

gained prizes at the A. and P. Show had the amounts subsidised on being utilised for the above purpose. The splendid collection of grasses, &c., of the Fairhall School may be mentioned. Some of the schools have, by the above means, provided themselves with microscopes. The Board has purchased a sufficient number of thermometers and compasses to furnish every class-room with one of each. Rain-gauges, barometers, and wind-vanes are still required for the larger schools.

The mathematician has lately found his science strangely altered, and the chemist has seen his most cherished theory—the immutability of the elements—put into the crucible and melted down to be another illustration of the poet's verse: "Our little systems have their day." So, too, there has been change in the educational world. The old canons have been subjected to revision and the new methods have been slowly penetrating the schools. Like the man of science, the teacher must ever keep open mind on the question of reform. The teachers have shown a commendable desire to test the value of suggested reforms, and have shown zeal in discharge of their duties.

D. A. STRACHAN, Inspector.

The Chairman, Marlborough Education Board.

NELSON.

SIR,—

We have the honour to lay before you our report on the schools of the Nelson Education District for the year 1905.

One hundred and fourteen schools were at work at the end of the year, or four less than the number reported last year. Oparara School has been closed since the examination, arrangements having been made for the conveyance of the children to Karamea School. This is the first time the experiment of conveying children to a centre has been tried in this district, and we hope it will prove in every way successful. In this particular locality it would be easily possible to have the children from all four schools brought together, and a strong central school of between eighty and ninety pupils would thus be formed.

Five schools not under the supervision of the Board have also been examined, the total number of scholars being 374, of whom 359 were present. The corresponding numbers last year were 402 and 389, the Colleges now presenting fewer pupils than hitherto. Most of these schools showed decided improvement, and though none have yet reached the "good" rank, we are hopeful of some soon doing so, as all but one produced satisfactory work.

The average weekly number on the rolls for the September quarter was 5,633, or sixty-four higher than for the corresponding quarter of last year. We are pleased to find that after seven years of retrogression the number of children in the district is now again on the up-grade. The number on the rolls at the time of our examination was 5,632, as compared with 5,547 in 1904.

The average attendance for the year has been 4,829 (4,712 in 1904), or 85·6 per cent. of the average weekly number on the rolls. This is the highest percentage yet recorded for this district, though it is only slightly higher than the average for the whole colony last year, 85·5 per cent. Only four, however, of the thirteen educational districts showed a better average, and we are pleased to see that improvement in regularity of attendance, though gradual, is being brought about, and that the majority of our children in this respect are no longer at a disadvantage when compared with those in other parts of the colony. We note that the percentage for the September quarter, 86·9, represents the highest figure for any single quarter that we have ever yet had the pleasure of recording.

In spite of the general improvement, seventeen schools still fail to reach 80 per cent., and four of these are even under 70 per cent., which means that on an average out of every five days in the week that the school is open every child is losing over a day and a half's schooling. As a result, the children are heavily handicapped in the educational race, especially as, in addition to the irregularity, some of these particular schools are open too few times in the year. Parents nowadays are, as a rule, taking a keener interest than ever in their children's progress, as the struggle to obtain proficiency certificates and free places at secondary schools clearly shows, and indifference upon so vital a matter as regular attendance should no longer endure. Seven (household) schools again show 100 per cent., and twenty above Grade 0 exceed 90 per cent., one of these scoring the possible. All of the larger schools—that is, those in each of which more than two teachers are employed—make, with one exception, satisfactory returns.

There were in the employment of the Board on 31st December 165 teachers, whose classification was as follows: Head teachers—Certificated, 32; Assistants—Certificated, 43; uncertificated, 10. Sole teachers—Certificated, 44; uncertificated, 36.

There were also twenty-five pupil-teachers, all female, nine of whom have matriculated. There should be no difficulty in obtaining matriculated candidates for the larger centres, and the passing of the Junior Civil Service or of the Matriculation Examination might well be the minimum qualification for all applicants for pupil-teachership. A comparison of the above with last year's figures shows improvement, except in regard to uncertificated assistants. For several vacancies throughout the year the names of no certificated applicants were received, and consequently uncertificated teachers were temporarily employed. Reasons for the dearth of qualified applicants are not hard to find. In the first place, the salaries of assistants in country schools are not, we contend, on a right basis. An assistant in a Grade IV school should not have to begin at the same rate as one in a city school, which invariably presents greater attractions and advantages in the matter of training and tuition. The abolition of the E, or lowest certificate examination, though it tends to raise the level of scholarship, has necessarily made the acquisition of a certificate more difficult. In districts such as this, where small and necessarily poorly paid schools abound, this is and will continue to be a disadvantage till more effective steps are taken for the amalgamation of schools, the grouping of children at one centre by