

Whatever improvement, however, may be effected in the standard of attainment within the limits of the elementary school course, the need of further instruction on the lines of the continuation school, which now forms so prominent a feature in the English educational system, is evident; and the provision would best be made, we need scarcely add, in close connection with a scheme of technical instruction.

We have, &c.,

L. B. WOOD, M.A.,
W. J. ANDERSON, LL.D., } Inspectors.
THOMAS RITCHIE, B.A., }

The Chairman, Board of Education, North Canterbury.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 28th February, 1899.

I have the honour to present my report on the schools in this district for the year 1898.

At the close of the year there were sixty-seven public schools in South Canterbury, being two more than at the end of last year. The number of public schools examined during the year was sixty-five, and these, with the five Roman Catholic schools, brought up the number examined to seventy. In the Roman Catholic schools 721 children were presented, 448 were examined in standards, and 402 passed. Further details of the examinations of the Catholic schools are given in the appendix; and a comparison of these details with those of former years shows that the schools have made a distinct advance in efficiency. It may not be out of place here to remind the managers and teachers of the Catholic schools that the Timaru High School Board offers exhibitions entitling the winners to free education for two years at the Timaru High Schools, and that children from "any private primary institution" are eligible as candidates, the conditions as to subjects and age being the same as for children from the public schools. This year no candidates from private schools availed themselves of the opportunity of competing, but this may have been due to the fact that it was late in the year before the High School Board issued its new regulations with regard to the granting of exhibitions.

The following table shows the examination results of the Board's schools for the whole district:—

Classes.				Presented.	Examined in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
							Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	120	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	336	328	290	13 10
" V.	...	...	...	523	499	408	12 9
" IV.	...	...	...	730	704	591	11 11
" III.	...	...	...	763	741	643	10 8
" II.	...	...	...	609	599	587	9 7
" I.	...	...	...	619	596	591	8 6
Preparatory	...	...	...	1,394	...	...	...
Totals for 1898	...	...	...	5,094	3,467	3,110	11 2*
Totals for 1897	...	...	...	5,239	3,568	3,055	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

These figures show for the year a decrease of 145 in the number of pupils presented, but, as the Hakateramea School, with about forty children on the roll, is not included, the actual decrease is just over a hundred. The falling-off in roll-number, which commenced last year with a decrease of fifty from the previous year, is likely to continue, as it is almost altogether in the classes under Standard III. that the numbers have fallen. From all accounts North Canterbury and Otago are having a similar experience. I leave it to others to explain the causes of this decrease; but I wish particularly to draw attention to the fact that with a falling attendance we are increasing the number of our schools.

The number of pupils present and examined in Standards I. to VI. is 3,467, as against 3,568 last year; and the number of pupils that passed in one or other of the standards is 3,110, as against 3,055 last year. The percentage of those that passed is 89·7; it was 85·6 last year. In Standards III., IV., V., and VI. the percentages of passes are 86, 83, 81, and 88; the corresponding figures for last year were 83, 72, 79, and 84. While every class thus shows a substantial advance, the rise in Standard IV. from 72 to 83 is very marked indeed, and is to be accounted for in a great measure by the character of the test sums for the standard set by the Education Department, which were simpler than those of past years. The passes in Standards I. and II. as determined by the head-teachers are 99 and 98 per cent. respectively; and on examining these classes I found very few pupils whose promotion was undeserved.

Of the 1,394 children in the preparatory classes, 184 were over eight years of age when the schools in which they were taught were examined. Last year we had 185 out of 1,475. The reasons assigned for not presenting them in Standard I. appeared to me to be in most cases sufficient.