

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Board of Education Office, Wanganui, 1st March, 1900.

We have the honour to submit our report on public education in the Wanganui District for the year ending 31st December, 1899.

Number of Schools.—At the close of the school year 134 schools, including two half-time schools in the Ngamatapouri Block, were in active operation. During the year new schools were opened at Fraser Road, Riverton, Rangitoto, Kakariki, Bluff Road, Pukerua, and Coal Creek; while the schools at Komako, Maungahoe, Paiaka, Papanui, and Parapara were closed. The increase in the number for the year is therefore only two. During the year several buildings were enlarged, and a fine building on the most up-to-date principles was erected at Feilding, to replace the old structure destroyed by fire in December, 1898.

Pupil-teachers.—The examination of pupil-teachers was held in Wanganui during the mid-winter holidays. The following is a summary of the results: First class (third year)—examined, 30; passed, 28; failed, 2. Second class (second year)—examined, 30; passed, 16; failed, 14. Third class (first year)—examined, 21; passed, 17; failed, 4.

The limit percentages for a pass were—in the individual subjects, 25 per cent.; in the total marks in all subjects, 55 per cent. In the first class the limit percentage of total possible marks was reached in every case, and it ranged from 55 per cent. to 88 per cent. The two unsuccessful candidates failed in only one subject, viz., algebra. In arithmetic the class as a whole reached the high percentage of 80·1. Four candidates obtained full marks, five others over 90 per cent. of possible marks, five others over 80 per cent., eleven others over 70 per cent., two others over 60 per cent., two others over 50 per cent., while the weakest candidate reached 47 per cent. As the paper was quite equal to the requirements for the E certificate, results like this plainly point to very sound teaching on the part of our principal teachers in this very important subject. The second class showed a high number of unsuccessful candidates, but in five cases failure was in only one subject, viz.: three in algebra, one in arithmetic, and one in history. Nine candidates failed to reach the requisite total percentage. In arithmetic four candidates obtained full marks, and eight others over 80 per cent. of the possible. Dictation and algebra each brought five utterly to grief. The total percentages ranged from 41·3 to 85·2, and seven candidates obtained over 75 per cent. In geography and history the work might well have been better. In the third class the total percentages ranged from 42·5 to 81 per cent. The four unsuccessful candidates failed badly. Arithmetic, while seldom really strong, fell below 60 per cent. in only five cases. Algebra was very creditable. History, as usual in this class, was a very poor subject.

Roman Catholic Schools.—The four Roman Catholic Schools in the district were duly examined. The following are the examination results:—

School.	Number on Roll.	Presented in Standards.	Examined in Standards.	Failed in Standards.	Passed in Standards.
Marist Brothers', Wanganui	66	64	60	11	49
St. Joseph's, Wanganui ...	90	47	45	8	37
Hawera ...	90	54	48	7	41
Palmerston North ...	87	67	65	22	43
Totals ...	333	232	218	48	170

The work in these schools showed steady improvement. It should be mentioned that the arithmetic in the highest standards at the Hawera School was amongst the best received during the year.

Inspection.—In all, 110 schools were inspected. We are sorry to say that hitherto it has been found impossible to visit some of the schools (chiefly those in the interior) twice a year. Perhaps the new regulations will give us time for this in future. A few schools were temporarily closed when we were in their neighbourhood, but we could not on this account pay a second visit to their portion of the district.

At our inspection visits we almost invariably found the work going on satisfactorily according to time-tables. At the majority of the schools very good methods are employed, and they are well carried out; consequently the interest of the pupils is aroused, and their attention sustained.

At a few schools the instruction is rather aimless in character, showing a lack of method: there appears to be no definite plan of work, so there is much haphazard teaching. At schools where such faults obtain the teachers evidently do not know what form a lesson is to take until they go to the blackboard to give it. Lessons are not prepared and arranged so as to form part of a scheme which will give a complete and thorough knowledge of the subject. We are pleased to be able to state that such schools are yearly on the decrease, and that ex-pupil-teachers are seldom found amongst this class of sole teachers.

Some teachers might remember that, while a certain amount of rote learning is necessary, as, for instance, in the various tables, definitions, and rules in arithmetic, grammar, and other subjects, there are two ways of obtaining it. Thus, one teacher will rely on pure repetition, while another will see that each step is understood before being committed to memory. In the former case the tabulated facts are merely mechanically suspended in the mind; in the latter they are mentally assimilated. For pass purposes the former is, perhaps, as good as the latter, and involves less trouble to the teacher, but no educationalist can have any doubt as to which is of the more lasting advantage to the pupil.