

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Blenheim, 21st March, 1916.

I have the honour to submit a general report on the schools of Marlborough for the year 1915. At the end of the year ninety-eight schools were in operation, six more than last year. In the Sounds eight household schools have been established and three closed. That class of school keeps increasing, and out of forty-five schools only eight are Board's property. Schools have been opened at Hillersden and Wantwood (new settlements), and the school from Mirza has been removed to Wharanui to suit the families of men employed in the extension of the railway. In addition there are four private schools registered as efficient under the Act, with a roll number of 237.

The following table shows the classification, the number on the roll, the number present at the annual examination, and the average age of the pupils :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	
								Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	18	17	15	2
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	175	174	14	2
" V	...	...	...	...	...	294	290	13	0
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	273	266	12	0
" III	...	...	...	...	...	330	326	10	7
" II	...	...	...	...	...	325	320	9	11
" I	...	...	...	...	...	335	329	8	11
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	878	836	7	0
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	2,628	2,558	9	9*

* Mean of average age.

The following table will show the gradual increase during the past three years :—

	Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.
1913	2,465	2,337
1914	2,530	2,466
1915	2,628	2,558

Regularity of Attendance.—It is pleasing to record a percentage of 91·4 for the year. That is not a record for the district, but it undoubtedly proves that parents, teachers, and scholars have common interests and are working in harmony. No undue pressure has been used, and the Truant Officer's services have seldom been required.

Staff, &c.—At the end of the year 129 teachers were in the employment of the Board. Of these forty-six are certificated, eighty-two are uncertificated, and one holds a license to teach. Owing to the peculiar configuration of the district, and the distances the teachers are from those who could give personal instruction, correspondence classes were instituted two years ago, and so far about thirty have gained partial success. When these teachers qualify it will be interesting to see how many will remain in the district. Only fifteen schools have a staff of two teachers or more, the balance of eighty-three being sole-teacher schools. Is it little wonder there is difficulty in filling vacancies with certificated teachers? The efficiency of the schools is estimated as follows: Very good, 2; good, 17; satisfactory to good, 10; fair to satisfactory, 14; fair, 6; moderate, 2; unvisited, 2.

Certificates.—The Sixth Standard examination was held in the month of December at eleven centres, and in some outlying parts it was conducted at the annual visit. 174 candidates were examined; 108 gained certificates of proficiency, thirty-five gained certificates of competency, and thirty-two failed to qualify.

Schemes of Work.—In nearly every case these were completed before my first visit, and generally they were satisfactory. They were more definite, and details of the intended work were more fully set out than hitherto. The following are brief remarks on the various subjects :—

English.—Intelligent, clear, and expressive reading was fairly general, and some improvement was noticeable, particularly in the upper standards. More pattern reading had been given, with the result that phrasing, emphasis, and distinctness of utterance were greatly improved. The comprehension of the lessons was invariably satisfactory. Too much time is devoted by some teachers to the spelling of difficult words, to the detriment of the spelling in the dictation and composition exercises. It was not uncommon to find half a dozen mistakes in the dictation tests, while the lists of words were in most cases correctly spelt. Where strict supervision had been given the writing was usually good. More drill is required in the formation of letters, junctions, &c., and in this lesson blackboard correction should never be neglected. More liberal treatment had been bestowed on oral composition, and generally the results were satisfactory. The written composition in the upper standards was in many cases too short, the arrangement weak, and the punctuation only fair. The questions in analysis, synthesis, and correction of errors were better done than in previous years. The selections for recitation were usually well chosen and carefully prepared. Modulation, emphasis, and expression had received more attention, and in the upper classes there was a distinct improvement in both style and delivery. In the lower classes this subject was good.