

OTAGO.

Sir,—

Dunedin, 8th March, 1918.

We have the honour to submit herewith our annual report on the work of the schools in this district for the year 1917.

The following table gives a summary of inspection results for the public schools:—

					Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	339	311
„ VI	...	...	...	...	1,529	1,493
„ V	...	...	...	...	2,129	2,075
„ IV	...	...	...	...	2,590	2,531
„ III	...	...	...	...	2,760	2,697
„ II	...	...	...	...	2,832	2,770
„ I	...	...	...	...	3,205	3,035
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	7,220	6,966
Totals	...	...	...	...	22,595	21,878

During the year 260 schools were in operation: of these, two were half-time schools and six were household schools.

With the exception of household schools, all the schools were inspected, and in nearly all cases two visits were paid. In addition the Inspectors visited and reported on sixteen private schools.

Efficiency of Schools.—An analysis of the Inspectors' annual return gives the following results with regard to efficiency: Excellent or very good, 26 per cent.; good, 41 per cent.; satisfactory, 28 per cent.; fair to inferior, 5 per cent. This shows a satisfactory decrease of 5 per cent. in the lowest group and an increase of 6 per cent. in the highest group.

Proficiency Examination.—For the proficiency certificate 1,631 candidates presented themselves: of these, 1,275, or 78 per cent., secured the certificate of proficiency and 212 gained the certificate of competency. This shows an increase of 3 per cent. on the results of the previous year.

Syllabus.—Last year we reported very fully on the subjects of the syllabus, and as we have in our reports to the Board furnished details of the work done during the year we think it unnecessary to add to our general report this year, except to emphasize the remarks we made in 1917 on reading, history, geography, and drawing. Instruction in morals and health is receiving suitable attention, and the Minister's direction that lessons in temperance should be given is being fulfilled.

Physical Instruction.—In only a few schools have we had to call the teachers' attention to the necessity for regular instruction in physical drill, and in the majority of schools the exercises are faithfully carried out. The style of instruction by the teachers has improved, and in consequence the work was done more smartly by the children. In order to prevent any tendency to strain, and to obtain the greatest benefit from open-air exercise, the physical instructors have laid emphasis on the importance of correct breathing during the performance of all movements. The corrective classes which have been carried out during the year under the supervision of the Medical Inspector have been visited frequently by the physical instructors, and their report states, "The marked improvement in the physique of the children certainly justifies the continuance of these classes." In a number of schools swimming is systematically taught, while the importance of organized games as an educational factor is recognized in our schools, more especially in those in the larger centres.

Manual Instruction.—To our remarks on handwork last year we have little to add, except to state that we are pleased to record that the number of teachers who look upon the subject as a powerful educational factor and as an aid to instruction in other subjects is increasing, and that fewer are now treating it as an isolated subject in a watertight compartment. The instruction given in woodwork classes held in Dunedin and in the different centres is of a satisfactory character, but at the Dunedin centres the classes are too large, and in order to relieve the congestion the establishment of a third centre is absolutely necessary. In cookery and domestic economy good practical work has been done at all centres, but more theoretical instruction should be given in order to familiarize the pupils with principles.

Maori Schools.—In the Otago District the education of the Maori is conducted in mixed schools (nineteen), and as there are not one hundred Maori scholars in the whole district it is difficult to draw any comparison between their work and that of the European pupils.

In December the following were the numbers in each class: P, 25; S1, 16; S2, 12; S3, 11; S4, 12; S5, 3; S6, 5. These figures show that many of the Maori children leave school before reaching Standard 5, and up to this standard the average age of the Maori is considerably above that of the European in the same classes.

In drawing and in various manual occupations he does very good work, but the language difficulty handicaps him when he reaches the senior division. His behaviour is generally very satisfactory.

Of the five scholars in S6, one obtained a Proficiency Certificate and one a Competency.

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

Buildings, &c.—The buildings, grounds, and fences are, in general, in very good condition, and are well looked after. In only nine cases have the buildings been reported as below satisfactory, and in three of these the Board has already made provision for new buildings. The repairs necessary in the other cases are receiving the attention of the architect. In many cases