

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, February, 1919.

We have the honour to submit our report for 1918 on the work of the primary and district high schools of the Wellington District.

During the year inspection-visits were paid to 269 State schools (including nine side schools) and to thirty-one registered private schools—a total of 300 schools, with 28,383 children on the roll. Details as to numbers, average ages, &c., are shown in the following tables:—

					Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.	Average Age.
<i>Public Schools (269).</i>							
Standard VII	..	..	..	..	367	362	Yrs. mths. 14 8
„ VI	..	..	..	..	2,154	2,132	13 8
„ V	..	..	..	..	2,555	2,517	12 7
„ IV	..	..	..	..	2,827	2,786	11 11
„ III	..	..	..	..	3,140	3,082	10 11
„ II	..	..	..	..	3,178	3,098	9 9
„ I	..	..	..	..	3,152	3,080	8 9
Preparatory	..	..	..	..	7,840	7,556	7 3
					25,213	24,613	
<i>Registered Private Schools (31).</i>							
Standard VII	..	..	..	..	80	76	14 9
„ VI	..	..	..	..	262	253	14 2
„ V	..	..	..	..	317	312	13 2
„ IV	..	..	..	..	346	339	12 1
„ III	..	..	..	..	371	354	11 1
„ II	..	..	..	..	400	386	10 0
„ I	..	..	..	..	420	405	8 10
Preparatory	..	..	..	..	960	915	6 9
					3,156	3,040	

Estimate of efficiency: Good to very good, 92 schools; satisfactory to good, 125 schools; fair to moderate, 36 schools; inferior, 7 schools.

Changes have been made in the management of all but two of the most unsatisfactory schools; and in all cases of schools where the work has been found unsatisfactory on the occasions of more than one visit special reports have been made in accordance with clause 13 of the regulations.

Proficiency Examinations and Certificates.—In consequence of the influenza epidemic it was found necessary to make a departure from the usual method of determining the qualifications of candidates for S6 certificates. In all schools in the district proficiency marks in reading, recitation, drawing, handwork, and “other subjects of satisfactory attainment” had been awarded or assessed by the Inspectors prior to the outbreak; but in the schools not examined by the first week in November—and these comprised the larger schools in the district—the proficiency marks in the remaining English subjects and in arithmetic were awarded by the Inspectors on the basis of the pupils’ term marks and record for the year, and in consultation with head and class teachers. While the percentage of passes was practically the same as under the examination system, the individual results were in our opinion more satisfactory as being more consistent with the pupil’s record throughout the year. The number of candidates (133) for endorsed certificates of competency under clause 16 (1) was nearly double what it was last year, showing that parents are evidently waking up to the benefit and privilege of this qualification. On the other hand, only one application under clause 89 (3), Manual and Technical Regulations, was dealt with. In our opinion the only way to bring pupils within the operation of this clause is to deal with them at the time of the annual visit or examination. The six months’ interval allowed by the clause practically makes the clause itself ineffective.

We would here once more recommend a junior leaving-certificate in place of the present complicated system of proficiency, competency, and endorsed competency certificates. Such a leaving-certificate could be endorsed by an Inspector for free place in a secondary school or a technical school, or for technical classes, as the case might be. If it is not considered desirable to simplify the present system, then something at least should be done to rehabilitate the S6 certificate of competency by making it a qualification for free places in technical and district high schools. At present it carries with it no free-place privilege or benefit of any kind, and is no qualification more than a S5 certificate for entrance to any Government office or service. It does not even exempt, as formerly, from school attendance. So far from there being any loss of educational efficiency in thus lowering the free-place requirements in these schools, in our opinion there would be a decided gain. There are numbers of children with competency certificates whose parents refuse to keep them another year at the primary school for proficiency, but who would be quite willing to enter them for a two-years business or mechanical course at a technical school.

Syllabus.—Our estimate of the condition of efficiency in the chief subjects of the syllabus may be briefly summarized as follows:—English subjects: Reading is fluent and accurate as a rule,