

GREY.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit my annual general report on the schools subject to inspection in this district for the year ending 31st December, 1898.

Thirty schools were in active operation at the close of the year, and all of them were duly visited and examined. In addition to these, I both inspected and examined the four Roman Catholic schools in the district.

The number of schools which are under the direct control of the Board has increased by one during the year—viz., a school at Poerua—another small and comparatively expensive school added to an already long list of similar ones in so small a district. The increase of these small and non-paying schools must eventually do serious injury to the whole district: *vide* my remarks on this point in last year's annual report.

Inspection reports were laid before you during the year. These show that although the school-buildings are in a fairly satisfactory state, yet many repairs and improvements are necessary. In many cases there are no fences or playgrounds, whilst shelter-sheds are almost unknown luxuries; here and there, too, is a building which has never been painted since it was erected. The building vote granted to this Board is apparently quite insufficient to carry out improvements and to overtake repairs, which, owing to climatic influences, are rendered more frequently necessary, and which, owing to difficulty of access of places, scattered population, &c., are also more costly to effect, than in most educational districts.

The general result of my inspection visits to the schools was encouraging. I almost invariably found the rooms clean and tidy, time-tables nicely drawn out, children orderly, and the teachers working with diligence and energy. Many difficulties experienced, especially by our younger teachers, are explained at this time, and advice is given with reference to methods and the general working of the schools.

During the latter half of the year school work was considerably interfered with by a visitation of measles, which attacked both old and young—teachers and pupils—without respect of persons, not once, but sometimes twice and even three times. In consequence, several schools were closed for short periods. Those schools suffered most, so far as results are concerned, where the outbreak occurred just prior to the date fixed for the examination.

The following table gives a summary of results for this and the four previous years :—

Years.		Number of Schools in Operation.	Presented for Examination.*	Presented in Standards.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes.
1894	...	24	1,644	1,024	995	696	69.9
1895	...	25	1,684	1,066	1,007	829	82.3
1896	...	28	1,650	1,068	1,040	862	82.8
1897	...	29	1,698	1,085	1,041	898	85.3
1898	...	30	1,619	1,091	1,059	920	88.7

* Including infants and class above Standard VI.

It will be noticed in the above table that the number of schools has increased from twenty-four in 1894 to thirty in 1898.

I have again to record a most satisfactory improvement in the percentage of passes, these being numerically represented by nearly $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The total number of infants is 481, and the total number of infants over eight years of age not presented for Standard I. is eighty-seven, being slightly over 5 per cent. of total roll-number. The number returned under the latter heading in 1896 was 133; so that a very satisfactory reduction has been made.

The following table gives a summary of results for each class :—

Classes.			Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1897.
						Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary class	...	...	19	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI.	...	...	28	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	100	95	77	14 3	14 1
" V.	...	...	174	169	138	13 4	13 2
" IV.	...	...	218	206	166	12 4	12 3
" III.	...	...	234	230	205	11 5	11 2
" II.	...	...	191	187	175	10 0	10 0
" I.	...	...	174	172	159	8 11	8 10
Preparatory	...	...	481	...	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	1,619	1,059	920	11 8*	11 7*

* Mean of average age.