

parents interested to the following schools, at which the attendance this year is so very far below the average of the colony (82.1 per cent. for 1896): Ranzau, 60 per cent.; Pangatotara, 62 per cent.; Ngatimoti, 63 per cent.; Fern Flat, 64 per cent.; Hope, 64 per cent.; Eighty-eight Valley, 65 per cent.; Lower Moutere, 66 per cent.; Lyell, 66 per cent.; Sarau, 67 per cent.; Cronadun, 68 per cent.; Tadmor, 69 per cent. It is quite time stringent measures were taken to put an end to the unsatisfactory state of things prevailing in these school districts. To the table headed "Summary of Results" we have appended for general information a column showing the percentage of average attendance of each school for the year. We hope that the comparison will open the eyes of teachers to the deficiencies of their scholars, and stimulate all to renewed efforts.

We commend to the notice of teachers the following extract from the Southland Inspectors' report for 1896: "The attendance problem, of course, is always with us, but in a number of schools it is being quietly solved by the teachers themselves. In these schools certificates are periodically issued to each pupil, wherein are registered his degree of proficiency in each subject, his position in class, and his conduct as to neatness of work, punctuality, and attendance. The interest of the parents in the progress of the pupils is thus secured, and, as they sign the certificates every time these are issued, they are not likely to overlook the virtue of regular attendance for want of an object-lesson thereon. Teachers that have tried this plan tell us that the attendance problem has practically disappeared from their schedule of difficulties."

The plan suggested is by no means new to some schools in this district, and has to our knowledge had a stimulating and beneficial effect upon the general progress of the children concerned. Many other devices to encourage regular attendance may be resorted to, and we mention this one in the hope that some teachers who have as yet done nothing whatever in this direction may no longer betray negligence on this important matter.

Mr. Hill, of Napier, also points out that the percentage representing the average attendance of a district or of a school may depend very largely upon the plan adopted in regard to absentees of long standing, especially in the interpretation which teachers put upon the word "left." Our view of the regulation is that in making up a weekly return the name of a child should be at once removed from the roll if during that week the teacher is positively informed on trustworthy authority that the child has left the school for good.

There were in the employ of the Board on the 31st December 149 teachers, whose grading is as follows: Head teachers—42 certificated or licensed; assistants—23 certificated or licensed, 9 uncertificated; sole teachers—33 certificated or licensed, 42 uncertificated: total—98 certificated or licensed, 51 uncertificated=149. Four of the uncertificated sole teachers and one assistant have passed examinations entitling them to certificates, but their names have not yet been gazetted, or they have not yet served the necessary two years. In addition to the above list there were employed two sewing-mistresses and forty-seven probationers, seven of whom were certificated. At present it is difficult to avoid appointing uncertificated sole teachers to take charge of very small schools, but the employment of uncertificated assistants is one of the worst features of our system, and could very soon be remedied. The results of the scholarship examinations of recent years show that a very large proportion of the successful candidates come from schools that are staffed by teachers who have received some University or secondary-school training, scholarship winners and even candidates from schools outside of these becoming comparatively rare. To teach well up to one's own level of attainments is a rarity, for the knowledge of a higher course of training is almost essential to obtaining a thorough grasp of the lower in all its bearings. Herein we put forward another plea for the higher culture of our teaching staff. We hope that the new regulation providing an entrance examination for our pupil-teachers will do much towards supplying better material on which to build the superstructure. At the same time we cannot in justice refrain from pointing out the marked success that is attending the efforts of some of our young teachers who have but recently finished with credit their probationers' course.

In addition to the examination of the Board's schools the following have also been examined: St. Mary's Orphanages at Stoke and at Nelson; Nelson Parish School; St. Canice's, at Westport; and Whakarewa Orphanage. Owing partly to a misunderstanding of the managers and partly to the fact that pressure on the Inspector's time prevented him from rectifying the mistake, the Sacred Heart School at Reefton was not examined this year; but arrangements will be made for taking it as early as possible in 1898.

The following table is an extract from the annual return, and gives a general summary of results for the whole district, with the corresponding totals for 1896:—

Standard Classes.				Presented.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	
							Yrs. mos.	
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	138	...	...	...	
Standard VI.	...	...	...	436	429	337	14	1
" V.	...	...	...	653	638	466	13	0
" IV.	...	...	...	829	805	582	12	1
" III.	...	...	...	848	822	621	10	10
" II.	...	...	...	823	805	711	9	8
" I.	...	...	...	692	680	641	8	5
Preparatory	...	...	...	1,635	...	...	...	
Totals 1897				6,054	4,179	3,358	11	4*
Totals 1896				6,051	4,117	3,256	11	3*

\* Mean of average ages.