

## SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Invercargill, 29th March, 1919.

We have the honour to submit our report on the schools of Southland for the year ended 31st December, 1918.

The following table gives the number on the rolls, the classification, and average ages according to classes of the pupils attending the public schools of the district:—

| Class.         |    |    | Number on Roll. | Present at the Annual Examination. | Average Age of the Pupils in each Class. |      |
|----------------|----|----|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------|
|                |    |    |                 |                                    | Yrs.                                     | mos. |
| Standard VII   | .. | .. | 11              | 9                                  | 14                                       | 2    |
| „ VI           | .. | .. | 825             | 821                                | 13                                       | 9    |
| „ V            | .. | .. | 1,177           | 1,155                              | 13                                       | 1    |
| „ IV           | .. | .. | 1,350           | 1,318                              | 12                                       | 1    |
| „ III          | .. | .. | 1,603           | 1,562                              | 11                                       | 0    |
| „ II           | .. | .. | 1,646           | 1,599                              | 9                                        | 10   |
| „ I            | .. | .. | 1,536           | 1,444                              | 8                                        | 10   |
| Preparatory .. | .. | .. | 3,934           | 3,685                              | 6                                        | 10   |
|                |    |    | 12,082          | 11,593                             | 11                                       | 2*   |

\* Mean of average age.

The year has been exceptional: educational interests have suffered through the war and through the epidemic. The effect of the latter has been very serious, the period of instruction being materially shortened. The demand for war service was responsible for much difficulty in filling vacancies, especially country vacancies. Consequently many appointments were unsatisfactory, and relieving teachers (some of them “makeshifts”) had to be very extensively employed. Moreover, the large town schools missed the services of capable young men. The immediate outlook is poor, especially in respect of male teachers. The early retirement of the older teachers will create vacancies, while the depletion of the training-college ranks through the war has interrupted the supply. It seems inevitable that the Board’s staff of teachers will for some years include a relatively large proportion of untrained, or partially trained, and uncertificated teachers. The partially trained are recruited from the ranks of pupil-teachers and probationers that do not proceed to the training-college; the untrained get positions by default of qualified applicants. The majority of sole teachers and some junior assistants in small schools are uncertificated; of the former class a considerable number cannot do much more than give rudimentary instruction in English and arithmetic. It is to be regretted that there is still a serious shortage of male applicants for positions as pupil-teachers and probationers, and it is disappointing to find that there are so many applicants with only the intermediate qualification. The results of the Board’s annual examination of pupil-teachers and probationers were on the whole satisfactory, but the general standard of the work was not high.

With a view to assisting uncertificated teachers, the plan of making two-day visits to certain schools was continued, twenty-two such visits being made; and in accordance with the usual practice we classified the pupils in schools taught by uncertificated teachers. One of the first difficulties encountered by uncertificated teachers is the preparation of a scheme of work. In the intervals that have occurred when the routine duties of their office were less pressing the Inspectors have endeavoured to construct a suitable model scheme for sole-teacher schools. It is hoped that this scheme will be ready for circulation at an early date.

The quality of the instruction is reported as good or very good in 30 per cent. of the schools in the district, as satisfactory in 52 per cent., and as fair in 18 per cent. The defects in methods of teaching referred to below are, of course, most frequent in the third of these classes. At the same time, the schools included in the second class, while regarded as on the whole satisfactory, need improvements in certain directions. With so many untrained teachers in the service it is not at all surprising that we have to note many defects in the actual work of teaching. Many young teachers make no preparation for the work of the day, and consequently much of their time is badly spent; in their case we have pointed out that preparation the night before is absolutely essential. As regards the attitude of pupils towards their work the two opposites of woodenness and restlessness are both prevalent. A good many sole teachers seem to forget that it is their business to see and supervise not only the members of the class being taught but every pupil in the school, otherwise continuous efficient effort cannot be secured. In many cases the text-book is the main obstacle to progress, and “teaching” means setting work from the book and “hearing” it or correcting it. The part the pupil should play in his own education is often forgotten; he is to a good many teachers only an empty vessel to be filled, not an active intellectual being whose co-operation is indispensable. Many young teachers see no necessity for the use of concrete examples or for reference to the facts of ordinary existence—arithmetic is a matter of tables and drill in figures, history a mass of book-learned facts. Similarly, though blackboards are plentiful, they are rarely used for purposes of illustration. Simultaneous work is much too largely employed: one hears pupils simultaneously spelling words which they are quite able to spell without the process. Three faults are common in questioning. The teacher is often satisfied with simultaneous answering, not realizing how deceptive this method of ascertaining progress is. Again, the questions are often badly distributed: by a show of hands