

NELSON.

SIR,—

Education Office, Nelson, March, 1914.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the schools of the Nelson Education District for the year 1913.

One hundred and eighteen schools were at work during the last quarter of the year. There were in addition, as hitherto, nine side schools, and at district high schools four secondary classes. Four very small schools have during the year been closed, and one reopened; three other household schools have been opened, and a Grade II school established.

One hundred and seventeen schools were inspected by us, in most cases more than once. Two were not visited. One of these was a household school, but recently opened, and the other the Inspector was unable to reach owing to the flooded state of the rivers when he was in the neighbourhood.

Eleven private schools, with a total roll of 614, have also been subject to inspection. These private schools had between them fifty-four Sixth Standard pupils, to whom were awarded twenty-six proficiency and sixteen competency certificates. Two additional schools have this year come under inspection, and the total roll number is accordingly higher by seventy-three. Our estimate of the general efficiency of the private schools is summarized as follows: Two good; three satisfactory to good; five satisfactory; one fair to satisfactory.

At the request of the Council of Governors we also examined for certificates the preparatory divisions of the Nelson Colleges: roll number, boys 21, girls 13. There were in all twenty-five competitors for Standard VI certificates, and eleven proficiency and eight competency certificates were gained.

At special examinations held during the year fifty-eight candidates presented themselves, fifty-three for Standard VI, three for Standard V, and two for Standard III, and the following certificates were obtained: nineteen proficiency; twenty-one, Standard VI, competency; two, Standard V, competency; and two, Standard III, competency.

The average weekly number on the rolls for September quarter, 6,369, is again higher than that for the corresponding quarter of last year by 130, so that we can congratulate the Board upon the continued growth of the district, the number on roll and average attendance for each quarter of the year constituting a record for the particular quarter. The average weekly roll number for the December quarter was 6,522.

The district, like others of small population, suffers from the lack of higher-grade schools, which by providing better salaries offer to teachers some prospect of ultimate promotion, and so furnish to teaching aspirants some inducement to enter a service which, of the professions, is one of the least remunerative. From this aspect is derived one of the main arguments in favour of the absorption of smaller districts by larger ones.

The average attendance for the year—5,685, an advance of 123 on that of last year—indicates further improvement in regularity of attendance, as the percentage that it bears to the average weekly roll number has increased to 89·2. The percentage for the Dominion last year had fallen to 88·9, so that the attendance throughout this district was better than the average, Nelson and South Canterbury with 89·1 per cent. tying for fifth place among the thirteen educational districts. Otago and Wellington stood highest with 90·2 per cent. Several household schools, as usual, return, as they should be expected to do, 100 per cent., and one in Grade I attained to 98 per cent. In all, fifty-nine schools exceeded 90 per cent. At some schools, on the other hand, the attendance continues to be hopelessly irregular. It is particularly in connexion with such schools as these that a Truant Officer is required, for negligence on the part of local authorities is producing the mental starvation of some of our juvenile population.

Some schools, again, have not been kept at work for the full year, eleven of those that were open each quarter failing to return 400 half-days, whilst only forty-seven were kept open 420 times, so that in the majority of schools the holidays throughout the year exceeded ten weeks, the limit contemplated in the Board's by-laws.

Improvement in attendance has produced an increase in the staffing, so that the total number of teachers in the employ of the Board in December was 200. Their classification is as follows:—

Grade of School.	Head Teachers.		Assistants.		Sole Teachers.		Totals.
	Certificated.	Uncertificated.	Certificated.	Uncertificated.	Certificated.	Uncertificated.	
0	...	...	...	...	...	12	12
1	...	...	...	...	6	25	31
2	...	...	...	...	16	9	25
3	...	...	...	...	9	...	9
4	26	...	17	9	...	...	52
5	5	...	8	2	...	...	15
6	5	...	11	3	...	...	19
7	1	...	4	...	...	...	5
9	2	...	17	1	...	...	20
10	1	...	11	...	...	...	12
1913	40	...	68	15	31	46	200
1912	39	...	61	13	33	47	193