

school throughout the year bears to its average weekly roll-number. I have of late years gone to the trouble of supplying this in the hope that teachers, who thus have the opportunity to compare their own with other schools in this respect, may be encouraged to put forth more effort to secure regular attendance. Last year six schools, as well as several household schools, returned over 90 per cent., and this time Win's Valley (96·4), Burnett's Face (91·5), Gibbstown (91·3), Pakawau (90·7), Ferntown (90·3), and Brighton (90·1) have each reached or exceeded that limit. River Terrace, Richmond Girls, Spring Grove, and Wakefield show marked improvement. The worst examples are Ngatimoti, still only 64 per cent., although greatly improved notwithstanding; Pangatatarā, also 64; Woodstock and Ranzau, each 66; Lower Moutere, Sarau, and Kaituna, each 67; Eighty-eight Valley and Fern Flat, each 69. Such a condition as these figures indicate should not be tolerated. Irregular attendance is the worst evil that teachers have to combat, and seldom do I hear of any strenuous efforts being made to overcome it, instances to the contrary, such as at Neudorf, being rare indeed.

Although we were requested to examine as usual certain private schools in the district, the illness of the junior Inspector prevented us from doing so except in the case of the Whakarewa Orphanage, and of the Sixth Standard children of St. Canice's, Westport, and Sacred Heart School, Reefton.

On the 31st December there were in the Board's employ 156 teachers, classified as follows:—Head teachers—certificated or licensed 39; assistant teachers—certificated or licensed 26, uncertificated 5; sole teachers—certificated or licensed 50, uncertificated 36. There were in addition forty-six pupil-teachers, as compared with fifty-four employed last year. Eight of these are licensed or fully certificated, and two others have passed the necessary examination. One of the Board's rules requires all teachers of aided schools who have not obtained a full certificate, or at least a partial one, to sit for the first- or second-year pupil-teachers' examination. Only one presented himself this year, several others being excused on the ground that, their appointments being recently made, they had had very little time for preparation. Under ordinary circumstances eight will be required to present themselves for the first-year examination in 1901. Half of our uncertificated teachers are employed in twenty-one very small household schools, the average number of children in each being slightly under five.

Fifty candidates presented themselves for the pupil-teachers' entrance examination in June last, and twenty-two of them succeeded in passing. With but one exception, all vacancies throughout the year have been filled by candidates who had been previously successful in this or a higher examination.

In the presence of the Inspectors criticism lessons for the benefit of the pupil-teachers were given in the two larger centres.

As usual, we attach a general summary of results for the whole district as extracted from the annual return:—

Classes.	Presented.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	170	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	463	445	320	13 11
" V. ...	653	641	425	12 11
" IV. ...	712	694	522	12 2
" III. ...	808	791	647	10 8
" II. ...	655	644	545	9 4
" I. ...	669	652	539	8 10
Preparatory ...	1,672	...	...	...
Totals ...	5,802	3,867	2,998	11 3½*
Totals for 1899 ...	5,907	3,886	2,980	11 3*

* Mean of average age.

The total is 105 lower than last year's, the falling-off being most noticeable in Standard IV. The proportion of passes is slightly higher, as also is the average age, the most marked difference in the latter case being in Standard I., of which class the average age is five months higher. Our children are still passing their respective standard examinations earlier than in most parts of the colony, the mean of the average age for the colony last year being 11·6, but for Otago and South Canterbury it was as low as 11·1.

The number present at the examinations was 5,444, but I cannot satisfactorily account for the fact of the absentees—356—being more numerous than in 1899. At thirty-seven schools every child whose name was on the roll was present.

It is a relief to find the number of schools in which the work was decidedly unsatisfactory reduced to ten. In four of these the poor results were probably due to the teachers' inexperience, all but one being uncertificated, and all having been appointed within a few months of the examination. In three other cases also the teachers were uncertificated.

By the regulations for the examination of schools issued in January, 1900, a new system, or, rather, a considerable alteration in the working of the standard pass system, was introduced. The chief feature of the new system is that the classification of the scholars in all standards from I. to V. is now in the hands of the head-teacher, who holds an examination for the sake of assigning certificates. The results of the examination may, however, not be indorsed by the Inspector if the