

for a junior free place in a secondary school, district high school, or technical high school, while a certificate of competency with a special endorsement of merit in handwork and elementary science is sufficient qualification for free entrance to a technical school or technical high school. The requirements of these examinations were slightly increased in 1916, with the result that the percentage of candidates obtaining the proficiency certificate fell from 70 in the year 1915 to 67 in 1916. In 1917 the figure was the same as in the previous year, 9,098, or 67 per cent., of the candidates from public schools securing the certificate of proficiency and 2,355, or 17 per cent., the certificate of competency. Of the latter number 1·8 per cent. had their certificates endorsed for merit in science and handwork. There is a wide variation in the percentages of successes obtained in the various education districts, the lowest percentage of certificates of proficiency granted being 51·5 and the highest percentage (obtaining in two districts) 78·2. The percentage of pupils obtaining the certificate of competency varies from 8·8 per cent. to 22·0 per cent., and the percentage of combined successes varies from 69·6 to 91·2. There is thus a range difference of 26·7 per cent. in the number of certificates of proficiency granted in the various districts, the corresponding figure for proficiency and competency certificates together being 21·6. That the variation is so great, notwithstanding the fact that steps have been taken by the transfer of Inspectors and otherwise to secure a little more uniformity, must be taken to show that there is a real variation in the standard of attainment, industry, and application in the schools of the various localities.

REGISTERED PRIMARY PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

(E-2, Tables D1 and D2.)

The number of primary private schools (excluding private schools for Natives referred to elsewhere) registered in 1917 was 207, of which a small number had closed before the end of the year. Annual returns were received from 197 schools, to which the figures given below relate. For the purpose of ensuring that children who do not attend public schools, wherein the State is willing to provide for them, are receiving adequate instruction elsewhere, private schools are inspected by the Department's Inspectors, upon the character of whose reports the registration largely depends. Pupils in S6 are also examined by the Inspectors for certificates of proficiency and competency. The following are the statistics relative to these schools :—

		1916.		1917.	
Number of schools	186		197	
Roll number at end of year—Boys	..	7,786		8,195	
Girls..	..	9,474		10,399	
		17,260			18,594
Average attendance	15,199			16,429
		Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.
Children under seven years of age	..	3,344	19·4	3,582	19·2
Children from seven to ten years of age	..	5,610	32·5	6,091	32·8
Children over ten years of age	..	8,306	48·1	8,921	48·0
Children in preparatory classes	..	5,681	32·9	6,019	32·4
				Males.	Females.
Number of full-time teachers	588		58	573
Average number of pupils per teacher	..	26		26	
S6 pupils presented for examination	..	1,093		1,190	
		Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.
Proficiency certificates issued	690	63·1	761	64
Competency certificates issued	189	17·3	228	30

It will be observed that the classification of pupils according to ages differs very little from that of public schools, while the percentage of pupils in the preparatory classes is 32·4, as compared with 35·14 in public schools. The average number of pupils per teacher is 26, the corresponding number for all public schools being 33. There is a large predominance of female teachers over male teachers, the numbers being 573 and 58 respectively.

Tables D1 and D2 in E-2 give particulars of the schools in the various education districts.