

years one month, and in Standard I from nine years two months to nine years. While it is gratifying to find a substantial decrease in the average age of the pupils in Standard I, an indication of more rapid promotion from the infant classes, we note that this average is higher than that of the district as a whole in the following large schools, viz.: Timaru Main, Timaru South, Waimataitai, and Temuka.

The following is the summary for the 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	4	15	2
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	19	19	14	7
" V	...	...	...	...	...	47	45	13	6
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	44	40	11	10
" III	...	...	...	...	...	56	50	11	1
" II	...	...	...	...	...	36	33	10	1
" I	...	...	...	...	...	47	44	9	7
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	204	176	7	0
Totals ...						463	411	9	7*

* Mean of average age.

Efficiency.—An estimate of the efficiency of the public schools placed them in the following groups: Good to very good, fifty-one schools, with 5,240 pupils; satisfactory, twenty schools, with 649 pupils; fair, nine schools, with 256 pupils; moderate, five schools, with 117 pupils. Of the total of eighty-five schools, seventy-one, with 5,889 pupils, are to be considered as conducted with efficiency, while the remaining fourteen schools, with 373 pupils, must be declared to a large extent unsatisfactory. The corresponding figures last year were seventy schools, with 5,979 pupils, and fifteen schools, with 337 pupils. The schools that were classed as "fair" are with two exceptions sole-teacher schools; those that were classed as "moderate" were in the hands of uncertificated teachers, three of whom no longer belong to the service.

Certificates.—The examination of the pupils of Standard VI was conducted by the Inspectors at the beginning of December, the examination being held at nine centres. The candidates at two outlying schools were examined by the Inspector at the time of his annual visit in November. Of the 433 candidates who entered for the examination 425 were present, 269 gained certificates of proficiency and 80 gained certificates of competency, the percentage of passes for the higher certificate being 63·2 and for the lower 18·8. From the Roman Catholic schools nineteen candidates were presented, and all were present; ten gained certificates of proficiency and seven gained certificates of competency. The average age of candidates from the public schools was thirteen years eleven months, and from the Roman Catholic schools fourteen years seven months.

Schemes of Work.—In general, teachers have sought to draw up, as required by regulations, schemes that are really suitable to the conditions of work in their schools. In future there can be no valid excuse for those teachers who fail to exhibit in full their schemes of work for the year. But we have sometimes found that too much is proposed to be done, with the result that the teachers have felt harassed, and their pupils have been unnecessarily driven. There is still room for closer correlation in such subjects as nature-study, drawing, and handwork. Too often these are treated as separate and independent subjects, with the result that valuable time slips by unused.

Reading and Speech.—Usually the mechanical part of reading receives plenty of attention, but some teachers still allow slovenly speech in the infant classes. We spoke strongly concerning this last year, and once again we urge that all our teachers, especially of the younger children, should give close attention to the cultivation of a clear pure tone in the speech, the reading, and the recitation of their pupils. It is now a trite statement that good reading cannot be taught by the use of one reader all the year. In future we intend to lay more stress on the free use of the *School Journal* and the supplementary readers supplied by the Board.

Recitation.—A great many of our teachers are to be commended for their choice of passages to be memorized by their pupils. Others seem to select whatever poem first comes under their vision, or teach the same pieces year after year. Let such note well this extract from the "Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers" issued by the English Board of Education: "Nothing in the teaching of English requires more discretion on the part of the teacher, or, it must be added, tests his own competence and appreciation of literature more severely, than the choice and treatment of suitable poems." Recitation does not consist in the mere repetition of words, even though that repetition be entirely accurate. This exercise can be made very helpful in securing expressive reading, and in those schools where the recitation is of merit the reading also is usually of good quality. Purity of intonation and accuracy of expression can be so insisted on as to bring about steady improvement in the child's powers of expressing thought.

Spelling.—In most of our schools satisfactory results are attained in this subject. Yet it is apparent that often the pupils learn the words at considerable cost to themselves, and are not trained to use their eyes so that the component parts of new words, or of any words, are seen and correctly related. Some composition exercises exhibit remarkably accurate spelling; others reveal that the writers have not received regular and educative practice in the use of the commoner difficulties of word-form.