

In Standard VI the record is much the same as that of last year, when twenty-eight classes were regarded as efficient against fifty-three non-efficient. Of 394 candidates for proficiency certificates 25 per cent. failed to qualify in this subject. The pass requirement is so low that the number failing in arithmetic appears to be considerably greater than should be the case. Thirty-three pupils of Standard VI were presented in Standard V arithmetic. In all the other classes, with the exception of Standard IV, where the result practically agrees with that of last year, considerable improvement is shown.

In the preparatory classes the subject is generally receiving careful and more correct treatment. In a great many schools the composition and grouping of numbers are skilfully worked by concrete examples. The results of these operations should be duly recorded and tabulated, and the principal tables committed to memory. This final stage is essential if the pupil is to possess that readiness in applying the four simple rules with the accuracy and rapidity that are always necessary for success in more advanced stages.

The prominence recently given to mental arithmetic has, we feel sure, resulted in considerable benefit. Frequent practice should be given in this branch of the work. The examples should come as much as possible within the experience of the pupils, and should not in the main be mere book questions. In the upper classes more attention might be given to shorter methods of working, and to producing greater facility in dealing with problems involving the use of units of the metric system.

GEOGRAPHY.—In the syllabus in geography no definite course of work has been laid down for the various standards in Course B. A list of suitable topics has been specified, from which the teacher is expected to draw up his own course. The result of this has been that considerable variety has existed in regard to what might be considered a suitable course, while our younger and less experienced teachers, especially in schools in which classes are grouped for the subject, find it difficult to arrange satisfactory schemes of work.

To somewhat help such teachers, early in the year we issued the outlines of a suggested scheme of work, giving alternate courses suitable for schools where two classes were grouped. The limits of work expected were alone stated; the method of treatment and the order of taking the work were left entirely in the hands of the teachers. This scheme was very generally adopted, and led at least to some uniformity in dealing with the subject.

On the whole the instruction appears to have improved, especially in the upper classes of the larger schools. In taking this subject in the examination for proficiency certificates the written answers showed a much more intelligent knowledge of the subject, but it was evident that in some schools the teaching had been limited to the getting-up of facts from a text-book.

The political geography was not generally well known, but would doubtless be improved if there was some continuity between the schemes of work as devised for the various standard classes.

HISTORY AND CIVICS.—The instruction in this subject is carried on in much the same way as hitherto—in some schools by means of historical readers, in others by special lessons given by the teacher. In only a few instances has the result been entirely satisfactory. The subject is one that requires a live interest on the part of the teacher if his instruction is to be profitable. There are many evidences that this interest has weakened to a great extent—we note that the subject is not a favourite one with candidates for teachers' certificates.

In many cases we found fault with the schemes of work presented to us as being too meagre, and certainly inadequate when compared with the time given to the teaching of the subject. The latter branch of the work—the civic instruction—showed to greater advantage than history itself.

Since writing the above the question of history-teaching in the primary schools has been adversely commented on at the meeting of the New Zealand University Senate. Much of the criticism reflects our previously expressed opinion that the subject is distasteful, and so it is not taken up with that keenness of interest that its importance demands. The suggestion that it be made compulsory for proficiency certificates might afford at best but a partial remedy for what is undoubtedly a weakness at the present time.

HANDWORK AND MANUAL TRAINING CLASSES.—Classes in the following branches of elementary handwork have been recognized in thirty-seven schools:—

	Classes.
Plasticine-modelling	29
Brush drawing	14
Elementary design and colour-work	5
Paper-folding	8
Free-arm drawing	6
Brick-laying	3
Cardboard-modelling	4
Needlework	7

A number of other schools carry on some branch of handwork. In such schools the working-conditions often prevent the fulfilling of the conditions necessary for earning the capitation grant. In this connection a large number of schools have been equipped for free-arm drawing. The subject is a favourite one with the pupils, and excellent work has been done, more especially in several of our infant schools.

Fifty-five schools again receive instruction in manual training, special centres for the first three subjects having been formed at Nelson, Wakefield, Westport, and Reefton. The following branches of work have been taken up:—