

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Hokitika, 16th January, 1901.

I have the honour to present the following report on the primary schools of the district for the year 1900. All the schools were examined with the exception of two household schools in the southern part of the district. One of these, the Karangarua School, had been in operation during the previous year, and the other, that at Five-mile Beach, was on the occasion of my visit closed through sickness. Separate reports have been presented on the examination of the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School, and of the Catholic schools at Kumara, Hokitika, Kanieri, and Ross. The total number of schools was forty. The aided schools of South Westland and three others were not inspected. The inspection of the remaining schools was duly carried out.

The following tables give the general results of the examination of the various standard classes :—

EXAMINATION OF PASS-SUBJECTS.

Classes.				Presented.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1899.
							Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary class	...	...	...	27	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	60	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	94	90	78	13 11	14 0
" V.	...	...	...	144	142	125	13 0	13 1
" IV.	...	...	...	171	169	140	12 1	12 2
" III.	...	...	...	156	155	133	11 2	11 0
" II.	...	...	...	143	143	137	9 9	9 11
" I.	...	...	...	136	133	129	9 1	8 9
Preparatory	...	...	...	346	...	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	1,277	832	742	11 6*	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

The distribution of the number presented for examination in the various classes is expressed in the following percentages of the total roll-numbers: Standard VII., 4·8; Standard VI., 7·5; Standard V., 11·5; Standard IV., 13·7; Standard III., 12·5; Standard II., 11·4; Standard I., 10·9; Preparatory, 27·7. The continued operation of the newly adopted regulations relating to the promotion of the pupils will render a statement of classes more indefinite owing to the presence in each class of pupils working in other classes in certain subjects. During the first year, however, freedom of classification has not been generally exercised, being confined to the preparation of the arithmetic of a lower standard by seventeen pupils. The reason given for the retention in the preparatory classes of pupils over eight years of age is in general satisfactory.

The percentages of failures compared with the total roll-number in standards is 12·1. The proportion of passes in the various subjects that are on the pass group in all classes remains about the same as in the previous years, except in arithmetic, in which there is an increase of 6 per cent. The following brief remarks relate to these subjects :—

Reading: In all classes at least three reading-books are prepared. The Imperial Readers are purchased by the pupils, and another set is provided by the Board. The latter, not being required for the preparation of spelling, is used only at school. In addition the pupils from Standard III. to Standard VII. are provided by the Board, for use in school only, with history readers. A satisfactory amount of reading-matter is thus provided at little cost to the parents, and since this system was adopted a great improvement in the subject has been effected. Want of fluency is rarely met with, and, while insufficient expression of the meaning has sometimes to be recorded, it is seldom that intelligent presentation of the subject-matter is totally lacking. In the Hokitika School the instruction in reading is very successful.

Spelling: The test in this subject is confined to exercises from one reading-book, and is generally well answered. It too often happens, however, that the instruction is confined to the setting and examination of home-work. Intelligent instruction should include blackboard exercises, suitable to the standard, on the composition of words.

Writing: This subject has suffered by the adoption in a number of schools of semi-upright style. While the eventual result will in most cases no doubt be an improvement, the derangement caused by the change is evident. It is important in the upper classes to insist on the formation of a good running hand. One method of securing this is the insistence on neatness and correctness in all the writing connected with the school work.

Composition: The instruction in this subject is in general very efficient. Not only the ordinary exercises, but synthesis of sentences, paraphrasing, and correction of errors are also well prepared by the respective classes.

Arithmetic: In all schools the pupils were examined as in previous years, and the results recorded. The percentage of passes are as follows: All standards, 80; Standard VI., 76; Standard V., 81; Standard IV., 80; Standard III., 79. These results are very satisfactory, and are accompanied by commendable success in mental arithmetic.

It is important to note, however, that business-men frequently complain that in simple operations connected with commercial requirements boys who have passed through the school show a