

extension of the free-place system at technical schools and classes to afford such children some training in subjects related to industrial occupations. From 100 to 150 free places were granted under the new regulations in 1918, and a further extension of the scheme is anticipated.

Examination of Pupils.

S6 examinations for proficiency and competency are usually conducted by the Department's Inspectors, the pupils being examined in English and arithmetic, at least, by means of written tests. The closing of the schools owing to the influenza epidemic at the end of 1918 prevented, in most cases, the examinations being held by the Inspectors, and certificates were awarded on the teachers' recommendations based on examinations held during the year, and where possible after consultation between the teachers and Inspectors. In some cases subsequent examinations were also held. On the whole the scheme worked well, but naturally it was a difficult matter for inexperienced teachers to arrive at correct estimates, and a general tendency in other cases to accept too low a standard of merit is remarked upon. Inspectors are generally of the opinion that the usual method of awarding these certificates is still to be preferred and should not be materially departed from. As a result of the unusual conditions the number of pupils obtaining certificates of proficiency—10,400, or 73·6 per cent. of the number of candidates—was higher than usual, the percentage for the previous year being 67. The percentage ranged in the various education districts from 60·1 per cent. to 81·5 per cent., showing a range difference of 21·4 per cent., as compared with 25·7 per cent. in 1917. The number of certificates of competency granted was 2,043, or 14·5 per cent. of the number of candidates; of this number 303 were endorsed for merit in science and handwork.

REGISTERED PRIMARY PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

(Tables D1 and D2.)

The number of primary private schools (excluding private schools for Natives referred to elsewhere) registered under the Education Act, 1914, in 1918 was 210, compared with 197 in 1917. 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:—

	1917.		1918.	
Number of schools	197		210	
Roll number at end of year—Boys ..	8,195		9,042	
Girls.. ..	10,399		11,034	
	18,594		20,076	
Average attendance	16,429		17,441	
	Number. Percentage.		Number. Percentage.	
Children under seven years of age ..	3,582	19·2	3,957	20·0
Children from seven to ten years of age ..	6,091	32·8	6,684	33·0
Children over ten years of age ..	8,921	48·0	9,435	47·0
Children in preparatory classes ..	6,019	32·4	6,380	32·0
	Males. Females.		Males. Females.	
Number of full-time teachers ..	58	573	44	639
Average number of pupils per teacher ..	26		26	
S6 pupils presented for examination ..	1,190		1,471	
	Number. Percentage.		Number. Percentage.	
Proficiency certificates issued ..	761	64	1,076	74·0
Competency certificates issued ..	228	30	227	16·0

Tables D1 and D2 give particulars of the schools in the various districts. A list of registered private schools is published each year in the *New Zealand Gazette*.