

of 50 per cent. in the proportion of failures, and the reports on the various schools show a general decrease of efficiency. Even where a good standard has been maintained the preparation of the pupils has probably been accompanied by hurry and pressure that must eventually be detrimental to true educational progress. Other hindrances to the obtaining of good records were the numerous changes of teachers during the year and the introduction of a more difficult set of Readers. A return to normal conditions and the earnest endeavours of the teachers will, it is hoped, produce improved results during the coming year.

Under the circumstances referred to it is not of great advantage to criticize in detail the preparation of the various subjects of the course of instruction. The decrease in the proportion of promotions indicates less efficiency in connection with the pass-subjects, and the accompanying summary of results furnishes evidence that the instruction in the class-subjects has also fallen below the standard of previous years. A satisfactory feature, however, is the increased interest taken in military drill and physical exercises, and the efficiency in this subject has reached a higher point than in any previous year. In addition to the usual examination in arithmetic, tests were given in the higher standards of fairly long exercises in compound addition, the limit of time allowed being such as to require a moderate rate of speed. A very small proportion of the number of pupils worked the exercises correctly, and the result supports the comments of last year's report on the necessity for modifying the syllabus in arithmetic so as to confine the instruction more to rules of commercial importance. At the same time the teachers will find it of advantage to provide opportunity for practice in such exercises.

The introduction of handwork has been delayed owing to a lack of familiarity with suitable methods on the part of the teachers, and to the difficulty in obtaining promptly a supply of the necessary material. A visit of an Inspector appointed under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act has so far prepared the way as to excite the interest of the teachers, and to impress upon them some of the principles upon which the instruction is based. During the present year it is expected that a course of handwork will be instituted in at least the lower classes of a majority of the schools.

An important requirement of the standard regulations is that a record of the nature and results of the teachers' periodic examinations must be preserved and presented to the Inspector at his next visit. It is necessary in every school that such a record shall be kept in such a form as to supply an indication of the progress of each pupil, and this necessity has, during the past year, been overlooked in a number of cases. Some of the most successful teachers find it advisable to hold examinations two or three times during each quarter, and the absence of such tests in other schools has led the teachers to form a false estimate of the effect of the instruction given. Suitable record-books have been supplied by the Board, and it should be understood that these are to be used regularly and intelligently.

During the year the teachers have received from the Education Department increases to their salaries sufficient to place their remuneration on an equality with that received in similar positions in other parts of the colony. The temporary relief thus granted has been made permanent by the passing of the Public-school Teachers' Salaries Act. The Board in its report to the Hon. Minister of Education has acknowledged the indebtedness of the teachers and of all interested in education to those who took part in effecting this desired reform. It is therefore sufficient here to note that the provision of more adequate remuneration and the removal of a continual source of complaint will result in increased efficiency in the teaching staff. Teachers will have less reason for discontent and for a sense of injustice, and will be encouraged to carry out their duties with cheerfulness and enthusiasm, qualities very essential to the achievement of complete success in the training of the young.

In the five Catholic schools in the district the staffs are numerically strong and the majority produce results in many respects commendable. In all, however, the attention of the teachers is confined too much to the pass-subjects. While these are often well prepared, the average result in the class-subjects is in no case satisfactory. The promotion of the pupils is left in the hands of the Inspector, and the task is rendered at times difficult, owing to weakness in branches outside the pass group. Of a total of 162 in standards 146 passed, and this result would be a matter of congratulation to the teachers if the instruction in some of the extra subjects had been more successful.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Westland Education Board.

A. J. MORTON, B.A., Inspector.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 29th January, 1902.

We have the honour to present our annual inspection report on the schools of the North Canterbury District for the year 1901.

The usual course of inspection and examination was followed during the year, the time and attention given to each department of work not differing materially from the practice immediately preceding the recent modifications in the regulations. In the summary of results for the district the roll-number recorded in the 205 schools examined is 19,842. This, when compared with the corresponding total of 1900, shows a drop of 176. As the loss for the two previous years was 462 and 410 respectively, we may in the present figures find some consolation in so far as they indicate a diminution in the downward trend which has been more or less noticeable during the past five years. It is remarkable that during the same time the infant departments show no corresponding signs of falling off. The present number enrolled in this part of the school is the highest since 1893, and the intervening years present a very close parallel in the steady maintenance of practically identical numbers. The fact has some significance; but too much weight