

This table shows a slight increase in three and a slight decrease in five classes, and a decrease of fifty-eight in the roll-number of the whole district.

We group the schools according to efficiency as follows: Good to very good, 45 per cent.; satisfactory, 42 per cent.; fair, 10 per cent.; weak or very weak, 3 per cent. The percentages in the second and fourth groups are the same as those of last year; that of the third group has decreased by 3, and the group "good to very good" has increased by 3 per cent. This is a very satisfactory result.

The following statement shows efficiency marks in subjects: Compulsory subjects—Reading, satisfactory; composition, fair; spelling, good; writing, good; recitation, satisfactory; mean of English, satisfactory; arithmetic, satisfactory; drawing, good; singing, satisfactory; physical instruction, good; geography, fair; history, satisfactory; mean of compulsory subjects, satisfactory. Additional subjects—Nature-study and science, satisfactory; handwork, good; geography, satisfactory; history, satisfactory; needlework, excellent; mean of additional subjects, good.

The results compare very favourably with those of last year's report, for they show increased efficiency in seven subjects and diminished efficiency in only one, compulsory geography, much of the work of which is new to the teachers and difficult for the pupils. The improvement lies mainly with the lower standards, the work of which, though wide in range, is in a large measure mechanical, and of course makes less demand on intelligence and reasoned methods than that of the classes above them, mathematical geography excepted, and here much of the work prescribed is, we think, beyond the grasp of children of thirteen or fourteen years of age. English and arithmetic are the subjects in which Standards IV, V, and VI were weakest; and in Standards V and VI the work frequently suffered from defect of thoroughness of preparation in Standard IV. Thoroughness of preparation in the classes below it is a *sine qua non* for efficiency in Standard VI, and defect of thoroughness of preparation there is precisely what makes high achievement so difficult here. The low standard set by the Department for the certificate of proficiency is in no small measure responsible for the inadequate preparation for promotion to Standard VI, for it seems to be held that capacity to win the low percentage of marks considered by the Department as a sufficient passport to the secondary schools ought to be regarded as a sufficient passport for promotion from one class to the next above it. The holder of a certificate of proficiency is naturally regarded as the finished product of our schools, and we fear that by this time teachers of secondary schools have formed a very unfavourable opinion of no small portion of this product. Near the end of the examinations the results of which are now under review, the Department raised the standard for this certificate; we hope therefore to see a general levelling-up of the work of the senior classes. One thing more is necessary, namely, the abolition of the age-limit for free places; for, so long as this remains, there will be a strong temptation to undue haste in promotion. It is our opinion that every child whose parents are willing to keep him for two years at a secondary school, and who proves his fitness to profit by the instruction given there, should be accorded the privilege of participation in such instruction.

The mark "good" for physical instruction is due to the high quality of the military drill of the larger schools—that is, to work done by the boys. With much of the work done by the girls we were very unfavourably impressed. It is, we think, certain that the girls, especially those of the senior classes, are not receiving such training as is necessary for the harmonious development of their physical powers; and, even where due attention is given to physical exercises, the effect of it is often neutralised by the bad postures the pupils are allowed to assume while doing the rest of their school work. We have frequently urged the necessity for systematic daily breathing-exercises, and are glad to see that the Commission recently appointed to judge the character of the physical instruction given in some of the northern districts emphasizes the value of these exercises.

Naturally, the schools, and even the classes of the same school, differ a good deal in efficiency; but the majority of them rank as high as could be reasonably expected in the circumstances in which they are conducted. The chief unfavourable circumstances are five in number: (1) classes too big for the powers of one teacher, (2) employment of unclassified teachers, (3) too frequent change of teachers, (4) irregularity of attendance, (5) premature promotion.

The question of the number of children that can be educated (we do not say "taught") by one teacher is a very important one, and one that has not been duly considered by those who have the ordering thereof—that is, those who control the public purse, not the officials of the Education Department. It is all very well on paper to take the number of teachers and pupil-teachers, divide this into the average attendance of the colony, and say: Average number of pupils per teacher=31.3; but, when the question is worked out from the facts as they exist in the class-rooms, the answer tells another story.

In 30 per cent. of the schools of the colony the average attendance was in 1904 under twenty-one in 50 per cent. it was under thirty-one, and in 80 per cent. under seventy-one. In the rest the average ranged from seventy-one to 750, and it is in these that the average number of pupils per teacher is so greatly in excess of the number given by the Department, and of what is required for all-round first-class efficiency. The average attendance of the 351 schools to which reference is here made was 75,779, and the number of adult teachers allowed by the regulation 1,269; the average number of pupils per teacher was therefore about sixty. The average attendance was to the roll-number as 85 to 100, hence the average number of pupils on the roll per teacher was about seventy. Any one who will take the trouble to visit our large schools, whether in Dunedin or elsewhere, will find that these figures are in substantial agreement with the facts. He will find most of the assistants teaching enormous classes, a small proportion of the pupil-teachers doing routine work under assistants, but the bulk of them helping the mistress in the infant-room, the very place where youth and inexperience should find no place on the teaching-staff. If all the pupil-teachers were employed with the mistress, there is not in Dunedin an infant department but would be inadequately staffed for the kinds of work such departments are now, and rightly, expected to do. Unfortunately, the new regulations for the employment of pupil-teachers will aggravate the evil, for under them a large proportion of pupil-teachers will serve two