration, sooner or later induce the Board to adopt a policy of amalgamating adjoining schools in the older settled districts in which means of communication are easy. As instances where such amalgamation is practicable, and would be attended also (as has already been the result at Charleston and at Motueka) by greater economy of teaching-power, we quote the two Wakefield schools—Brightwater and River Terrace—and the two Richmond schools. The excess of small schools in this district necessarily entails a low average salary, and as those having more than 200 pupils in average attendance (a size which, in larger districts, would not be considered of much importance) are only two, the chances of even a very successful teacher ever attaining a good position here are very few, so that there is little cause to wonder that several of our most intelligent and most capable young teachers have left this district for others in which there is a better prospect of promotion. In establishing new centres a limit of distance should be definitely fixed, and no new school should be erected within at least four miles of another previously existing.

In addition to the examination of the Board's schools, the work of the last half-year has been further increased by the examination of four large schools (the two Roman Catholic schools at Westport and Reefton, and St. Mary's Orphanages at Nelson and Stoke), by the inspection and examination of one small private school at Motupiko, and by the examination of the Whakarewa Orphanage, as well as by the usual probationers' and scholarship examinations.

There were 6,033 names on the rolls of the schools on examination day, and, though the number present (5,708) shows an increase of 146 on the corresponding number last year, we do not yet consider the attendance entirely satisfactory, as no excuse for absence except that of actual illness is admissible. Reefton, Waimangaroa, and Fern Flat are responsible for the largest number of absentees. Most of the schools in which this fault was noticed last year have shown marked improvement this time. In twenty-eight schools every child was present. The average attendance for the year was 4,807, the number on the rolls at the close of the December quarter being 5,995.

The following list shows the number of teachers in the employ of the Board on the 31st December:—

	Certificated.	Uncertificated.	Total.
Head-teachers	38	2	40
Assistants	25	10	35
Sole teachers	31	37	68
	94	49	143

* Mean of average age.