

payment of conveyance, or the establishment of part-time schools. The last is, in our opinion, the least desirable method, though Auckland District, we notice, possesses seventy-two half-time schools. The proposal recently made by the Department to issue licenses to capable teachers, and especially to those that have passed the pupil-teacher examinations, though it does not strengthen the service, may tide over the present difficulty *re* the supply of qualified teachers.

"The Education Act Amendment Act, 1905," again improves somewhat the salaries of teachers, and in schools above Grade 0, by paying according to grade and abolishing the capitation, the salaries are placed on a more stable basis. In schools of Grade 0—that is, of less than sixteen in average attendance—the teacher is to be paid at the rate of £6 per head; in the case of others, the provision that no reduction of salary can be made unless the average attendance for the two preceding years would reduce the grade of the school is a step in the direction of safeguarding the interests of teachers. We notice that the schools are to be regraded, sixteen to twenty being Grade I; twenty-six to thirty-two, Grade III; forty-one to fifty, Grade V; sixty-one to seventy-five, Grade VII; ninety-one to 120, Grade IX, &c. The salaries of pupil-teachers are also improved, and those of the assistants in a secondary department are to be paid according to the grade of the department. It is a relief to see the last of the former complicated system, with its absurdly high deductions for inadequate attendance, but we certainly question the wisdom of allowing so large a proportion of the salary to go to junior assistants and head teachers. The latter might now reasonably be expected to take an appreciable part of the secondary teaching. The staff of the primary department is reduced to the exact amount that that department warrants. We regret to see any reduction of staff made, the scale being in our opinion none too liberal, and we would especially welcome the lowering of the number (forty-one, average attendance) which a school under a sole teacher must attain to before he receives any assistance. It practically means that one teacher unaided must for at least a year teach not less than twelve subjects to about fifty pupils in different classes, possibly ten in all. It is, in our opinion, a position in which it is absurd to expect any one to do full justice to all his charges.

An immediate effect of the new Act has been to enable the Board to make a much-needed amalgamation of the Nelson City schools. Without any disturbance of present arrangements, there will be two groups of schools instead of four, each under a capable headmaster, who can more effectively than hitherto supervise all departments through having the complete school under his control. There will thus be no loss of power in management, and the pupil-teachers should benefit materially both in variety of training and in tuition.

The following summary for the whole district has been compiled for the Inspectors' annual return:—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	95	82	14 9
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	464	459	13 9
" V	...	...	...	...	...	604	592	12 11
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	618	603	12 1
" III	...	...	...	...	...	692	672	11 0
" II	...	...	...	...	...	714	698	9 10
" I	...	...	...	...	...	644	628	8 10
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	1,801	1,657	6 11
Totals						5,632	5,390	11 3*
Totals for 1904						5,547	5,280	11 3

* Mean of average age.

The number in Standard VII again shows a loss (thirty-three), our secondary departments having fallen considerably. Standards I and IV are also smaller, but all the other classes, and especially the Preparatory, are larger, so that the total is eighty-five higher than last year's. The average age is very nearly the same as in previous years. As compared with the average age prevailing throughout the colony for the respective classes, in the Preparatory class it is two months lower, in Standards I, II, and VII one month lower, in Standards III, IV, and V one month higher, and in Standard VI the same. The large number present at our examinations, in spite of the very unsettled weather experienced in the spring and early summer, was both gratifying to us and creditable to the schools. The class-lists of forty-seven schools showed not a single absentee.

In Standard VI the number of proficiency certificates gained was 249, and of competency 125. The amended regulation, which increased the difficulty of a pass for the former from 50 to 60 per cent. of the possible marks, took effect on the 28th August. By it the minimum mark for arithmetic was also increased to 40 per cent. Those candidates that have been examined since the date mentioned have consequently had to compete under more stringent conditions than formerly. We are, as we indicated in last year's report, in full sympathy with the changes effected, as the value of the certificate is much enhanced, for it now is a guarantee that its possessor has a fair working knowledge of the subjects prescribed for the Sixth Standard course. Considering the increased difficulty, the number of these certificates granted shows little diminution, whilst the number of competency certificates obtained for passing in four out of the five subjects—reading, composition, writing, spelling, and arithmetic—was over twice as large as previously. Over 81 per cent. of the candidates obtained one or the other certificate. Such interest in the competition has been displayed that some pupils, in order to renew their attempts, have followed us from school to school. On one occasion their numbers were such as