

on the Roman Catholic schools, of which there are five in the district—namely, two in Timaru, and one each in Temuka, Kerrytown, and Waimate.

The following table shows the number of pupils on the roll, the number present at time of the teacher's annual examination, and the average age of each class :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	141	135	15 6
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	353	322	14 1
" V	...	...	...	...	...	529	500	13 3
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	618	590	12 2
" III	...	...	...	...	...	598	579	11 2
" II	...	...	...	...	...	622	600	10 2
" I	...	...	...	...	...	641	610	9 1
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	1,894	1,781	7 0
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	5,396	5,117	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

The figures in this table show for the year an increase of 201 in the roll-number. In Standards III to VII there is a decrease of 118, while for Class P., Standards I and II the increase is 319; and it is gratifying to find that of this increase 290 belong to the infant classes. The number present at the teacher's annual examination is 5,117, as against 4,780 present last year at the time of the Inspector's annual visit.

Under the regulations now in force the pupils in all our schools are classified at the beginning of the year, the classification being determined by the results of periodical examinations held by the head teacher, the last of which is called the "annual examination." Head teachers are directed to hold the annual examination in November or December. The purpose of this is to enable the new classification to be determined on the results of the year's work; and, though it may be necessary in very large schools for head teachers to begin the work of examining in November, there is no call to do this in the great bulk of our schools. The aim should be to hold the examination as near as possible to the closing of the school for the Christmas vacation. The pupils will naturally feel that the work for the year is over when the examination is past, and parents will be of the same opinion. Should a period of many days intervene between the examination and the closing of the school, it will certainly be regarded by many as of little consequence whether attendance is then well maintained or not, and an attitude of indifference on the part of the pupils will almost inevitably take the place of the spirit of earnestness that should pervade all school-work. Now that teachers have had their attention directed to this point, they will no doubt recognise its importance, and act accordingly.

The results of the annual examinations as set out in the schedules provided by the Department were forwarded to me by the head teachers, and when the class-lists were found to be complete and duly in order, one copy was signed and returned to the head teacher, to be kept in the school as the record of the annual examination. The examination of their pupils necessarily entailed a good deal of work on the teachers, and the recording of marks on a scale of 0 to 50 (the scale adopted in this district on the advice of the local Institute) against the name of every pupil to show his strength or weakness in the main subjects of instruction was a matter that gave most of the teachers an anxious time. In the majority of the smaller schools it was noticeable that the marks for subjects were very high—so high that one with a knowledge of the schools could not but feel that through lack of experience as examiners the teachers were no doubt unintentionally presenting the results of their teaching in too glowing colours. In conversation with one of the teachers on this matter, I ventured to express some doubt as to whether the marks 45, 46, and so on, out of 50, were a true indication of the attainments in geography (Course A) of certain S5 pupils, and was assured that these pupils had certainly answered her questions "fairly well." Now, marks of 45 or more out of 50 to my mind indicate an approach to "excellence," and, if pupils answered only "fairly well," 25 marks out of 50 would have been a sufficient allowance of marks to show this. The adoption of a scale of 0 to 20 is recommended for future use: there is ample scope in such a scale for showing varying degrees of proficiency in any subject, and in practice it will be found less likely to lead to unintentional overestimating of the quality of the work done.

Whether the marks had been wisely given or not did not affect the question as to the class-lists being complete and duly in order. Still, through misunderstandings of one kind and another about one-third of the schools had their lists sent back for amendment before they could be signed and finally issued. After the experience of this year, mistakes of the kind that were made—not serious ones, but adding considerably to one's correspondence—are not likely to recur to any great extent in the future.

The system of examining the pupils of Standard VI at various centres, as fully explained in last year's report, was again successfully followed this year. There were applications to be examined from 356 pupils, and of these 348 sat for examination. Certificates of proficiency were awarded to 229 scholars, and certificates of competency to 69, the percentage of passes for the higher certificate being