

The average age for the colony of the pupils in Standard VI at the time of the annual visit of the Inspector was 13 years 9 months, which is precisely the same as the average for the three preceding years. In range, the ages returned by the several districts differ by 7 months, the lowest age being found in Westland, 13 years 5 months, and the highest in Hawke's Bay, 14 years 0 months. As to the age at which pupils in this standard obtained certificates of competency and certificates of proficiency respectively, no precise information is available; but the information deduced from Table D2—that 82·45 per cent. (84·31 in 1905) received one or other class of certificate—serves to show that the pupils failing to obtain such a certificate before attaining the age of fourteen years must be comparatively small.

In Table D4 are given the numbers of children receiving instruction in the several subjects. For the purpose of this return reading, spelling, writing, and composition are grouped together under the heading "English," and some other alterations are made which are rendered necessary by alterations in the programme prescribed. "Object-lessons," for instance, disappears, as it has disappeared from the syllabus of instruction, and its place is taken by "nature-study," which is here grouped with "elementary science," from which in general it is not to be distinguished.

TABLE D4.—NUMBER OF PUPILS INSTRUCTED IN SEPARATE SUBJECTS, DECEMBER, 1906.

Education Districts.	Numbers belonging at End of Year.	English.	Arithmetic.	Drawing.	Singing.	Physical Instruction.	Geography.	History.	Nature-study and Elementary Science.	Handwork.	Needlework.
Auckland	32,455	32,455	32,409	32,186	30,367	31,060	15,552	13,562	26,650	22,448	9,899
Taranaki	5,040	5,040	5,040	5,040	5,040	5,040	2,864	1,890	5,040	4,128	2,103
Wanganui	12,831	12,831	12,809	12,774	11,413	12,607	7,569	4,838	11,661	11,380	4,593
Wellington	16,212	16,212	16,206	16,088	15,362	15,424	9,891	7,458	15,229	13,190	6,700
Hawke's Bay	9,149	9,149	9,149	9,095	8,666	8,662	5,190	3,589	7,974	5,956	4,365
Marlborough	2,015	2,015	2,015	1,927	1,831	1,936	1,292	891	1,610	1,504	776
Nelson	5,592	5,592	5,592	5,245	5,592	5,592	4,564	2,527	4,388	3,602	2,478
Grey	1,643	1,643	1,635	1,556	1,533	1,610	857	630	1,346	725	599
Westland	1,035	1,035	1,035	890	699	850	528	234	924	489	336
North Canterbury	19,403	19,403	19,403	19,150	18,415	18,817	11,110	8,853	18,130	11,858	8,618
South Canterbury	5,195	5,195	5,195	5,017	4,848	5,162	2,580	1,958	4,382	3,641	1,998
Otago	18,995	18,995	18,995	18,995	18,995	18,995	10,641	9,150	15,298	11,449	7,579
Southland	9,737	9,737	9,672	9,586	9,124	9,578	5,574	4,293	8,201	8,095	3,857
Totals for 1906	139,302	139,302	139,155	137,549	131,885	135,363	78,212	59,873	120,833	98,465	53,901
Totals for 1905	137,623	137,623	137,408	135,146	129,630	127,386	79,981	59,956	122,040	93,565	52,777
Difference	1,679	1,679	1,747	2,403	2,255	7,977	-1,769	-83	-1,207	4,900	1,124

In English and arithmetic the numbers returned remain practically identical with the roll-numbers, following them in the upward grade; under the heading "physical instruction" a further marked increase is shown in the number receiving some definite course of training, and drawing and singing also include a somewhat larger proportion of the whole. A large increase is again shown in the addition to the number reported as receiving instruction in handwork of various forms; the total number receiving instruction under this heading has now reached 70·68 per cent. of the total roll-number. The percentages of the numbers receiving instruction in nature-study and physical instruction were 86·74 and 97·17 respectively of the total roll-number. On the other hand, further reductions are found in geography, history, and in nature-study and elementary science. The fall in the number taking nature-study must not be taken as implying that this important department is receiving less attention than formerly. There is an increasing number of schools at which elementary agriculture, dairy-work, and cognate subjects are being taken. Pupils attending such classes would not be returned as taking a general course of nature-study, but as taking some branch of handwork providing a definite course of nature-study.

PUBLIC-SCHOOL TEACHERS.

In December, 1906, there were employed on the primary staffs in the public schools of the colony 3,872 teachers, of whom 3,201 were adults and 671 pupil-teachers: the corresponding numbers for December, 1905, were 3,137