

wise the damage would probably have been less. All schools should be furnished with a ladder and two or three buckets.

It was a matter of congratulation that this district should have gained the highest average percentage in attendance for the colony during last year, the figures being 87·2 per cent. of the average roll-number. The Minister, in his annual report, describes the high figures as being worthy of note. The weekly competitions instituted amongst the classes of the Greymouth District High School for possession of the flag, which are decided by the average attendance, have had a wonderful influence on the attendance there, and, as our annual average mainly depends on the attendance at this school, I fully anticipate seeing our district occupying the same post of honour this year. So far as the attendance at the examinations is concerned, it could not well be better: no matter what the weather is, the pupils are invariably present.

This year we have been working under new regulations, which came into force on the 1st January, 1900. Under these, principal teachers practically have freedom in regard to the classification of their pupils; they may arrange their pupils in different classes for different subjects, and any pupil must be examined in the class in which he has been taught. Teachers in this district have as yet taken little or no advantage of this freedom of classification; possibly they require a little time to get into new ways and to cut themselves adrift from the old ones. That there are cases in which the placing of pupils in different classes for different subjects would be an advantage there is no doubt, and in medium and small-sized schools I think a direct benefit would be gained by doing so, but in large schools I fear the interchanging of pupils from one class to another would, if carried to any extent, unduly disturb the main portion of the classes.

No great change has been made in the actual syllabus, except that geography and drawing have been transferred from the pass to the class group of subjects in Standards I., II., III., IV., and V., whilst they still remain in the pass group in Standard VI.

Handwork has also been in the group of class-subjects, not as an addition to the group, but as one which may be substituted for other subjects (see Regulation 29). This subject has as yet found no place in our schools, in most instances, no doubt, owing to the lack of funds with which to purchase necessary material. I might, however, mention that by regulations recently gazetted under "The Manual and Technical Instruction Act, 1900," provision is made for granting aid, by way of capitation to all classes in our primary schools for the special purpose of providing material for this class of work, so that I trust before long we shall see it introduced in many, if not all, of our schools.

As regards the annual examination, this, it would be as well to point out, is not an examination for the purpose of classification, though it will undoubtedly have a direct bearing on it, but an examination on which passes are based and certificates issued. This annual examination is, in the case of Standards I. to V. inclusive, to be held by the head-teacher, and in the case of Standard VI. by the Inspector. In our large schools the head-teachers examined Standards I. to V., and I examined portions of each class in the various subjects. In other schools, the head-teachers having previously held their examinations, I examined every pupil as usual, and conferred with them afterwards on the subject of passes in Standards I. to V. In some of our smaller schools the teachers did not care to undertake the responsibility of examining for certificates, and I therefore examined these at their request, the returns of their four quarterly examinations affording guidance as to what their own opinion was of the abilities of their pupils. I must here say that, on the whole, I was thoroughly satisfied with the results of the examinations as conducted by the teachers. Rather more care in filling up the class-lists might reasonably have been expected of many of our teachers; the class-lists were on a new form, it is true, but instructions were plainly printed on the back of each. In several cases I had to rewrite the whole of the class-lists.

In estimating the general efficiency of the schools the same method has been adopted as in previous years, the only difference being that the mean average percentage of marks has, in the case of our larger schools, been computed from the marks of a portion of a class instead of, as previously, from the marks of the whole class. In no case have the marks of the teachers been taken in obtaining the following. Summarising the results, I find that in the pass-subjects six schools gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—"very good"; seven schools gained a mean mark between 70 and 79 per cent.—"good"; fourteen schools gained a mean mark between 60 and 69 per cent.—"satisfactory"; three schools gained a mean mark between 50 and 59 per cent.—"fair." In the class-subjects one school gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—"very good"; seven schools gained a mean mark between 70 and 79 per cent.—"good"; fifteen schools gained a mean mark between 60 and 69 per cent.—"satisfactory"; five schools gained a mean mark between 50 and 59 per cent.—"fair"; one school gained a mean mark between 30 and 39 per cent.—"very weak." And in the additional subjects one school gained a mean mark between 80 and 89 per cent.—"very good"; twenty-one schools gained a mean mark between 70 and 79 per cent.—"good"; four schools gained a mean mark between 60 and 69 per cent.—"satisfactory." In the class-subject group one school is not represented, this being a school recently opened, in which the teacher devoted the whole time to the pass-subjects.

The following gives a summary of results for this year: Number of schools in operation at close of year, 30; total presented for examination, including infants and pupils above Standard VI., 1,598; total presented in standards, 1,045; total present in standards, 1,028; total passed 946.

I have purposely refrained from giving similar returns for previous years, as these results, being obtained, some by the teachers and some by myself, are of no practical value for purposes of comparison.

The total number of infants is 492, and the total number of infants over eight years of age not presented for Standard I. is seventy-three. Similar figures for the previous year were 480 and eighty-eight respectively.