

One has only to read the list of successful competitors at any annual prize-giving at the local colleges to obtain evidence of the distinctions won by pupils who have been grounded in the district State schools. The abundant proof thus afforded by our best scholars of their ability to take at once a good position among those studying secondary subjects is a strong testimony to the intelligence which can only have been developed by sound elementary training. The success of a pupil from the Westport High School in attaining the highest place in the recent competition for the Victoria College Scholarship may also be fairly considered a matter of congratulation for the district.

We have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.

G. A. HARKNESS, M.A., } Inspectors.
W. LADLEY, }

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, 1899.

Twenty-eight schools were in actual operation at the close of the year. Each one was duly inspected and examined. I also inspected and examined the four Roman Catholic schools in the district. The number of schools under the direct control of the Board has decreased by two during the year, the result of the following operations—viz., the closing of schools (owing to scarcity of pupils) at Teremakau Settlement, Maori Gully, and Orwell Creek; whilst a new school has been opened at Kotuku.

Early in the year the Chairman of the Board visited most of the schools for the purpose of ascertaining, by personal observation, the requirements of the district with regard to buildings, general repairs, and improvements. He was thus enabled to formulate a scheme most advantageous to the district for the allocation of the building grant. This was adopted by the Board, and the works he recommended have been carried out. The chief improvements were new teachers' residences at Ahaura and Paroa, whilst a heavy item in the expenditure of the year was the painting, &c., of the Greymouth District High School. He found many of the buildings sadly in need of being painted, but this work was in most cases deferred owing to lack of funds. I might here point out that for the same reason no large sum has been expended in regard to school appliances for some years. Up-to-date maps, globes, &c., are real necessities, and no school can be considered efficient without them; so that I trust the Board will shortly be able to allocate a substantial amount for this purpose.

Inspection reports were laid before you during the year. These were for the most part of a very satisfactory description, showing our teachers as a whole to be capable and painstaking. The commonly visible parts of our schools almost invariably present a neat and tidy appearance, but the same does not always extend to cupboards, &c.

Numbers have again been used in estimating the value of every child's work, the general efficiency of a school being computed from the means of the average percentage of marks gained by the pupils of all standards in each subject. Summarising the results so obtained, I find that in the pass-subjects four schools gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—very good; thirteen schools gained between 70 and 79 per cent.—good; eight schools gained between 60 and 69 per cent.—satisfactory; and three schools gained between 50 and 59 per cent.—fair. In class and additional subjects two schools gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—very good; eleven schools gained between 70 and 79 per cent.—good; ten schools gained between 60 and 69 per cent.—satisfactory; four schools gained between 50 and 59 per cent.—fair; and one school gained between 30 and 39 per cent.—very weak.

The percentage of passes—86·2—is most satisfactory; and, although it does not quite equal that recorded for the previous year, yet the general efficiency of our schools, especially in pass-subjects, has been more than maintained.

The total number of infants is 480, and the total number of infants over eight years of age not presented for Standard I. is eighty-eight. Similar figures for the previous year are 481 and 87 respectively.

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.
Secondary class and class above Stan- dard VI. 	49	...	...	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Standard VI. 	120	118	102	14 4	14 3
" V. 	163	161	140	13 4	13 4
" IV. 	228	221	166	12 5	12 4
" III. 	194	187	151	11 0	11 5
" II. 	168	164	160	10 1	10 0
" I. 	157	157	150	8 9	8 11
Preparatory 	480	...	...	...	...
Totals 	1,559	1,008	896	11 8*	11 8*

* Mean of average age.

The fewness of pupils absent from examination is again a noteworthy feature in the above table—twenty-two absent out of 1,030 presented in standards.