

In view of the large number of small schools under teachers without special training, it has been found necessary to maintain close control of the programmes of work, and a number of teachers have been required to forward for inspection the exercises of the pupils in connection with the periodical tests. This direction of the work will be extended during the coming year. Courses will be defined with special reference to tests in June and December. For these examinations questions will be supplied, and the papers of the pupils will in most cases be forwarded for the Inspector's perusal. While other tests will be made by the teachers, the emphasis of the two main ones will, it is hoped, lead to more thorough preparation. The plan indicated will apply chiefly to schools under sole teachers, but teachers in other schools may find the material issued of value in carrying out their tests and classification.

The five Roman Catholic schools, in which the inspection and classification has been carried out in accordance with the method and requirements of the regulations, have all presented at least satisfactory results. The teachers, equally with those of the public schools, welcome advice, and show due regard for the maintenance of a good standard by the adoption of effective methods and by strictness in the classification of the pupils.

The Chairman, Westland Education Board.

I have, &c.,

A. J. MORTON, Inspector.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,—

Education Office, Christchurch, 25th March, 1912.

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

VISITS PAID.—The number of public schools open at the end of the year was 212. To each of these, with the exception of three small household schools and three opened during the last quarter of the year, two visits were paid. Several schools were visited a third time, with the special object of assisting an inexperienced or a newly appointed teacher. For the purposes of the announced visit the pupils of two of the household schools presented themselves at the nearest public school. Two visits were also paid to each of twenty-one private schools enumerated in the appendix to this report. The examinations held for the purpose of awarding certificates of proficiency are not included in the above statement.

ATTENDANCE.—The annual examination schedules prepared by the teachers at the end of the year record an enrolment of 21,666 pupils in the Board's schools, with an attendance of 20,124 at the annual examination. This return shows an increase of 507 on the rolls, though the number present at the examination was seventeen less than last year. For such discrepancy the prevalence of epidemics in the last quarter of the year is mainly accountable. Similar returns from the private schools visited showed an enrolment of 1,752 pupils, of whom 1,555 are recorded as being tested for promotion.

AGE OF PUPILS.—In each of the classes Standards VII, V, IV, and II, the average age for the end of the year was one month lower than that of the previous year. In the remaining classes the average age for the year 1910 was maintained. In Standards IV, V, and VI the average age of the pupils of private schools was higher (notably in Standard VI) than that in corresponding classes in the public schools.

STANDARD VI CERTIFICATES.—The following statement supplies a summary of the results of examinations held for the purpose of awarding certificates of proficiency and competency:—

	Pupils examined.	Certificates of Proficiency.	Certificates of Competency.
Public schools	1,400	985	284
Private schools	131	75	36
Special examinations	61	36	14

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—The enrolment in the district high schools (295 pupils) shows an advance of twelve on the return for the previous year. The progress made by the pupils is an encouraging sign of their desire to profit by the opportunities afforded them, and of the interest shown by their teachers in their welfare. At two essentially agricultural centres, Lincoln and Kaikoura, the programme of work for the coming year is being arranged on the lines recommended by the Department as suitable for rural district high schools.

SCHEMES OF WORK.—An improvement is shown in the form in which the schemes of work have been submitted, and, as a rule, they were ample in scope and educative in aim. Occasionally we have to impress on a teacher the importance of preparing such schemes well in advance, and of having them in full working order at the beginning of the year, with a clear course planned and a definite aim in view. Such admonition should not be necessary, as an instruction to this effect is printed in the scheme-of-work book supplied by the Board.

CLASSIFICATION.—The classification of the pupils, on the whole, has been carefully conducted, and instances are rare where the promotion or non-promotion of the pupils has called for adverse criticism. By untrained or inexperienced teachers, whose judgment is apt to be influenced by local pressure, the advice of an Inspector has been frequently sought with beneficial results. On the other hand, occasionally in a larger school there is evidence of needless rigidity in assessing the claims for promotion, and in deciding whether the pupils have satisfactorily completed the course of work up to a given point, arbitrarily fixed, without due regard for the relative importance of the several subjects of the syllabus. More especially in the preparatory classes of such schools is it desirable that the promotion of those who distance the majority of their classmates should be made at frequent intervals, as soon as they show themselves fit for advancement. Such