

The following table shows the number of pupils on the roll of the public schools, the number present at the annual examination, and the average age of the pupils in each class :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	115	114	15 5
" VI	...	...	...	...	469	463	13 11
" V	...	...	...	...	575	559	13 1
" IV	...	...	...	...	669	652	12 2
" III	...	...	...	...	792	779	11 1
" II	...	...	...	...	748	736	10 0
" I	...	...	...	...	731	715	9 2
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	2,231	2,150	6 11
Totals	...	...	...	...	6,330	6,168	9 10*

* Mean of average age.

The figures in this table show for the year an increase of 276 in the roll number and of 349 in the number present at the annual examination. There is very little variation in the average age of each class, except that in Standard VI the average has fallen from fourteen years one month to thirteen years eleven months, and that in Standard I the average has gone up from nine years to nine years and two months. With regard to the age of Standard I we find that the following large schools are all over the average of last year, viz: Temuka, Timaru Main, Waimate, and Waimataitai.

The following is the summary for Roman Catholic schools :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	10	8	15 1
" VI	...	...	...	...	29	29	14 7
" V	...	...	...	...	21	21	13 5
" IV	...	...	...	...	61	61	12 6
" III	...	...	...	...	54	53	11 3
" II	...	...	...	...	52	51	10 1
" I	...	...	...	...	30	30	9 2
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	164	153	7 1
Totals	...	...	...	...	421	406	9 11*

* Mean of average age.

The average attendance for the year stated as a percentage of the mean of the average roll is 89·8, last year it was 88·6. While it must be considered that this percentage of regularity is in a large degree creditable, it may be pointed out that it falls short of that attained by our neighbours in Otago. Irregular attendance is a common excuse for weakness in school-work, but we hold that it is a weak teacher's excuse, the excuse of the incompetent or the lazy. Those that make this excuse have failed to discover that under ordinary conditions good teaching wins good attendance. When the teaching is intensive and cumulative a child feels that by his absence for a single day he has lost something, and it is then a common remark among parents that they cannot keep their children away from school. The knowledge that solid work is being done from day to day grips both parents and children, and the Truant Officer's services are required only in very exceptional cases.

Efficiency.—An estimate of the efficiency of the schools places them in the following groups: Good to very good, fifty-three schools, with 5,543 pupils; satisfactory, seventeen schools, with 536 pupils; fair, twelve schools, with 282 pupils; moderate, three schools, with 55 pupils. Of a total of eighty-five schools reported on, seventy, with 5,979 pupils, are to be considered as conducted with efficiency; while the remaining fifteen schools, with 337 pupils, must be declared to a large extent unsatisfactory. The corresponding figures last year were seventy-four schools, with 5,756 pupils, and eleven schools, with 280 pupils. The schools that have been deemed unsatisfactory are sole-teacher schools, with the exception of one that is taught by a head teacher and an assistant; and it is not on account of any weakness in the assistant's department that the school occupies its unenviable position.

Certificates.—The examination of the pupils of Standard VI was conducted by your Inspectors at the beginning of December, the examination being held at nine centres. The candidates at three outlying schools were examined by the Inspector at the time of his annual visit. Of the 469 candidates who entered for the examination, 462 were present, 349 gained certificates of proficiency, and 56 gained certificates of competency, the percentage of passes for the higher certificate being 75·5, and for the lower 12·1. From the Roman Catholic schools twenty-nine candidates were presented, and twenty-