

## WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 28th February, 1900.

I have the honour to present the annual report on the working condition of the primary State schools of the Wellington Education District for the year 1899.

By the appointment of a second Assistant Inspector early in the past year I have been in a position to overtake the work of inspection, to examine thoroughly all the schools in operation, and for the first time to examine and inspect all the Roman Catholic schools. The Board schools examined numbered 136, and those inspected 117, the latter number including all in operation whose attendance warranted a second visit of inspection.

There is a nominal increase of four schools on the previous year's return, caused by the opening of small ones at Parkville, Mangatiti, and Huia Road, in the Forty-mile Bush, at Matahiwi, near Masterton, and at South Featherston, the school at Te Mai being closed. Although a few children were examined in a settler's woolshed at Maungapakeha, the new school-building there is serving no purpose. Also a new building at Wharau, seventeen miles from Gladstone, was opened for a short time with very few children, and closed for the remainder of the year. These and one or two other cases, which may come into notice, point to apparent undue haste in erecting buildings. I do not think any new school-building should be put up by the Board until the Inspector reports that a temporary school has been carried on to his satisfaction, and that the attendance justifies the erection of a permanent building. For some time past the multiplication of very small schools has been going on, until we have now thirty-two with less than twenty-five children on the roll, although in former years twenty-five was the minimum roll allowed.

At present there does not appear to be any pressing need for increased accommodation. In the city some of the schools are fairly full, and the Rintoul Street School is overcrowded, but the recent erection at Island Bay was intended to relieve it, and the Newtown School is capable of accommodating over a hundred children. The old part of the Newtown building and the Mount Cook Girls' building are dilapidated, out of date in construction, and inconvenient, and they should be replaced with new structures as soon as funds are available. These remarks apply also to the Lower Hutt School buildings, for which a new site is already selected.

The total number of children on the rolls for the past year was 14,973, showing a small increase of 289. There is evidence to show that many children leave school at an early age, and it is hoped that the much needed amendment of the exemption clause of the Education Act will have a salutary effect on the school attendance. The average attendance is good in some localities and very poor in others.

In the Board schools 9,629 children were examined in the standards, of whom 8,296 passed, the average age of those who passed being eleven years four months. These results show a falling-off for the year of 3 per cent. in the number of passes as compared with those for 1898. The following table displays the number of standard passes compared with those of the previous year:—

		Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
1898	...	1,651	1,731	1,688	1,539	1,072	819
1899	...	1,609	1,675	1,560	1,544	1,177	731

The number of pupils who had previously passed Standard VI. and were examined in the class above Standard VI. was 516, as compared with 420 for the year before. These results show a falling-off in Standards I., II., III., and VI., steadiness in Standard IV., and increase in Standard V. and the class above Standard VI. In some instances the school year was shortened by the Inspectors' rearrangement of their itinerary. Before drawing any inferences from these numerical results and from the Inspectors' reports on the work it will be well to consider each school in its work as a separate unit, taking it according to its class in the appendix to this report. Beginning with the eleven schools in Class A\*, it is again found that the efficiency of these schools is the mainstay of the whole. With one exception, they may be pronounced distinctly satisfactory, and they are mostly managed by head teachers of high standing and great experience. It is only in the lower classes of some of them, where recently selected pupil-teachers are much on their trial, that any falling-off is apparent; but the energies of the head teachers have been more than ordinarily taxed in the amount of assistance they have been called upon to give to these weaker teachers. The number of passes in the same eleven schools in Class A has fallen from 4,827 in 1898 to 4,593 in 1899. I attribute this falling-off and that in the several standards almost entirely to the unsatisfactory selection of pupil-teachers.

Taking now into consideration the twenty-three important schools of Class B,† I find, after very carefully going into each case, that fifteen may be looked upon as really satisfactory, that five of them have weak classes or weak subjects, and on the whole are less satisfactory, and that three of them are deplorably weak. Of twenty-eight schools in Class C,‡ eleven are satisfactory, fourteen are less satisfactory, and three are weak.

Examining closely the schedules and reports of fifty-eight schools in Class D,§ each taught by one teacher, I look upon thirty as quite satisfactory, nineteen as less satisfactory, and nine as weak. Among the teachers of these unsatisfactory schools some had no qualifications, some had been removed for incompetence from other schools, and others had made no successful record. The tendency of the administration is to retain weak teachers—some sympathy always arising in the personal favour of the teacher as against the educational interests of the suffering children.

Of the thirteen aided schools nine are promising, and four are in doubtful hands. The three large infant schools are all satisfactory.

\* Schools presenting over 300 children each.

† Schools presenting from 100 to 300 children each.

‡ Schools with less than 100 children, taught by more than one teacher.

§ Schools under sole teachers.