

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Board of Education, New Plymouth, 16th April, 1903.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year ending the 31st December, 1902.

At the close of the year seventy-three schools were open, and all were examined with the exception of the newly opened school at Ruapuha and the Tongaporutu School, which was closed at the usual examination time.

The following table contains a summary of the examination results:—

Classes.				Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Passed.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	
							Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII.	...	...	...	67	47	...	14	5
" VI.	...	...	...	236	226	164	14	2
" V.	...	...	...	406	400	257	13	4
" IV.	...	...	...	544	518	341	12	5
" III.	...	...	...	598	578	416	11	5
" II.	...	...	...	608	576	470	10	6
" I.	...	...	...	602	577	498	9	1
Preparatory	...	...	...	1,627	1,449	...	7	2
Totals	...	...	...	4,688	4,371	2,146	11	6*

* Mean of average age.

During the year the number on the roll has increased by 352. The percentages of increases in the several classes are as follow: Preparatory class, 11 (nearly); Standard I., 11; Standard II., very slight; Standard III., $5\frac{1}{2}$; Standard IV., 3; Standard V., 2; Standard VI., 30; Standard VII., 24.

It is extremely gratifying to find that the number of pupils in Standard VI. increases year by year, thus indicating that parents show an increasing desire to give their children the benefits of an education beyond what is rendered compulsory by the School Attendance Act. The very slight increase in Standard V. is surprisingly low, the increase for 1901 being 26 per cent. The number present at the Inspector's annual visit shows an increase of 1,619, but of these 1,449 were pupils in the preparatory classes, which were not previously included in this column of the return. The number present in Standards I. to VII. increased by 170. The number of passes in Standards I. to VI. increased by fifty. The majority of the pupils in Standard VII. were on the roll of the Stratford District High School, and received regular instruction in secondary subjects. In the following schools pupils were presented, but the instruction was, in the main, confined to primary work somewhat in advance of the requirements for Standard VI.: Tarata, Denbigh Road, Midhirst, Urenui, Dudley Road, Omata, Lepperton, Hurford Road, Huirangi, Egmont Road, Tikorangi, Ngaire, Bell Block, and the Central School. A considerable proportion of the secondary pupils of the Stratford District High School received free tuition as a reward for a pass with credit in Standard VI. at the schools in the Stratford district. These would, however, represent only a fraction of the ex-Standard-VI. pupils in the whole district that were desirous of obtaining instruction in secondary subjects, for until the beginning of the present year no provision for free tuition at the northern end of the district had been made by the Department, and a pupil in or near New Plymouth, though having done work equally meritorious, was debarred the privileges enjoyed by his more favoured *confrère* at Stratford. I anticipate that during the current year at least seventy or eighty ex-Standard-VI. pupils will be receiving free tuition in secondary subjects as a result of their primary work.

The changes in the staffing necessitated by the passing of "The Public-School Teachers' Salaries Act, 1901," were gradually carried out, and these, combined with the increased attendance, have just doubled the number of assistants.

As there was considerable difficulty in procuring suitable teachers, positions as assistants and even as sole teachers were offered to pupil-teachers before the expiry of their apprenticeships, and, though the curtailing of their course of training is a matter for regret, I have been pleased with the very good promise shown by most of those so appointed. As the transference of one teacher often involves the transference of others, there was an abnormal number of changes in the staffs of the schools. Even excluding pupil-teachers, I find that permanent appointments were made in the staffs of more than half of the schools, and that in some schools three or four changes took place. This, of course, interfered materially with the continuity of the work, but I was gratified to find, in many cases at any rate, that the interests of the pupils did not apparently suffer, the difficulties serving merely as stimulus to increased effort on the part of the teachers. Recognising that there was a scarcity of teachers, many Committees have shown a commendable spirit in leaving the appointments in the hands of the Board, thereby enabling vacancies to be filled more promptly, avoiding the necessity for the number of relieving teachers that would otherwise have been required, and enabling deserving teachers in the Board's employ to obtain well-earned promotion. Twenty-six vacancies were filled by teachers not previously employed by the Board, and in all seventy-nine permanent or temporary appointments (exclusive of pupil-teachers) were made. With the exception of the West End School in New Plymouth, all schools are working with the staff provided by the above