

The following summary shows the number of classes and the average ages of the pupils in attendance:—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	365	355	14 10
" VI	...	...	...	...	1,386	1,365	13 11
" V	...	...	...	...	1,855	1,831	12 10
" IV	...	...	...	...	1,906	1,880	12 0
" III	...	...	...	...	2,050	2,010	10 11
" II	...	...	...	...	2,041	2,013	9 9
" I	...	...	...	...	2,151	2,095	9 0
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	6,139	5,865	6 11
					17,893	17,414	11 3*
Eleven Catholic schools	...	...	...	...	1,442	1,384	...
Totals	...	...	...	...	19,335	18,798	...

* Mean of average age.

These figures show a total increase of 132, or, in detail, a slight increase in Classes P, S1, S3, S5, and S6, and a decrease in S2 and S7. Though on the aggregate number we have more than held our own, we regret to notice that the country schools (Grades 0–6) as a whole show a decided decrease in numbers—nearly 400. This is in part due to the fact that many of our small settlers have moved to the cheaper land along the Main Trunk line, but, unfortunately, the main cause has undoubtedly been the growing tendency towards aggregation in towns. We are pleased, however, to note that settlers in the backblocks are taking fuller advantage of the liberal allowances made to aided schools by the Education Department. The numbers in S6 and S7 have been practically stationary during the past two years. We had expected an increase this year in our district high school numbers, but this expectation has not been realized, a fact largely due to the alteration in the Wairarapa Railway time-table. In the Greytown District High School alone the new time-table entailed a loss of nearly 40 per cent. in the number of secondary pupils.

As the matter of accommodation receives more particular attention in the Chairman's report, we touch on the question only in so far as it affects general efficiency. Of our total of 163 schools, 150 are satisfactorily accommodated. This number includes ten aided schools, where the parents have provided accommodation quite suitable for the small numbers in attendance. Ten schools are housed, wholly or in part, in rented halls or churchrooms, and eight are in old and dilapidated or otherwise unsuitable buildings. In four instances this disability in the matter of accommodation has been such as seriously to affect the organization and efficiency of the school work. The matter of school residences has been referred to in previous reports, and it is satisfactory to know that both Department and Board have in hand a comprehensive scheme to afford our teachers a higher standard of comfort. During the year special accommodation has been provided for woodwork at the five high schools now taking the rural course. Woodwork and cookery centres have also been established at the Mount Cook Schools.

The matter of efficiency naturally receives detailed attention in our inspection and examination reports, and it is due to our teachers to say that a large measure of improvement has resulted from suggestions made in these reports. The following table summarizes our opinion of the schools as a whole:—

Satisfactory to good	...	...	...	...	...	135
Fair	...	...	...	...	...	18
Inferior	...	...	...	...	...	10

As in previous years, these unsatisfactory schools are for the most part in Grade 0 or in Grade 1, and, while in no way wishing to extenuate a decided weakness, we would point out the great difficulty experienced in finding suitable teachers to meet the frequent changes that occur in the management of the schools in these grades.

While still expressing general approval of the discretion exercised by our teachers as a body in the classification and promotion of their pupils, we would direct attention to our warnings in last year's report, relating to this matter, as we again noticed at the proficiency examination an appreciable number of candidates who gave indications of hasty and ill-judged promotion from S5. It has been contended that under the new regulations the small country school is suffering. An idea has gone abroad that the Inspectors' visits now mean merely a cursory examination of the teaching methods and an estimate of the general condition of the school as a whole. We take this opportunity of assuring the Board that the new order gives a decided advantage to the country school, and if responsibility is anywhere taken from the Inspectors it is in the larger city schools, where the individual examination of the pupils is—unless the circumstances are exceptional—confined to S6. The small country school is generally visited by an Inspector in March, and the teacher's classification of the pupils is then put to