

larger education districts." The average attendance for that year throughout the colony was 84.1, but in the Nelson District only 82.9 per cent., although that is the highest percentage that has so far been recorded here. Even if we except the farming and the hop- and fruit-picking districts, we cannot yet view with complacency the degree of regularity with which the rest of the schools are attended. The three largest centres in the district, Nelson City, Westport, and Reefton, show this year respectively 85.1, 80.3, and 81.6 per cent. At our inspection, or, as they are sometimes called, "surprise" visits, which, of course, are paid in any weather, we usually found, so far as numbers go, the schools in fair, if not good, working order. The following were exceptions to the rule: (1.) A school of sixty on a very fine day, when hop-picking was near at hand, showed only thirty-five present. (2.) At a smaller one of seventeen the Inspector and the teacher were favoured by the presence of three mites, who alone had had the courage to face a trifling drizzle. (3.) At a third, one very stormy morning, when the river was in very high flood, with part of the district and the railway-line submerged, only ten children were present out of forty-two, and we deemed it advisable to send these out for their own safety when an overflow from the river surrounded the school-room. Thanks to prompt action our serious rescue-work in this case was confined to helping a half-drowned cow to struggle on to the playground, after a long and perilous journey down the river. A somewhat similar experience befell us on one of our recent examination visits. On his way to the school your Inspector found the teacher and one of her elder pupils playing the Good Samaritan and practising "life-saving," though perhaps not exactly of the kind intended in the syllabus of the Manual and Technical Regulations. Two long-woolled sheep had fallen into a small creek beside the path, and, though the young ladies had successfully "grassed" one, the weight of the other was too much for their united strength. With some misgivings the Inspector undertook the task, and "passed," but not with ease. (4.) At one school of twenty-four, notorious for the irregularity of its attendance, we found one fine day in May only twelve children present. (5.) At another small one of ten, one very wet morning, after a toilsome journey of eleven miles, the Inspector met no one but the teacher.

In addition to the public schools, we have this year examined the children of the Whakarewa Orphanage, St. Canice's School (Westport), and the Sacred Heart School (Reefton).

On the 31st December there were in the Board's employment 152 teachers, whose classification was as follows: Head teachers—Certificated or licensed, 40; assistants—certificated or licensed, 29; uncertificated, 2; sole teachers—certificated or licensed, 46; uncertificated, 35; totals, certificated or licensed, 115; uncertificated, 37. The numbers for 1900 were—Certificated or licensed, 115; uncertificated, 41.

An improvement is shown in the reduced number of uncertificated assistants, and the twenty-one schools in this district having each an average attendance lower than ten are responsible for most of the uncertificated sole teachers. Before much improvement can be looked for in the staffing of such small schools the rate of payment must be increased. The colonial scale is welcome in this respect, as its rate is higher than the Nelson Board could afford; but, even so, it is altogether inadequate. By the adoption of the scale which makes provision for such small schools the Government has recognised what has long been a debatable point—the right of such schools to exist, and, consequently, its duty to maintain them. Double rate of pay, or £10 *per capita*, would be none too great an allowance, and even then for a maximum of five scholars would only be equal to pupil-teacher rates. In all, forty-eight pupil-teachers were employed, and of these six are certificated and two others have passed the necessary examination.

The adoption of the colonial scale of staffs will ultimately mean the displacement of twenty-two pupil-teachers by the appointment of ten assistant teachers. The schools affected will be chiefly those with an average attendance of from thirty-one to sixty-six; but some of the larger schools will also lose teachers, so that, although some will be greatly benefited, the majority will suffer in staffing by the change.

Fifty-two candidates presented themselves for the pupil-teachers' entrance examination in June, and twenty-six passed, the majority of the failures being caused by incorrect spelling. Vacancies have been regularly filled by those who have passed this or a higher examination. In future pupil-teachers will be required only in schools having each an average attendance exceeding ninety, and, as these at present in this district number only nine, opportunities of entering the service in this way will be much restricted. The establishment of the entrance test has proved of very great use, and now the passing of this examination should be the minimum requirement from the teacher of even the smallest household school.

A summary of results for the whole district has been extracted from the annual return, and, with the corresponding totals for 1900, is shown below:—

Classes.	Number on Roll	Present in Standards.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
				Yrs. mos.
Above Standard VI. ... ..	197	...	...	...
Standard VI. ... ..	444	428	314	13 6
" V. ... ..	603	586	458	13 0
" IV. ... ..	742	723	549	11 3
" III. ... ..	693	663	535	10 10
" II. ... ..	665	647	524	9 3
" I. ... ..	671	648	563	8 9
Preparatory ... ..	1,654	...	...	...
Totals ... ..	5,669	3,695	2,943	11 1*
Totals for 1900 ... ..	5,802	3,867	2,998	11 3½

\* Mean of average age.