

colony are compared as percentages of the average weekly number on the roll that Nelson, with an average of 79.4, still occupies one of the lowest places—the tenth—the highest being Otago, which has long held pride of place, with 85.9. That irregularity has much to do with shortcomings in this district was clearly shown at examination-time, when we were often presented with long lists of children who had made less than three hundred attendances since the previous examination. In some few cases these lists contained all the names on the school-rolls. It would be unfair to expect teachers to produce good results under such circumstances. But, while bad attendance is the good teacher's bane, it too often is the weak one's defence, as much of the irregularity is due to the teachers themselves, being either the result of weak discipline and absence of stimulus, or a reflex of their own unpunctual habits, in either case betraying contributory negligence on their part. A systematic and progressive course of lessons is a great incentive to regular attendance, keeping alive as it does from day to day the interest in the work. When the teaching is of this character the children quickly perceive that by absenting themselves even for a day they place themselves at a disadvantage when they return. When, on the other hand, the teaching is unsystematic and desultory, the absentee finds that he can resume his old place in school on apparently equal terms with his fellows. There is no cause for surprise if in such cases the importance of regularity is undervalued.

School Committees, by insisting upon regular attendance at school, may greatly benefit the cause of education, and the responsibility of enforcing the attendance of those children whose names are not on any school-roll rests wholly on their shoulders. Instances have recently been reported, one of which was brought directly under our notice, of young men, apparently not unintelligent, who have been brought up in our towns and are yet unable to read or write. Our many educational facilities should not allow of such a deplorable result even in a single instance. We hope that Committees, teachers, and parents will in future do their utmost to enforce regular attendance, and help to remove some of the reproach from this district.

The examination of certain schools which are not under the control of the Education Board has been undertaken for the last three years. This time the list comprises seven schools—St. Mary's Orphanages at Stoke and at Nelson, two Roman Catholic private schools at Reefton, one at Westport, and one at Nelson, and the Whakarewa Orphanage. Of these the total roll number was 588. We can fairly say that the examinations have done much to improve many of these schools, but we feel bound to point out that the improvement itself renders the private schools more formidable rivals to the public schools, whose efficiency we have to maintain, and whose interests we must of necessity guard.

The following table shows the number of teachers in the employ of the Board on the 31st December :—

					Certificated.	Uncertificated.	Total.
Head teachers	...	...	...	...	38	1	39
Assistants	...	...	...	...	24	9	33
Sole teachers	...	...	...	...	33	39	72
					95	49	144

Two of the uncertificated teachers hold licenses to teach, and five others have passed the examinations necessary to qualify for certificates. Of thirty-nine probationers, who are not included in the above list, four are fully certificated. Except in the case of one certificated head teacher, the list shows no improvement on that of last year. The Minister's report for 1895 shows that here again, with one exception, Nelson stands lowest on the list of educational districts, our proportion of certificated teachers being only 62 per cent. of the whole number, while Otago and Auckland average 97 and 95 per cent. respectively. This district is at a disadvantage in having such a large proportion of very small schools. No less than thirty-eight, nearly one-third of the whole number, have a daily average attendance of less than twenty, twelve of these averaging less than ten. It is not to be expected that highly-qualified teachers can be obtained for such small and consequently poorly-paid appointments; but on the other hand we cannot reasonably hope to raise the intellectual level of the district unless the status of our teachers is raised, and, in spite of many disadvantages, more might be done in this direction. Many of our uncertificated assistants and teachers of our larger aided schools make no attempts to qualify themselves for their positions, some of which have been held for several years past. The same remark applies to some probationers who have finished their term of service. Although the service of two or three excellent teachers would be temporarily lost, yet the general service would certainly profit if the Board would strictly interpret the clause in the Act referring to the employment of uncertificated teachers, and at regular intervals would, for the positions mentioned, advertise for properly-qualified successors. It is even questionable whether certificated teachers who are out of employment have not a right to demand that such a course be taken.

Visits of inspection have been paid to 104 schools. The object of these inspection, or, as they are commonly called, surprise visits is evidently misunderstood by some of our teachers, so that a word or two concerning them may not be altogether out of place. They are intended to afford the Inspector an opportunity of seeing the practical working of the school in its ordinary state, of judging the teacher's power of control and of imparting knowledge, of noting his methods of work, of estimating generally his ability to teach. The conclusion that the Inspector arrives at from these visits, modified or confirmed by the examination results, enables him to assign the marks for efficiency that are necessary for the grading of the certificate of each teacher. Seeing, then, their importance, it is surely excusable that some teachers show the Inspector their best front, putting forth their greatest efforts, and creating possibly a better impression of energy, method, and zeal than their ordinary behaviour would warrant. But what excuse can be offered in the many