

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Invercargill, 25th February, 1916.

We have the honour to submit our report on the public schools of this district for the year ended 31st December, 1915.

The following table shows the number on the rolls, classification, and ages of the pupils belonging to these schools in December, 1915 :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.	
								Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	24	21	15	0
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	761	748	13	9
" V	...	...	...	...	...	1,113	1,078	12	11
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	1,318	1,283	12	0
" III	...	...	...	...	...	1,431	1,389	10	11
" II	...	...	...	...	...	1,377	1,347	9	11
" I	...	...	...	...	...	1,462	1,418	8	11
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	4,217	3,950	6	11
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	11,703	11,234	9	8*

* Mean of average age.

As a result of the increase of the inspectorial staff to three, 144 unannounced visits were paid in 1915, as compared with 112 in 1914. The new departure of omitting for one year the inspection of a number of schools which it was not deemed necessary to visit enabled us to devote more time and to pay extra visits to some of the weaker schools. It is our intention to give this plan a further trial next year. It is also proposed to reduce the number of proficiency centres by three—viz., Athol, Queenstown, and Arrowtown—the schools affected to be placed on the list of remote schools whose proficiency candidates are examined late in the year at the annual announced visit. In this way the work of examination will be somewhat lightened and the cost correspondingly reduced. Four household schools—Lake Te Anau, Sunnyside, Taunoa, and Otahu—were not inspected. The two first-mentioned are situated in very remote districts, and the two last were opened in the course of the year.

The problem of the uncertificated teacher has become increasingly difficult by reason of the necessity for making an additional number of these appointments. In view of this it was decided after careful consideration to issue for the guidance of such teachers a model scheme of work, supplemented at a later date by outlines of suitable courses of manual work. It is, of course, intended that these schemes should be adapted to the varying needs of the schools. Despite its disadvantages, the plan is preferable to the previous order of things.

The office-work has made greater demands on our time owing to the setting-up of monthly examinations for outside candidates for proficiency and competency certificates. By this arrangement these candidates are saved the payment of the examination fee.

The average age of pupils in the classes S2 to S6 as given above shows a decrease as compared with last year's figures. On the other hand Classes P and S1 show an increase. In this connection the age at which pupils are promoted to S1 and the time spent in Class P deserve consideration. From a review of teachers' annual reports we find that the time spent in Class P is, in normal conditions, less in the case of sole-teacher schools under experienced teachers than in the case of schools of Grade III and upwards. The following statistics may repay study :—

(a.) GENERAL.

				Grades I, II.	Grade III.	Grade IV.	Grade V upwards.
				Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Average age on entering S1	..	..	..	8 2·6	8 0·0	7 10·6	7 9·9
Time spent in Class P	..	..	..	2 0·8	2 1·5	2 2·6	2 1·1

In the last column the figures given would be substantially increased by the omission of one of the large schools.

(b.) INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS.

				School in Grade III.	School in Grade IV.	School in Grade VI.
				Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Average age on entering S1	..	..	..	7 5	7 1	7 3
Time spent in Class P	..	..	..	2 2	1 11	1 8