

gentlemen who have been continuously engaged in the same work, and if a conference of these, and other friends of education generally, could be called, to take the subject into consideration, much good would result, and many defects, which a trial of twenty years has revealed, might be remedied. As a preliminary step I would suggest that expressions of opinion might be invited from Education Boards, and from eminent educational authorities, as to the desirableness of holding such a conference; and if the opinions so expressed should, on the whole, be favourable to such a course, the Government might be requested (by a memorial signed by the consenting parties) to convene such a conference at some convenient time, say, early in 1898. I beg, therefore, to submit the above suggestion to your consideration.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Marlborough.

I have, &c.,

JOHN SMITH, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	72	...	...	...
Standard VI.	123	118	94	13 8
" V.	191	179	107	13 3
" IV.	323	314	238	12 6
" III.	322	303	212	11 9
" II.	318	312	298	10 0
" I.	275	271	260	8 1
Preparatory	561	...	...	...
Totals	2,185	1,497	1,209	11 6*

NELSON.

SIR,—

26th January, 1897.

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

One hundred and fourteen schools, including two that have been recently established, have been at work during the year, and all, with the exception of these two, have been examined, the most important of the five additions to last year's list being Central Takaka and Bedstead Gully. The establishment of four others also has been sanctioned by the Board. A review of former reports shows that the increase of small and necessarily expensive schools has of late years been very rapid. The report for the year 1892 exhibits a total of ninety-four schools in the district, so that, allowing for one amalgamation, twenty-one more have been added to the list within the last four years. Several of these have been household schools—that is, schools established in the houses of isolated families, and subsidised by the Board to the amount of £4 per head of average attendance. These, almost without exception, have been well managed, and have produced most satisfactory results, thereby repaying the Board for its liberality and consideration. The small roll-number, the regular attendance, and, above all, the complete control which the teacher has been able to exercise have in many cases enabled her to rival, and even to excel, the success achieved in larger schools under more favourable surroundings. The number of children on the rolls at our examinations was 6,051, the corresponding number for 1892 being 5,830, so that the increase—less than 4 per cent.—is by no means proportional to the increase in the number of schools. Whilst thus the establishment of additional schools has undoubtedly proved a great benefit to outlying settlers by bringing educational advantages within the reach of their children, it year by year taxes more and more the finances of the Board and increases the labours of the Inspectors.

The number present on examination-day was 5,697, the absentees thus amounting to 354. Many of these were children in the preparatory class, or were those who have passed the Sixth Standard examination. In some cases many, especially of the infants, were detained by exceedingly wet weather; but we do not think that such an excuse applies to Burnett's Face, Westport Preparatory, Motueka, Pangatotara, or Wai-iti, in each of which there were about 10 per cent. of absentees. The absence of the class above Standard VI. is, we consider, a reflection upon the moral tone of the school in which it occurs, as it says little for the respect or esteem in which the teacher is held if the choicest fruits of his skill—those who are capable of doing him most credit—are not in their places on examination-day. Every child was present in no less than twenty-four schools, the largest of which were—Little Grey, 53; Central Takaka, 48; Hope, 41; and Neudorf, 35.

The average attendance for the first three quarters of the current year was 4,917, the number on the rolls at the end of the December quarter being 6,005. In the matter of attendance this district, in spite of the nearness of schools, the good roads, and the exceptionally fine climate that prevails over a large part of it, compares badly with the other educational districts of the colony. In the last annual report of the Minister of Education we find in the column in which the average attendances of the thirteen different educational districts of the

* Mean of average age.