

These results are compiled from the separate school reports entered on forms supplied by the Education Department. In the first column is given the number presented in each class—that is, the number on the roll; in the second the number “present” is the number present at the teacher’s examination in Standards I. to V., and at the Inspector’s examination in Standard VI. In the second column of the form showing the summary of results for the whole district the Department has substituted the heading “Present at the Inspector’s Annual Visit” for the single word “Present” appearing in the report forms used throughout the year for each separate school. This puts a different interpretation on the word “present” from that we had given to it in making up our examination reports, and we do not feel called upon to go back on all our reports and alter our entries to suit this new form of summary. At the same time we heartily approve of this new form for future use. It is just carrying out for the colony as a whole what we did in our own district for 1900.

The roll-number is 5,024, a decrease of 135 from last year. Every class contributes to this decrease except Standards I. and VI.; the increase in the latter is forty-five, the number on the roll in Standard VI. being 436, as against 391 for last year. The number passed in one or other of the standards is 2,908, out of 3,386 present at examination. As was the case last year, the head teachers awarded the passes in Standards I. to V. In one school it was found necessary to substitute our results for the head teacher’s, and in several the final award of a pass was determined after consultation with the Inspector. Notwithstanding their experience of last year, a considerable number of teachers have taken a much more favourable view of the fitness of their pupils for obtaining pass certificates than the attainments of the pupils, as observed by us at our annual visit, would warrant. This has been most noticeable in Standards IV. and V. In most cases the teachers who have shown want of judgment in this respect give other evidence of weakness in the management and teaching of their schools, and we are inclined to believe that with most of them the passes were awarded in good faith; the few that resort to indiscriminate giving of passes as a means of cloaking inferior work are placing on the children the burden of a hopeless struggle with tasks for which they are unprepared, and laying up for themselves a store of troubles. Notwithstanding these strictures, it would be unfair to the teachers as a body if we did not declare most emphatically that in the overwhelming majority of cases the award of passes has been made to our entire satisfaction. Were the periodical examinations, which have always been a feature of our best schools, conducted with the requisite care and skill the teacher’s difficulty of determining passes would be reduced to a minimum. Since the duty of classifying the pupils in Standards I. to V. was laid on the teachers there has been an appreciable lightening of our labours in the large schools in the matter of assessing the value of the written examination work; but the large schools are few, and, on the whole, the time taken and the work involved in examining a school are much the same as under the old regulations.

In 1901 436 pupils were on the roll in Standard VI.; 416 were present at our examinations, and 291 passed, a percentage of almost 70, as against 69 for last year. In view of the standard of proficiency we look for in this class and the number of subjects involved, we consider this on the whole a satisfactory result, a result, however, that leaves plenty of room for improvement. We are pleased to know that the Department has under consideration a scheme by which those that pass the Sixth Standard are to have the privilege of continuing their education without paying fees, not only at the district high schools, but also at the high schools of the colony. This year our district high schools give promise of doubling the number of pupils in their secondary department owing to the concession of free tuition already granted, and this increase will be greater as soon as free railway-passes for children attending the secondary classes of the district high schools are available. The scheme, as outlined in the Inspector-General’s report on secondary education, by which those that have passed the Sixth Standard in places remote from district high schools and in centres like Timaru, where high schools are already established, are to have something like equality of opportunity of continuing their secondary course with those within reach of district high schools, is one that commends itself to a large section of the community, and the coming into operation of the suggestions contained in that report is eagerly waited for.

With regard to the methods of teaching as observed by us on our visits to the schools, we find ourselves generally in a position to report favourably. As in previous reports, we again take this opportunity of exhorting teachers to keep themselves abreast of the times in their professional work. Not content to go on from day to day on the old lines, they should be ever on the outlook for fresh suggestions as to methods and aims in education; and they should welcome these suggestions whether they find them set forth in formal manuals of school method, in journals devoted to school matters, or in articles from time to time appearing in the newspapers and magazines of the day. We might here point out how inadequate is the provision made by the State for the professional training of young teachers. For the most part they serve an apprenticeship as pupil-teachers, and, having obtained their certificates from the Department, they at once begin their work as assistants or are placed in charge of small schools. It is true there are training-colleges for teachers in Dunedin and Christchurch under the control of the Education Boards of Otago and North Canterbury respectively; but there should be established by the Department at least two training-colleges for each Island, and the attendance thereat of young teachers should be encouraged by a system of scholarships or by monetary aid granted to those compelled by distance to reside away from home during the period of their training.

As failure in reading now debars a pupil from obtaining a pass certificate in his standard, teachers have given even more attention than formerly to this subject, and improvement has to be recorded, particularly in the reading of the lower classes. A wider course of reading has been adopted; children are encouraged to read at sight matter well within their power, and there is less dependence placed on “pattern reading” of every phrase, sentence and paragraph, which in some cases was carried to such an absurd extent that pupils who could read their prepared books