

The efforts of practically all teachers have been put forth with a full consciousness of the importance of the duties they are called on to discharge, work has been characterized by earnest endeavour, and modern developments have found appreciative and intelligent followers.

We have, &c.,

E. K. MULGAN,	N. T. LAMBOURNE,	} Inspectors.
CHAS. W. GARRARD,	JAS. W. McILRAITH,	
JAMES T. G. COX,	N. R. MCKENZIE,	
G. H. PLUMMER,	M. McLEOD,	
MAURICE PRIESTLEY,	GEO. PITCAITHLEY,	

The Director of Education, Wellington.

TARANAKI.

Sir,—

New Plymouth, 2nd March, 1918.

We have the honour to submit the annual report on the public primary schools of the Taranaki Education District and of the private schools inspected.

At the end of the year the number of public schools in operation was 156, including two half-time schools. Of this number, eighty-two were in charge of sole teachers. The private schools inspected number thirteen, with a total roll of 1,161.

Inspection.—With hardly any exception the schools, both public and private, received two visits during the year, and it was very seldom that two schools were visited on the same day. For the greater part of the year the services of a third Inspector were available. There was thereby provided an opportunity to carry out the duties of the Inspectors with greater completeness and efficiency than was possible during the previous year.

Conditions.—The average attendance for the year, based on the average roll number, was 88·3 per cent. Although this percentage compares favourably with that of other districts during the previous year, there is need in some localities for greater insistence on the necessity for fuller attendance. A certain amount of irregularity is due to war conditions, as there is a tendency to make use of the older pupils on the farms to the detriment of school attendance. There are some instances of the overwork of children in connection with the dairy industry, and these demand their protection in some way from the ill-considered action of the parents. Generally, however, the conditions in this respect are good.

Considerable difficulty has been experienced in obtaining a supply of suitable teachers to take charge of small schools and to fill positions as assistants of the lowest grade. In a number of cases applicants with practically no experience have perforce been accepted. Of the head and sole teachers and assistants 110, or 39 per cent., are uncertificated, and many of these have had no previous training as pupil-teachers or probationers. Satisfactory arrangements have been made for supplying substitutes for teachers absent on war service. Assistance to teachers desiring to qualify for certificates has been continued. Special aid to inexperienced teachers in the small schools has been provided by the issue of specimen schemes and of specimen term tests. Such assistance has met with wide appreciation. A promising feature in connection with the future supply of teachers is that the Board was able to fill practically all the vacancies for pupil-teachers and probationers from applicants that had attended at least three years in a secondary school.

Efficiency.—We have again to report that the efficiency of the schools is creditable to the teaching staff of the district. Only occasionally is slackness or inferior work evident, and in some instances at least this is due to lack of experience on the part of the teacher. Of the 155 schools, three were recorded as excellent, thirty-one as very good, forty-two as good, sixty as satisfactory or very satisfactory, sixteen as fair or very fair, and only three as weak. Commendable results were obtained by the private schools, the teachers of which continue to take a keen interest in the welfare of their pupils.

Standard VI.—The number of pupils presented for inspection in S6 was 682. Of these, 533 were awarded proficiency certificates, eleven endorsed competency certificates, and forty-nine ordinary competency certificates—percentages of 78 for proficiency and 9 for competency certificates. The increase in the percentage of proficiency certificates was to some extent unexpected. It may largely be explained, however, by the strictness in the previous classification in the Fifth Standard, and by the effect of the issue by the Inspectors of independent specimen tests to all schools at the end of each term. The latter tended to maintain regularity of effort and a more exact estimate of the progress of the pupils during the year.

Course of Instruction.—Owing to the necessity for brevity in the report a detailed reference to the subjects of the course is omitted. In any case extended comment is not very necessary, as many of the suggestions of the previous annual report cannot be completely adopted in one year, and to a large extent still apply to the conditions existing. A good beginning has been made in modifying the programmes in drawing, vocal music, nature-study, and handwork, as well as in improving methods in other subjects. It is usual to find that care and intelligence have been applied to the preparation and presentation of the schemes of work in all classes of schools. It may be mentioned specially that in physical instruction the course has been extended and more thorough methods adopted.

We have, &c.,

A. J. MORTON,	} Inspectors.
W. A. BALLANTYNE,	
H. DEMPSEY,	

The Director of Education, Wellington