

WESTLAND.

SIR,— Education Office, Hokitika, 14th February, 1905.

I have the honour to present a general report on the working of the schools of the district for the year 1904. The tables accompanying the report relate to the examination of thirty-two public schools and five Catholic schools. The former omits three schools that were in operation during the year, but were closed at the time when the examination was due. With the exception of eleven schools of South Westland all the public schools received special inspection visits and in a few schools this was necessary on several occasions.

The following table presents information relating to the numbers connected with the annual examination :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Percentage of Total Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Secondary Class	...	...	...	...	32	3.2	31	...
Standard VII.	...	...	...	...	28	2.7	26	14 11
" VI.	...	...	...	...	81	7.8	80	13 9
" V.	...	...	...	...	104	10.0	101	13 3
" IV.	...	...	...	...	117	11.3	109	12 7
" III.	...	...	...	...	105	10.1	104	11 0
" II.	...	...	...	...	101	9.8	99	10 7
" I.	...	...	...	...	113	11.0	111	8 5
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	352	34.1	345	7 2
Totals	...	...	...	...	1,033	...	1,006	11 5*

* Mean of average age.

Of the number on the roll at the time of the annual examinations twenty-six were presented in a different class in arithmetic, twenty-two being in a lower standard and four in a higher. The number over eight years of age presented in the preparatory class was eighty-two, a considerable increase on that for the previous year.

The pupils in the Seventh Standard, numbering twenty-eight, were all represented in the Sixth Standard for the purpose of obtaining proficiency certificates. In this the twenty-six candidates present were successful. In addition, fifteen prepared work prescribed for Standard VII. in the extent at least of a useful course of book-keeping. In future pupils that have previously obtained a proficiency certificate will be expected to attempt the course of instruction prescribed by the regulations, which require that where possible the secondary class of a district high school shall be utilised. In general it will be found advisable to present again in Standard VI. those that at the previous examination obtained only a competency certificate for that standard.

Of the number presented in the Sixth Standard thirty-nine qualified for proficiency certificates and thirty obtained competency certificates. The percentages are : proficiency certificates, 48 ; competency certificates, 37 ; failed, 15. The large number of competency certificates is accounted for partly by the inclusion of pupils that were presented in a lower class of arithmetic and partly by the advance in the relative importance of geography and drawing, these subjects being allotted one-fourth of the total marks. The percentage of proficiency certificates will increase, as the Sixth Standard will in future include those who have previously obtained competency certificates and who may be expected to complete their record for the standard.

The classification of the pupils of standards below the sixth is carried out in most cases with commendable care and with due sense of responsibility. Very seldom in schools under experienced teachers is it necessary to criticize adversely the system of promotion. In the schools of the lower grades, however, untrained teachers require assistance very frequently. A few teachers in all grades of schools are remiss in keeping throughout the year the records required by Regulation 5. Any neglect in the preservation of the necessary statements and results of the teacher's periodical examinations must be regarded as evidence of some degree of weakness in the management of the school and of want of interest in its progress. Where the classification is carried out by the teacher these records furnish indispensable information regarding the conduct of the school, and where promotion has for any reason to be allotted by the Inspector, they form a valuable check on the results of the annual examination. For these reasons the requirements of the regulation referred to should receive regular and careful attention.

In efficiency the schools of the district have during the past year maintained a good standard. Very few reports record general weakness and in a number of instances distinct progress has been recorded. The course of instruction followed has to a large extent been that of the new syllabus. In the English subjects this has been the case without exception. Considerable advance has been made in the teaching of oral composition and increased attention has been given to phrases and clauses in the study of the sentence. In arithmetic, owing to the undue reliance on the text-books in use, the course adopted did not always coincide with the new requirements, and it was frequently necessary to adapt the test partly to the new and partly to the old syllabus. In all schools no change was made in the course in geography and little in drawing. The full requirements of the new syllabus will be undertaken during the present year. The following subjects were adopted as stated in the thirty-two