

The Board's regulations *re* the closing of schools without permission should be more stringently enforced, as many schools are not kept working with sufficient regularity throughout the school year. Omitting many household schools and several other small ones in which the resignation of a teacher has led to delay in filling the position, seventeen schools have been working less than 400 times, and only thirty-one were open 420 times. It would not be unreasonable to insist upon the latter amount being made up, as the children's education suffers much more than is generally supposed from spasmodic treatment.

There were in the employ of the Board on the 31st December 206 teachers, whose classification is as follows :—

	Certi- ficated.	Uncerti- ficated.	Total.
Head teachers	43	0	43
Assistant	62	24	86
Sole	29	48	77
	134	72	206
For 1913 the figures were,—			
Head teachers	40	0	40
Assistant	68	15	83
Sole	31	46	77
	139	61	200

The general status of our teaching staffs is unfortunately lower than previously. The loss has been occasioned by the unavoidable necessity for supplying the places of junior assistants and sole teachers with uncertificated teachers. In addition, twenty-five pupil-teachers and thirteen probationers were employed. Less than half of these complete their course each year, and the new annual draft into this district, still further reduced on the completion of the Training College course, is insufficient to supply the vacancies of the year. Consequently the appointment of the untrained and inexperienced as teachers, especially in Grade I schools, becomes a necessity. This class of school is unfortunately more common in this district than elsewhere, and the uncertificated teachers therein, on account of the difficulty they experience in attending a practical science course, have little prospect of improving their status. An increase in the number of pupil-teachers or probationers, preferably of both, is essential to prevent the appointment to graded schools of the totally untrained.

Examinations for proficiency certificates were held by the Inspectors in November and early December at eight different centres—Westport, Reefton, Motueka, Granity, Richmond, Wakefield, Nelson (boys), Nelson (girls)—at which all children from schools within easy access were congregated. The results are as follows: Number of candidates examined, 368; proficiency certificates gained, 226; competency certificates gained, 97.

On the occasion of our announced inspection visits to certain schools we also examined candidates for certificates with the following results: Number of candidates, 69; proficiency certificates, 31; competency certificates, 22. So that the totals for the whole district should read: Candidates, 437; proficiency, 257; competency, 119.

Whilst examining we formed the general impression that the examination under the new conditions was somewhat lightened and the passing consequently made more easy, for the proficiency by the removal of geography and drawing from the subjects marked, and for the competency by the allowance of alternative methods of estimating a pass. The percentage of proficiency certificates, fifty-eight, however, though 4 per cent. higher, is well within the limits approved by Inspectors, and the total number of certificates of both classes is practically the same as that recorded last year.

The Inspectors' annual returns furnish the following details of classes throughout the district :—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	Average Age for the Dominion in 1913.
Standard VII	101	92	Yrs. mos. 14 10	Yrs. mos. 15 0
" VI	445	437	14 1	14 0
" V	666	658	13 0	13 2
" IV	703	693	12 1	12 2
" III	848	825	10 11	11 3
" II	808	802	9 11	10 2
" I	757	739	8 11	9 1
Preparatory	2,307	2,236	6 11	7 1
Totals for 1914	6,635	6,482	9 9*	...
Totals for 1913	6,525	6,327	9 7*	9 10*

* Mean of average age.

The numbers in Classes III, V, and VI have grown, all others being lower than previously, and the preparatory division now forms a smaller proportion, 34 per cent. of the total roll.