

The following information is added to that supplied by the table: The number of pupils absent at the Inspector's examination was reduced in 1902 to 4 per cent., a proportion less than half that of the previous year. The percentage of pupils in the various classes compared with the total rolls is: Standard VII., 4.1; Standard VI., 8.4; Standard V., 9.6; Standard IV., 13.9; Standard III., 11.1; Standard II., 10.9; Standard I., 10.9; Preparatory, 31. The percentage of the pupils in Standards I. to VI. from whom promotion was withheld is 14.8, a decrease of 3.2 from that of the previous year. The number of pupils presented in a lower class in arithmetic is sixteen, and in a higher class three. Of the 337 pupils in the preparatory classes, thirty-eight were over eight years of age, and satisfactory reasons were usually given for the retention of such pupils in those classes.

In the previous year's report reference was made to the effect of adverse conditions on the work of the schools. An improvement in the length of the actual school year produced by a return to the normal number of holidays has especially provided an opportunity to recover usual efficiency, and in a few schools, including one or two of the larger ones, a distinct advance has been made in comparison with the results of several previous years.

While the record for the year is thus in many respects encouraging, there is reason to fear that there will continue to be an increase in the difficulty experienced in maintaining a good standard of ability in the staffs of the smaller schools. This change of conditions is due to the increasing scarcity of certificated female teachers, caused by the requirements of the new Act relating to staffs and salaries, and by the opening of numerous schools in certain districts of the North Island. During the past year eight certificated teachers have left the district to accept positions in other parts of the colony, and in several instances their places were of necessity filled by teachers without the required qualifications. To further emphasize the probable decrease in efficiency of the staffs, it may be added that, while during the year applications were invited in connection with fourteen positions as sole teachers or assistants, the salaries ranging from £56 with residence to £120, there were out of a total of forty-nine applicants only sixteen in possession of certificates, and on six occasions all the applicants were uncertificated. Of the pupil-teachers of the district only about two complete their course each year, and it is necessary in filling the numerous vacancies to depend largely on candidates without experience or special attainments. As the causes of the scarcity of female teachers in the colony are largely temporary, some relief might be granted by the acceptance, during a limited period, of voluntary service in public schools, under suitable regulations, as part of the qualification for a certificate. The Board has during the year had several applications from pupils that have passed the Sixth Standard to be allowed to act as voluntary assistants. The recompense for such service is instruction and training by the head teacher, and experience is gained that is of value to the small schools that are subsequently placed under the tuition of these probationers, who would be encouraged to pursue the preliminary course with more eagerness if by that means they could qualify for a certificate. This temporary arrangement would assist to maintain a supply of duly qualified teachers.

The classification of the pupils from the preparatory classes to the Fifth Standard, where that duty has been performed by the teachers, was carried out with care and discretion. There is, perhaps, a tendency in some cases to overstrictness produced by a laudable desire to maintain or elevate the standard of efficiency of the schools, but in no instance was there displayed a desire to promote unduly pupils that were not sufficiently prepared. The teachers in charge of a majority of schools, however, prefer to leave the duties of classification to the Inspector, and I have had to insist on the examination of every school by the teacher immediately before the annual examination, and on the presentation of the records of such preliminary test, even where the final classification according to standards is omitted. The information thus supplied is frequently of use to the Inspector, and a comparison of results is instructive to many of the teachers. It has also been necessary to remind teachers of some schools that to supply an estimate of the regularity and completeness with which the work of the school year has been carried on there must be preserved the exercises of the pupils duly dated, a syllabus of the course of instruction recorded twice each quarter, and the results of the teachers' examinations. Such records, further, enable a teacher taking charge of a school to become acquainted more readily with the work done under previous management.

The English subjects of the course of instruction have been treated more thoroughly in the larger schools than during previous years. Reading, spelling, composition, and grammar are now prepared in a manner that in general is satisfactory. In view of the extension of secondary education that will follow the grant of free tuition, it is pleasing to find that the subjects that must form the basis of most of the work of secondary schools are receiving due attention from the pupils from whom the students of such schools are drawn. The chief criticism that suggests itself in connection with the instruction in these branches of the school course is the need of greater attention to correlation among them. Being to an unnecessary extent separated in the teachers' time-tables, they are regarded as unconnected subjects, and the advantage of the treatment of English as one object of study, though viewed from different aspects, is lost. Orthography and inflection; the explanation of words and phrases; the relation of these to each other in the sentence; the arrangement of ideas by paragraphs and in proper order—all should receive attention in accordance with a general and well-devised scheme. Each should be the subject of at least occasional reference in lessons in reading and composition, and several in instruction in spelling and grammar, although the emphasis in the various exercises may be placed on different points. Composition especially should be regarded as an exercise in reproduction of methods studied in connection with the other branches. For this purpose good methods of oral answering in all classes, the paraphrase of passages, and rewriting of reading lessons form valuable aids in acquiring a vocabulary and the power of expression in the written form.

Arithmetic is the individual subject occupying most time, and the one to which most mental effort is devoted. It is certain, however, that its educational value is reduced by the unnecessary