

the average for all the schools being 396. It will be seen that this state of things is not satisfactory. In future reports I purpose setting apart a column in the summary to show for each school the number of times it has been open, and an explanation will be looked for in the case of those schools that are in fault.

During September, October, and November I was laid aside from work owing to illness. In my absence Mr. Bell, with the assistance of Mr. Pitcaithly, of the Waimate District High School, and Mr. Dalglish, of the Timaru Main School, completed the visits of inspection. I beg to tender my thanks to these gentlemen for their assistance. My thanks are also due to the Waimate and Timaru Main School Committees for temporarily releasing their headmasters from their school duties, and to the Board of Education for my leave of absence.

I have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, South Canterbury.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Education Office, 20th March, 1909

We have the honour to submit our general report for the year 1908.

Since April, 1908, the inspection and examination of the schools have been conducted in accordance with the regulations gazetted in that month. As these regulations formed at the time the subject of a special memorandum from us to the Board, they do not call for extended notice in this report. The chief changes they involve may be summarised as follows:—

- (1.) At the opening of the year (with us, the first Monday in February) every standard class begins the work prescribed for it in the syllabus, and at the end of the year it is examined by the teacher for purposes of classification for the succeeding year.
- (2.) The schedules containing the head teacher's estimate of the attainments of his pupils are, after they have been seen by the Inspector, to be "the record of the annual examination."

As it is essential that the children should have a full year in which to prepare the work prescribed for Standard VI, the first change made necessary a corresponding change in the time of examination for the certificate of proficiency, a change which, though it involves inconvenience to country children, is of advantage to those who live in the neighbourhood of, and wish to proceed to, secondary schools. For these the year-end examination has been substituted for the examination formerly held when the schools they attended were examined to test the general efficiency of the instruction.

With regard to the second change, we remark that the value of "the record of the annual examination" will ever depend partly upon the teacher's experience, skill, and ideals, and partly upon his power to resist pressure from parents for the annual promotion of their children. As a matter of fact, the teacher's estimate of the attainments of his pupils as expressed in the record not infrequently differs widely from our own, which is based in part upon a careful scrutiny of the papers worked by the children for their teacher and in part upon the examination conducted by ourselves to test the efficiency of the instruction and to obtain data for our "inspection reports" to the Board.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	412	314	15 0
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	1,105	1,003	13 10
" V	...	...	...	...	...	1,802	1,706	13 1
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	2,158	2,059	12 3
" III	...	...	...	...	...	2,236	2,166	11 3
" II	...	...	...	...	...	2,235	2,161	10 2
" I	...	...	...	...	...	2,279	2,177	9 2
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	7,332	6,509	7 1
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	19,559	18,095	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

At their parents' request a large number of the pupils of Standard VI were examined for the certificate of proficiency at their own schools. Of these only 50 per cent. succeeded in winning the certificate, while of those who were examined at the centres in December only 40 per cent. succeeded. Even the higher of these percentages is below what it is fair to expect from schools in the majority of which the teaching is generally good. The chief cause is not, we think, far to seek: it has been mentioned again and again in our reports—namely, premature promotion from Standard IV to Standard V, and from Standard V to Standard VI. The operation of this cause was felt more severely in 1908 than in preceding years [from the circumstance that the new regulation prescribes for a pass in English a higher percentage of marks than did the old. It ought to be obvious to every one that even with the