

line. In fact, if the Masterton town schools are included with the city schools, there is a marked decrease in the roll-numbers of the rest of the district, as a comparison with the corresponding totals of ten years ago clearly shows:—

	1901.	1911.
Roll of schools on Manawatu line	1,060	1,722
Roll of city and suburban schools, including Masterton ...	9,770	12,321
Roll of schools in rest of Wellington District ...	4,411	4,046
	<u>15,241</u>	<u>18,089</u>

which means that, omitting the two Masterton schools, the rolls of the schools north of the Rimutaka and south of the Hawke's Bay line show a decrease of 9 per cent. in ten years, although the actual number of schools has in the same period increased from 92 to 103.

EFFICIENCY.—A summary of details contained in our examination and inspection reports gives the following result for 1911 as compared with 1910:—

	1911.	1910.
Satisfactory to very good	151	135
Fair	12	18
Inferior	6	10
	<u>169</u>	<u>163</u>

This shows a most commendable improvement—the fact that 90 per cent. of our schools are in a satisfactory condition is a matter for congratulation to all concerned. The unsatisfactory condition of small rural schools and the disabilities under which they work have been specially commented on by the parliamentary Education Committee, and various remedies have been suggested by educational authorities. We have recognized that the problem is one most difficult to deal with in a sparsely settled country. Whatever else might be done, our duty in the matter was obvious, and with practically no exceptions we have given the maximum amount of time to the lower grade schools, in every case carefully examining and classifying all pupils, and, where necessary, paying a third visit. We have been gratified at the response made by our country teachers. The weakness of the school has often been the result simply of the teacher's want of experience. The advice willingly received and acted on has resulted in immediate improvement. For example, in the Pongaroa district, where backblock disadvantages certainly reach their maximum, we have this year been able to report that fifteen schools out of the total of sixteen are classified as satisfactory to good.

During Mr. Tennant's absence in England the Board made use of the services of Mr. W. T. Grundy as an Inspector. As Mr. Grundy is a teacher of high standing and long experience, both in England and in the Dominion, it may be of interest to give some of the impressions formed by him while engaged on inspectorial work. He writes: "In most of the small country schools I was impressed with the fact that the teachers were striving loyally and earnestly to do their best for the children, and the work was in many cases of a higher order of merit than I had expected to find. There was close supervision of written work, which in most cases was very neatly done, and evidently an earnest endeavour was being made to meet the requirements of the standards of education in every possible way. The children, too, were more responsive than I had expected to find them, and it is evident that the leaven of the spirit of the new education is working, and is having a beneficial effect on education in these remote districts. Great credit is due to many of the country teachers for the care they bestow on the upkeep of the Board's property. In connection with some of even the smallest schools there are beautifully kept gardens in which the pupils work, and from which, educationally, they undoubtedly obtain much profit as well as enjoyment."

A reference to the annual report of the Inspector-General of Schools shows that apparently no explanation satisfactory to the Department has been forthcoming with regard to the increased proportion of children in the preparatory classes, the length of time they are kept there, and the consequent increase in the average age of Standard VI. While careful to acquit Inspectors and teachers of any direct blame, the report this year again emphasizes the gravity of the position, and it is evidently the desire of the Department that district authorities should make some attempt to remedy matters—presumably by accelerating the promotions into standard classes. The question is undoubtedly one for very serious consideration, and we append a table showing a comparison between the average standard ages for Wellington District and for the Dominion:—

Average Ages.	Preparatory.	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Dominion ...	7 0	9 2	10 2	11 3	12 3	13 1	14 0
Wellington ...	6 11	9 1	9 9	11 0	11 8	12 11	13 9

Percentage of pupils in preparatory classes—Dominion, 37.15 per cent.; Wellington, 34 per cent.

First, as to the length of time children are kept in the preparatory classes. In our district, this increase in the preparatory age has been accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the length of time taken to pass through the subsequent standards. Moreover, if the increase has had no more serious result than that of raising the average age of Standard VI by three months (the statistics for the last three years do not indicate the probability of any further increase), we do not see that the primary pupil is necessarily any the worse for such extension of his primary