

The following table contains a summary of examination results :—

| Classes. | | | | | | Number on Roll. | Present at Inspector's Annual Visit. | Average Age of Pupils in each Class. |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------------|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | Yrs. mos. |
| Standard VII | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 77 | 72 | 14 4 |
| " VI | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 246 | 241 | 13 11 |
| " V | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 439 | 432 | 13 3 |
| " IV | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 590 | 574 | 12 2 |
| " III | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 651 | 627 | 11 5 |
| " II | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 649 | 640 | 10 1 |
| " I | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 664 | 643 | 9 2 |
| Preparatory | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1,668 | 1,475 | 7 0 |
| Totals | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 4,984 | 4,704 | 11 5* |

* Mean of average age.

Compared with the return for 1904 the following increases are shown : Roll, ninety-three ; present at the Inspector's annual visit, 104. The number of pupils absent at the annual visit was 280—eighty-seven in the standards and 193 in the preparatory classes. The number of pupils in Standard VII was seventy-seven—a decrease of three. In addition to the public schools the Roman Catholic schools at New Plymouth, Stratford, and Opunake were inspected and examined. The summary of results shows : Roll, 275 ; present, 258—an increase of eight and twelve respectively on the 1904 return.

The annual reports have frequently referred to the unsatisfactory nature of the school buildings caused by the hampered finance of the Board. The former building grant was allocated on a capitation basis which was very unfair for districts in which the rapid growth of small schools, consequent upon the settlement of new land, was a constant drain upon the funds. Schools had to be built with cramped accommodation, limited air-space, and with equipment much below requirements. The present system, however, is much fairer. Schools in newly settled districts and additions due to the increase of population are erected by the Government, and an allowance is made for maintenance. During the last few years it has been possible, therefore, to better equip the schools, and by painting, repairing, &c., when necessary, take such care of the buildings as will undoubtedly give them longer lives. Older buildings are being gradually improved, and, with respect to hygienic and educational requirements, rendered more suitable for the purposes for which they were intended. In the matter of teachers' residences much remains to be done. Many of them, we may say most, do not provide the conveniences that an artisan would put into his house. It will be a long time before the evil effects of parsimony necessitated by the former limited building grant will be eradicated ; but we, and we believe also the teachers, recognise the efforts made by the Board to give the teachers the comfort and conveniences to which their positions entitle them.

As there was considerable difficulty in procuring competent teachers, positions as assistants and even as sole teachers were offered to pupil-teachers before the expiry of their apprenticeship ; and, though the curtailing of their course of instruction was a matter for regret, we have been pleased with the very good promise shown by most of those so appointed. This scarcity of teachers is felt all over the colony, and it remains to be seen if the training colleges recently established can supply a sufficient number to replace those who, in the usual course, leave the service. One effect of the scarcity of teachers is the great increase in the number of uncertificated teachers now employed in this and other districts. A few of our ex-pupil-teachers, we regret to say, have not shown the desire to obtain certificates that was formerly displayed. It may or may not be due to the ease with which appointments are obtained, but the fact remains that a number, who in the ordinary course would be expected to take their certificates, make no effort in that direction. We are pleased, however, to note that among the more experienced teachers there is a strong desire to obtain a higher status, and that a considerable number have been successful.

As teachers have the greatest freedom in classifying their pupils, some teachers have exercised a wise discretion in dealing with the children in the Preparatory classes and Standards I and II. These classes may be looked upon as groups of children in which promotion according to ability and progress can be readily and easily carried out without detriment to the child. Not infrequently we find that pupils strong in the work of Preparatory II are promoted to Standard I, and pupils strong in the work of Preparatory III are promoted to Standard II, and with excellent results, the promotion itself being a stimulating factor. Should, however, the work of any standard appear too onerous the teacher has the matter in his own hands, and can give lengthened instruction in the work found most difficult. Far be it from us to advocate the undue forcing of children, but, if freedom of classification means anything at all, it means promotion in accordance with ability ; and what can discourage a pupil more than being kept at work with which he is fully familiar, and in the performance of which habits of diligence, application, and thought are not required.

The quality of the work in the lower classes shows steady progress. In schools where a teacher has to manage unaided probably five or six classes in addition to the infants, not much time can be given to the little ones, though much can be done by systematic and careful preparation of the work ; but, in large schools where the infants are in charge of assistants who have the help of pupil-teachers, good work is expected and is being done. Sometimes more variety might be introduced into the work ;