

Though the number of certificates awarded is much greater, the percentage of passes—proficiency 57 per cent. and competency 21 per cent.—is practically the same as that of last year. For the whole Dominion last year the percentages were 67 and 16 respectively. Of the competency certificates twenty-three were endorsed for special merit in handwork and elementary science. The endorsed certificate, as well as the proficiency, qualifies the holder for a junior free place at a technical school.

*Teachers.*—The status of the teaching staff has not further suffered during the year, but, if anything, has slightly improved in respect to sole teachers. On the 31st December 209 teachers were in the employ of the Education Board, classified as follows:—

|                 | Certificated. Uncertificated. |    | Total. |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|----|--------|
| Head teachers   | 38                            | 2  | 40     |
| Assistants      | 64                            | 29 | 93     |
| Sole teachers   | 25                            | 51 | 76     |
| Totals          | 127                           | 82 | 209    |
| Totals for 1916 | 125                           | 79 | 204    |

Twenty-three pupil-teachers and eighteen probationers were also employed.

*School Buildings.*—During the last two or three years the greatly increased cost of materials and labour has led to the postponement of much repairing and repainting. The general condition of the school buildings has suffered in consequence. We are pleased to see that during the year the Board has taken effective measures to prevent rapid deterioration. Schools requiring attention have been graded, and are being systematically put in order, the most urgent cases having been already dealt with. Several of our schools are very old. In order to avoid the accumulated cost of rebuilding these—a necessity which must arise at no very distant date—it would be well to systematize effort and allocate a sufficient sum to replace one school each year or alternate year.

*Efficiency of Schools.*—The estimate following shows that the loss of efficiency occasioned by the unusual disabilities of last year has been somewhat compensated by an improvement in the number of schools classed as efficient. Good, 24 schools; satisfactory to good, 23; satisfactory, 53; fair to satisfactory, 13; fair, 3; moderate to fair, 1. Efficient, 100; non-efficient, 17: for 1916—efficient, 95; non-efficient, 17. All but one of those marked inefficient are sole-teacher schools, and many of them, are of such low grade that it is almost impossible to obtain trained or certificated teachers for them. Though the general status of the schools is not so high as it was even in 1915, the improvement is gratifying, and shows that the teaching staffs as a rule are doing their duty in maintaining efficiency and in preventing the decline that might be expected as a result of continued war conditions.

*Handwork.*—Some form of elementary handwork has been taught in almost all schools, and the quality of the work done has been reported on in 105. Plasticine-modelling is by far the most common form of training. The manual-training centres of Nelson, Westport, Wakefield, and Reefton have, as usual, conducted classes in woodwork or ironwork and cookery. Motueka has taken the domestic-science course only, and a new centre for metal-work and cookery has been formed at Denniston. Seventy-two schools have taken some form of manual training.

The most common deficiency in handwork instruction is to be found in small country schools remote from a manual-training centre, which find special difficulty in carrying out the requirements laid down for S5 and S6.

*District High Schools.*—[See E.—6, Report on Secondary Education.]

*Maori Children.*—The number of Maori children in attendance at the schools of the district is thirty-one, as compared with thirty-three last year. This number is distributed throughout eleven schools, Whangarae, with nine pupils, having the largest roll number. There are ten in Class P, four in S1, seven in S2, four in S4, five in S5, and one in S6; and the general progress of the Maori children is quite satisfactory.

*Physical Instruction.*—The work of physical instruction is now very systematically carried out in almost all the schools of the district. The reports of the physical instructors are in most cases of a very favourable nature, and indicate that good work is being done. The chief weakness is that in some schools the work is becoming too mechanical. A refresher camp of instruction for teachers was held on the West Coast in December. Fifty teachers attended, and in spite of very unfavourable weather conditions during the opening days everything worked towards a complete success. The regular visit of the Medical Inspector was made during the year. The corrective classes previously established were inspected, and further classes of the kind were organized. It is not always easy to arrange and carry on the special work of these classes, but where the treatment has been regularly applied good results have been evident.

We have, &c.,

The Director of Education, Wellington.

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