

In some small schools—attended perhaps by a score of children—programmes have been adopted which were long enough for schools of five hundred. In most cases, too, these elaborate programmes have been faithfully and exhaustively carried out—every jot and tittle has been religiously gone through—but such a result has only been achieved by an altogether undue pressure and strain upon both teacher and pupil. The syllabus was not devised for the purpose of killing off our teachers. Quality, rather than quantity, is the thing to be desired, and it is infinitely more important that the programme should be of practical dimensions and intelligently carried out than that teachers should attempt to cover the whole range of the syllabus in a brief twelve months.

It is fitting that expression should be here given to the great loss to education sustained by the deeply lamented death of the late Inspector Smith. Well-merited tributes to his memory and his work have already been paid by the Board, the teachers, and the Press. I need only place on record here—what has been so often stated before—that he loved his work and threw himself into it with whole-hearted enthusiasm, and that he carried out the difficult and delicate duties attaching to his position with a tact, considerateness, and sympathy that made him esteemed by all.

I have, &c.

The Chairman, Education Board, Greymouth.

E. A. SCOTT, Inspector.

WESTLAND.

SIR, —

Education Office, Hokitika, 12th February, 1907.

I have the honour to present a report on the general work of the schools for the year 1906. The tables attached to the report embody information relating to the examination of thirty-three public schools and five Catholic schools. Separate special reports have been presented with reference to the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School, the pupil-teachers, the candidates for the Board's scholarships, two school classes in woodwork, and special classes in woodwork and commercial subjects.

The following table presents information relating to annual examinations :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	48	48	15 9
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	77	73	13 5
" V	...	...	...	...	...	100	95	13 2
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	91	90	12 2
" III	...	...	...	...	...	108	106	11 6
" II	...	...	...	...	...	116	115	9 9
" I	...	...	...	...	...	128	126	9 1
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	379	347	6 8
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	1,047	1,000	11 5*

* Mean of average age.

The number of pupils in the Preparatory classes over eight years of age is sixty-three, a reduction of eleven on that of the previous year. The pupils in standards have in general been promoted in the whole work of each class, and the only variation that appears is the retention of seventeen in a lower class in arithmetic.

In the report for the previous year reference was made to the necessity for maintaining a fuller school year, and it is a subject of regret to find that the conditions in this respect are for the past year still more unsatisfactory. If the vacations allowed by the Board's regulations are deducted, a school year of 440 half-days remain. This number must be further reduced by a reasonable number of single holidays, and a net school year of 420 half-days may be considered satisfactory. The laxity disclosed in the returns of some of the schools points to the necessity for drawing the attention of a number of the School Committees and teachers to the urgent necessity for improvement. The inference is either that the regulations relating to the allotment of vacations have not been followed or that the number of single holidays have been far too numerous, and the result must of necessity be injurious to the welfare of the pupils. The reduction in the annual time given to school-work must cause difficulty in covering the requirements of the course of instruction, and when failure in this is not the result, overstrain in the daily work and an undue reliance on homework must characterize the operations of the year. The evil that calls for special emphasis is the granting of holidays on every pretext. This has the effect of unsettling the minds of the pupils, and produces deterioration in the power of concentration and in the habits of industry that is detrimental to true education. It is only the very satisfactory regularity of the attendance that renders possible the commendable degree of efficiency maintained in the majority of the schools. The estimate of the true value of the training of the pupils cannot, however, be based solely on the results of the annual examination. The conditions under which those results have been achieved must also be taken into account, and every effort should be made to avoid the evils of over-pressure.