

the measure in being binding upon all entrants to the service, in making provision for old age, in granting immediate retirement to faithful servants who are eligible, and in its intention to keep the service in the hands of those who are full of life and energy or who retain at least sufficient vigour to carry out their arduous duties efficiently, is in the best interests of public education.

We have, &c.,

G. A. HARKNESS, M.A.,
A. CRAWFORD, B.A., } Inspectors.

The Chairman, Nelson Education Board.

GREY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Greymouth, 20th April, 1906.

I have the honour to submit a general report on the schools of the Grey Education District for the year 1905.

The number of public schools in operation at the close of the year was thirty-two. These, with the three Catholic schools, were all visited during the year, and many were inspected more than once. This was made possible by my relinquishing secretarial duties early in the year, a step which I feel sure has been for the benefit of school work generally. Besides having more time for inspection, I was able to assemble the teachers on Saturdays for some months during the year, and to have talks with them on school work generally and the new syllabus particularly. I much regret that, owing to the early resignation of my successor, I have been compelled to again temporarily undertake office work, which has prevented me from visiting the schools early in the year.

The following table gives information relating to the annual examinations :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	27	25	14 5
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	132	130	13 9
" V	...	...	...	...	...	120	117	13 0
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	195	194	11 10
" III	...	...	...	...	...	179	175	10 10
" II	...	...	...	...	...	174	171	9 10
" I	...	...	...	...	...	156	151	9 1
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	606	561	6 9
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	1,589	1,524	...

While the average for the pupils of most classes has remained stationary or decreased, that for Standard I has decreased, and now reaches the high figure of 9 years 1 month. Pupils who begin their school life between the ages of five and six, and most of them do, have to spend between three and four years before they are ready for promotion to Standard II. When it is remembered that the syllabus for Standard I is not by any means difficult, children should be ready for promotion earlier than they are. Nothing can be gained by keeping pupils an inordinate length of time in the preparatory classes.

I am pleased to be again able to state that the attendance on the date of annual visit was extremely good, in standard classes only eighteen being absent out of a roll-number of 956. On many days the weather was very stormy; indeed, in some cases the Inspector was not expected, yet every child was present. This shows that interest in education on the part of the parent is not wanting.

The one great drawback to a steady advancement in the quality of work is the continual change of teachers. There are only five schools in the district where there have not been changes in the staff during the past three years. The amending Act of last year has improved matters in connection with teachers' salaries, but as long as payment depends upon average attendance teachers cannot be blamed if they seek a change as soon as population tends to decrease.

The following is a classification of the schools: 7 good, 13 satisfactory, 8 fair, 4 weak. This is a big improvement on the classification of the previous year, and the work done throughout the schools is the best I have had. In no subject is this more noticeable than in arithmetic—not that the mark gained in many schools is a high one, but in previous years it was very low. The mental tests which have been given in every standard were much better done, though there are still many teachers who do not fully realise the value of mental arithmetic. Where a teacher has a number of classes to manage, it is, I know, almost impossible to give a great deal of time to oral work in each standard, but the teacher should strive to give as much attention as he possibly can. To quote the syllabus: "Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the fact that success in teaching arithmetic is proportional to the attention given by the teacher to the oral work at every stage, but more especially in the early stages."

In Class P and Standard I I confined my tests to oral work, and the teachers who had been giving only blackboard and slate work were disappointed with the results obtained.

Of the English subjects, reading shows the greatest improvement. As more practice has been given through the year, this was to be expected. All standards now read at least two books, and I hope the Board will soon be able to see its way to provide extra reading-matter for all schools. As I pointed