

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 14th January, 1913.

We have the honour to submit our annual report for the year ending the 31st December, 1912.

At the beginning of the year ninety-five schools (including four half-time schools) were in operation, and during the year a new school was established at Radnor, and the school at Taurakawa was closed.

The following table contains a summary of the examination results :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	129	128	14 8
" VI	...	...	...	...	385	368	14 0
" V	...	...	...	...	473	456	13 1
" IV	...	...	...	...	661	646	12 2
" III	...	...	...	...	663	646	11 3
" II	...	...	...	...	723	699	10 3
" I	...	...	...	...	786	765	9 1
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	2,340	2,165	7 0
Totals	...	...	...	...	6,160	5,873	9 9

Catholic Schools.—The following is a summary of examination results for each of the Catholic schools examined and inspected by us :—

Convent Schools.	Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.	Standard VI Certificates granted.		Quality of the Instruction.	Order, Discipline, and Tone of the School.
			Proficiency.	Competency.		
New Plymouth	105	101	...	1	Good...	Very good.
Inglewood	117	108	2	3	Very satisfactory	Good.
Stratford	122	119	1	2	Satisfactory	Very good.
Opunake	58	56	2	...	"	"
Waitara	63	61	...	1	Very satisfactory	Good.

Compared with the return for 1911 the roll number shows a decrease of sixty-three, while there has been also a decrease of 101 in the number present at the Inspectors' annual visit. This decrease has taken place principally in the preparatory classes. For several years past there has been a steady increase in the yearly roll number, and it is difficult to account for the sudden falling-away in the attendance that has taken place.

Punctuality and Regularity of Attendance.—In many cases the attendance at the smaller schools in country districts has been both irregular and unpunctual. Many of our teachers have adopted various devices to remedy this evil, but the apathy of the parents frequently render all efforts futile. The present system of inflicting a small fine to secure the statutory minimum of attendance has not proved the deterrent that it was expected it would, as parents that place very little value on the education of their children, and that think only of their earning-power, are not deterred from keeping them at home by the small fine inflicted. We are, however, convinced that the personality, tact, and methods adopted by the teacher will ever be an all-important factor in securing regularity of attendance.

Private Schools.—Section 151 provides that "if ten or more children resident in any school district are on the roll of any school other than a public school, the head teacher of such school may apply for and receive from the Education Board a general certificate of exemption from attendance at a public school for such children upon satisfying the Board that efficient and regular instruction is given at such school." This certificate of exemption holds good for only one year. We are strongly of opinion that no exemption should be granted unless a school is visited regularly by the Board's Inspectors, as is the practice in some districts.

Observation Schools.—There are in this district over seventy uncertificated teachers, exclusive of pupil-teachers and probationers, and about forty of these have had little or no experience in the management of a school. Under present conditions this experience must be gained at the expense of the children, and we feel that it is imperative that some provision should be made whereby these untrained teachers could gain the necessary practical knowledge to enable them to carry on their work with some prospect of success, and thereby minimize the disabilities under which the children they are instructing now labour. With this object in view we have submitted the following scheme to the Department: (1.) That three of the schools in this district be converted into special schools for the practical training of inexperienced teachers, who would be required to attend for a few weeks at a time for the purpose of gaining an insight into the working of an efficiently conducted school, and acquiring