

WESTLAND.

Sir,—

Education Office, Hokitika, 8th February, 1898.

I have the honour to present the following report on the schools of the district for the year 1897.

The examination of the twelve aided schools of South Westland was conducted during February, and that of the remaining schools during the last four months. Inspection visits were also made to all except the smaller aided schools. Owing to numerous changes in the staffs two visits were necessary in several cases. Separate reports have been presented on the examination of the secondary classes of the Hokitika and Kumara District High Schools and of the Catholic schools at Kumara, Hokitika, Kanieri, and Ross.

The following is a tabulated statement of the results of the examinations held during the year in the primary schools under the Board :—

Classes.	Total presented.	Presented in Standards.	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	Average Age of passing for New Zealand in 1896.
					Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Secondary classes ...	37	...	...	...	...	...
Above Standard VI. ...	39	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	119	119	115	106	14 4	14 0
" V. ...	168	168	162	141	13 2	13 2
" IV. ...	181	181	172	153	12 3	12 4
" III. ...	163	163	159	140	11 7	11 2
" II. ...	188	188	185	172	9 10	10 0
" I. ...	167	167	165	151	9 0	8 11
Preparatory ...	399	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	1,461	986	958	863	11 8*	11 7*

* Mean of average age.

The percentage of failures for the district has fallen to 9·9, an improvement of 2·7 on that of the previous year. This advance is owing, as will be shown later, chiefly to better results in arithmetic. The average age at which the pupils have passed the various standards again corresponds very closely with that of the whole colony. The mean of the average age remains at 11 years 8 months, a number exceeded in 1896 by only four districts. As the average attendance of pupils in the district is high and the staffs in general efficient, it is plain that the remaining factor in maintaining a high average rise of passing is present—viz., a strict and sufficiently exacting interpretation of the requirements of the syllabus of instruction in the examination tests. The distribution of the number presented for examination is expressed by the following percentages: Above Standard VI., 2·7; Standard VI., 8·2; Standard V., 11·6; Standard IV., 12·5; Standard III., 11·2; Standard II., 13; Standard I., 11·5; preparatory, 29·3. It may be noted that an increase has occurred in the percentage of pupils in the three higher standards, and that the number is nearly equal to that of pupils in the lower standards, which is owing to the fact that in this district the conditions of labour render it unnecessary to remove the children from school until the standard course is concluded. The number of pupils over eight years in age in the preparatory class is 18·1 per cent. of the class and 5·3 of the total roll. This number does not appear to be excessive, and the explanation given by the teachers as required by No. 5 of the standard regulations is satisfactory.

Appended is a return showing in detail the results obtained by the individual schools, and with this is stated the average attendance of each school expressed as a percentage of the average roll. The average attendance for the colony was 82·1 per cent. in 1896, and the following schools have failed to reach that percentage in 1897: Bruce Bay (aided), 64·9; Jacksons, 73; Arahura Road, 76·2; Lower Kokatahi, 77·6; Dillmans, 78; Blue Spur, 79; Kawhaka, 80; Kumara, 81·2; Otira (Lower), 81·2. With the exception of an improvement at Lower Kokatahi and Kumara the schools mentioned show a decrease in the regularity of attendance. In the remaining schools the attendance is very satisfactory, with the result that the attendance for the district in 1897 was 85·3 per cent. In 1896 Otago and Westland secured the highest percentage in regard to attendance, 86·5 in each case.

In the various pass-subjects the percentages of passes obtained during 1897 are: Reading, 98; spelling, 84; writing, 87; drawing, 96; arithmetic, 75; composition, 97; geography, 87. In arithmetic the percentage of passes for the four years during which the tests have been set by the Education Department are :—

	Standard VI.	Standard V.	Standard IV.	Standard III.
1894 ...	68	71	82	70
1895 ...	75	49	74	77
1896 ...	66	48	69	86
1897 ...	81	68	75	78

In writing there is retrogression in the number of passes, but it is pleasing to be able to record a distinct advance in the remaining pass-subjects. The introduction of a second set of readers has been followed not only by greater efficiency in the reading, but also by improved results in spelling