

NELSON.

SIR,—

Education Office, Nelson, 30th January, 1912.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the schools of the Nelson Education District for the year 1911.

One hundred and eighteen schools were at work during the last quarter of the year. To six of these eight side schools are also attached. Household schools at Aniseed Valley, Drummond's, Moutere Bluffs, and Torrent Bay have during the year been closed, but Nine-mile has reopened, and new household schools have been established at Rainy River, Norris's, Awaroa Bay, Okiwi Bay, and West Haven, so that the total number is higher by two than previously. Further development is expected shortly at Glenhope, Owen Junction, and Braeburn.

One hundred and twelve schools have been inspected, and, as usual, the great majority have been visited at least twice. Those as yet uninspected have been but recently opened. Those inspected but once in the year are small outlying schools in Grades 0 or I.

It is questionable whether too large a proportion of our time is not absorbed in the inspection of small schools, as so little is available for the examination of high schools, the setting of examination-papers, the supervision and criticism of pupil-teachers' training, the consideration and criticism of head teachers' schedules and examinations, the investigation of claims for certificates, the consideration of applications for temporary appointments and of schemes of work, and the drafting of these for inexperienced teachers. We have found that suggestions upon some of the lines indicated above have, when issued to teachers in the form of circulars, been much appreciated, and have quickly influenced a greater number than could be readily reached individually.

The following private schools have also been inspected by us:—

	Roll.	Present.
1. St. Mary's Boys', Nelson	43	38
2. St. Mary's Girls', Nelson	73	68
3. Sacred Heart High, Nelson	62	60
4. Sacred Heart, Reefton	88	86
5. St. Canice's, Westport	266	265
6. Cabragh House, Nelson	15	15
7. Zephyr Lodge, Nelson	16	16
Totals	563	548

The examination of pupils from these schools that were candidates for proficiency certificates was also conducted by us, with the following result:—

Candidates.	Proficiency Certificates gained.	Competency Certificates gained.
42	19	16

Our appreciation of the general efficiency of these schools is briefly expressed as follows: Five satisfactory, two satisfactory to good.

Six special examinations for Sixth Standard certificates were also held, and for these forty-nine candidates presented themselves, and gained twelve proficiency and twenty-six competency certificates.

The total number of children in attendance at the public schools of the district is still increasing, the average weekly roll for September quarter, 6,050, being 153 higher than that for the corresponding term of last year; whilst the return for December quarter, 6,130, shows a higher roll than the district has ever previously recorded.

It is very gratifying to note a marked improvement in the standard of regularity of attendance, 88.5 per cent. of the average weekly roll number, a percentage that for the first time for many years exceeds that of the Dominion for the previous year—namely, 87.7 per cent. Our average attendance for the year was 5,345, as compared with 5,069, or 82.2 per cent., for the year 1910. The operation of section 9 of the Education Amendment Act of 1910, which requires all children to be present whenever school is open, has already had a beneficial effect upon the attendance, and the improvement recorded has been made in spite of an epidemic of measles which seriously affected the attendance of a large proportion of our scholars, those in the Nelson City schools. Almost every school has improved its position in this matter, but the attendance at Waitahu, 75 per cent.; Waiharakeke, 76 per cent.; Glenroy and Takaka Secondary, each 77 per cent.; Inangahua Landing, 78 per cent., is still so poor as to render the attainment of the best teaching results impossible. There were, however, only seven schools below 80 per cent. this year, and twenty-nine below 85 per cent., as compared with eighteen and fifty respectively in 1910. Apart from household schools, excellent attendance was maintained at Seddonville, Rahui (side), and Arapito, each 95 per cent.; Summerlea and Redwood's Valley, each 94 per cent.; Nelson Boys' (main), Cape Foulwind, Land of Promise, and Fairdown, each 93 per cent. Three of our larger schools deserve special commendation for the very marked improvement that has been effected in the attendance during the year—Seddonville's percentage has risen from 87 per cent. in 1910 to 95 per cent., Richmond's from 86 to 92, and Westport's from 83 to 89. In all, forty-five schools record 90 per cent. or more for the year. Of the thirteen Education districts of the Dominion, Otago still holds pride of place for good attendance with 90.5 per cent. for 1910, Marlborough being second with 89.2 per cent. Nelson, with 86.4 per cent., was tenth on the list, and classed by the Minister of Education among the districts having the lowest average. Though in all probability other districts may have improved, we hope to secure a higher position this year, and in any case can congratulate the district upon making so great an advance upon any previous effort.