

most of the subjects of the course is given at centres, instead of at the schools to which the pupil-teachers severally belong. The centres of instruction are Wanganui, Hawera, Marton, and Palmerston.

In adopting the former change, we have come into line with the Department's general regulations on the subject, and we believe that it will be a great advantage to the pupil-teachers to have the number of examinations they are required to face so substantially reduced. The regulations require that the instructors at the various centres shall examine and report periodically on the work done, and also that the Inspector shall, on the occasion of any of his visits to the school, investigate carefully the work of the pupil-teachers. It is too early yet to give a pronouncement upon the success or otherwise of the scheme for centralising the instruction; but we believe it will prove better for all concerned than the previous method. It gives to all an equal opportunity by bringing them under the same conditions; it shortens for them the ordinary school day; it removes a burden from headmasters, whose school work demands their whole thought and energy; and when once the system is fairly established, we believe it will result in better and sounder progress than was possible before.

The local scholarship examinations have also been abolished, and candidates for these will now be required to face the National Scholarship and Civil Service Examination. The amended scholarship regulations have been sent to the Education Department for approval, and will be issued shortly. This unification of our examination system is a decided step forward, and means for pupils and teachers a relief from a strain which at certain times was well nigh intolerable.

**CERTIFICATES OF PROFICIENCY AND COMPETENCY.**—The number of candidates for the certificate of proficiency was 849, and of these 537 gained proficiency certificates, and 140 competency certificates. During the year, while the examinations were in progress, the regulation regarding the conditions on which this certificate is to be awarded was altered; but we deemed it inadvisable to make any change until the end of the year. The new regulation adopts a higher standard than the old and therefore makes a much clearer line of demarcation between the competency and the proficiency certificate. It will be much better so. The proficiency certificate will under new conditions be gained only by those pupils who have thoroughly mastered their work. The majority will have to be content with the lower certificate; and the fact that the higher certificate is beyond their reach will, we trust, effectively put an end to the tendency to put undue strain upon backward pupils.

With regard to the certificate of proficiency, it may be pointed out here, in order to remove any apparent idea of harshness there may be in refusing to grant it in the case of a large number of pupils who may be fit only for the lower, that after three months' additional preparation a special examination may be asked for. Such an examination was held at the close of year, and was taken advantage of by a considerable number who had at the previous examination been unsuccessful.

**CONCLUSION.**—We have once more to express our thanks to the Board for the ready support given to us in our work and for the consideration given to any proposals we have had to make; to the teachers for their co-operation and help during examination and in the furtherance of our plans and schemes for the betterment of the schools, and to the office staff for the assistance they have rendered from time to time.

The Chairman, Education Board.

We have &c.,

WM. GRAY,	} Inspectors.
JAS. MILNE,	
T. B. STRONG,	

#### HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 31st March, 1906.

At the close of the school year in December last, ninety-three schools were in active operation under the Board's control, and six under the control of the Catholic body. Two of the Board's schools were opened during the year—viz., Wigan and Argyle—and the small half-time school at Whakarau in the Motu district was closed. Eight of the schools have an attendance of less than ten pupils, ten of them have between ten and thirty, sixteen between twenty-one and forty, and thirty-five between forty-one and ninety. In the schools with an average attendance of not more than forty, one teacher is allowed, and two teachers in schools where the attendance exceeds forty and is not more than ninety. Thus more than two-thirds of the Board schools are staffed with one or with two teachers. When the staffing was controlled by Education Boards, three teachers were recognised by the Board as being necessary in schools where the average attendance exceeded seventy-five, and an experience of the working of the schools under both schemes compels me to report that a modification of the present staffing is desirable in schools where the average attendance at present exceeds seventy-five. In fact, the present staffing scale is seriously defective in several important particulars. The efficiency of the schools would be improved by a modification of the staffing in the direction indicated.

**ATTENDANCE.**—The school attendance for the year shows a very small increase compared with the previous year. Although much activity is shown by settlers for the establishment of small schools the total increase in the school attendance does not compare favourably with the increase of previous years. Small household schools are increasing, and settlers in remote parts of the district avail themselves of the advantages offered by the Board in the way of grants. The question of suitable buildings for small schools often presents a difficulty, but this might easily be overcome by the erection of a small and inexpensive building to meet the temporary requirements of a district. The type should be fixed and the work of erecting a building could be undertaken by the settlers themselves, who would take care to have specifications and conditions carried out to the fullest extent. A total of 8,865 children were returned as belonging to the schools, and 8,238 were actually present at examination. This is exclusive of 598 pupils belonging to the Catholic schools. In twelve schools all the pupils were present on examination day, but the existence of various forms of sickness brought up the number of absentees