

In his annual reports to the Minister of Education the Inspector-General has repeatedly commented upon the undue length of time spent by pupils in the preparatory classes. In the report for 1911 he gives a table showing that while the percentage of children between the ages of five and eight years has increased from 29·8 in 1905 to 31·5 in 1911, the percentage of pupils in the preparatory classes has advanced from 28·3 to 37·3 in the same period. In our own district, in 1911, 35·1 per cent. were not over eight, but 43 per cent. were in the preparatory classes. The corresponding figures for 1912 were 35·2 per cent. and 39·1 per cent., showing that some improvement has been effected in this district. Referring to the matter generally, the Inspector-General, after dealing with the possible causes, goes on to say, "I have therefore been forced to the conclusion that pupils are kept unduly long in preparatory classes, and consequently are retarded throughout their whole school course."

The buildings generally are in fair state of repair, but more frequent applications of paint are needed, owing to the severe climatic conditions that are characteristic of the West Coast. The supply of hyloplate for wall-boards could with advantage be increased and hastened. Where schoolrooms are used for dances, concerts, and other public entertainments it is found that often the furniture is not removed and replaced with sufficient care.

The Junior National Scholarship was won by a pupil of the Greymouth District High School.

Board Scholarships have been awarded to six scholars of schools with an average attendance of over thirty-five, and to one scholar of a school with an average attendance of thirty-five or less.*

Technical.—School classes in paper-folding and carton-work were held at Greymouth, Cobden, and Blackball; in agriculture, at Dobson, Poerua, Blackball, and Moana; in cookery, at the Greymouth Technical School, by the Greymouth, Cobden, and Runanga Schools; in physical measurements, at Greymouth (primary and secondary classes) and Cobden. The special classes comprised cookery classes conducted by the Sisters of Mercy, engineering and mechanical drawing, and wool-classing. Special classes in sewing were held at Moana and Ahaura Schools, where there were no women teachers, and a continuation class was conducted at Blackball. At the Saturday class for teachers the subjects taken were brush drawing and carton-work, as for the D and C examinations. This class was well attended by teachers of distant schools, and it is hoped that not only the teachers themselves, but also the children under their care, will derive considerable benefit from the work done. A word of praise is due to those who, at considerable self-sacrifice, have undertaken the conduct of special classes, for any remuneration they have received is very slight compensation for the labour and loss of time entailed.

Thanks.—I wish to place on record my thanks to the teachers of the district for the courtesy extended to me on my first visit to the schools, and for the readiness with which any suggestions I have made were received; to the many kind people in the more-distant settlements for their hospitality; and to yourself, the late Inspector, and the other members of the Board's executive staff for much assistance generally.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Grey Education Board.

WM. S. AUSTIN, Inspector.

* Details of purely local interest have been omitted.

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Hokitika, 20th January, 1913.

I have the honour to present a report on the work of the schools of the district for the year 1912.

A summary of the numbers and average age of the pupils at the end of the school year is given in the following table. It may be added that of the pupils in standards, twenty-three received instruction in a lower standard in arithmetic.

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	
							Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	62	53	15	3
" VI	...	...	...	...	65	62	14	2
" V	...	...	...	...	109	106	12	9
" IV	...	...	...	...	107	106	12	0
" III	...	...	...	...	131	129	11	0
" II	...	...	...	...	125	123	10	0
" I	...	...	...	...	125	123	8	10
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	482	456	6	8
Totals					1,206	1,158	9	7