

## SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 19th March, 1908.

We have the honour to present our report for the year ended 31st December, 1907.

One hundred and sixty-five public and eight Catholic schools were examined, but, owing to the fact that many duties incidental to our Department, but more or less unconnected with the formal work of inspection and examination, made heavy demands on our time, we found it impossible to inspect all the schools in the district, as required by the departmental regulations.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	201	178	14 10
" VI	...	...	...	...	789	768	13 8
" V	...	...	...	...	983	945	12 10
" IV	...	...	...	...	1,175	1,129	12 1
" III	...	...	...	...	1,191	1,141	10 11
" II	...	...	...	...	1,209	1,168	9 11
" I	...	...	...	...	1,084	1,031	8 10
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	3,273	2,969	7 0
Totals	...	...	...	...	9,905	9,329	11 3*

\* Mean of average age.

Reviewing the year's operations broadly, we are able to say that the teachers, with very few exceptions, have been entirely conscientious in the discharge of their duties, and that, notwithstanding serious interruptions due to epidemics and other untoward circumstances, encouraging progress has been made in the work of primary education in this district. Though comparative deductions from statistics are apt to be misleading, the favourable opinion above expressed receives some indorsement from the fact that the percentage of pupils that qualified for proficiency certificates is slightly higher than for the preceding year.

We regret exceedingly that the time available for the work of inspection in this district is now too limited to enable even one unannounced visit to be paid to all the schools under the Board's jurisdiction; for it seems clear to us that inspection visits, while useful in the main as affording opportunities for friendly conferences between Inspectors and teachers, must, if they are to be wholly effective, remain as far as possible not only in name, but in reality "visits of surprise." It is the duty of the Inspector no doubt, by advice, by encouragement, by precept and sympathy, to make the most of the natural and acquired powers of every teacher in the Board's service; it is equally his duty, when all these moral forces fail, to report to the Board idleness, incompetence, and incapacity; and both duties, in our opinion, can best be fulfilled as the results of visits paid without notice previously given, either officially or unofficially. The good teacher, who has his arrangements for the year well in hand, will not resent—nay, will rather welcome—such visits; while the careless or procrastinating teacher may be inspired in time with a wholesome horror of detection. But since, unfortunately, our time was too limited to allow of the inspection of every school in the district, we devoted the greater part of the time available to visiting schools in charge of young and more or less inexperienced teachers. It was not, of course, possible to spend more than one day in each of the smaller schools, but we felt strongly that a single day rarely sufficed to do all that the circumstances rendered desirable, or that the departmental regulations prescribe. A few hours are quite inadequate for observing methods, criticizing defects, and giving lessons to illustrate the proper educational aim of every subject. In some cases where young teachers were found to be altogether at sea arrangements were made for their attendance at other schools of similar grade, but under more competent management. In this way much good resulted. Indeed, so convinced are we that such visits help weak teachers very materially towards a clearer comprehension of the suggestions and criticisms made on their own work by the Inspector that we are inclined to subscribe to the proposal that every teacher should, in the course of the year, visit at least one school other than his own. There are, truly, practical difficulties to be met with in putting this scheme into operation; but the difficulties do not appear to us to be insuperable, while the good that would accrue, even to the capable teacher, is undoubted.

In a district such as Southland, where, exclusive of pupil-teachers, five out of every twelve teachers do not hold a departmental certificate, and are either quite untrained or only partially trained, the efforts made in the schools to cope with the provisions of the syllabus exhibit great disparity of results. The more intelligent teachers—and they are by no means a minority—have realised that the syllabus places in their hands a potent instrument for good, and have been stimulated to fresh study of a kind that is rich in promise for the future. There is evidence that these teachers are getting into more sympathetic touch with their pupils, and that the children themselves are finding school life pleasanter than it used to be—and certainly not less profitable because it is pleasanter. Other teachers, however—some of whom, we regret to say, rank fairly well in the list of certificated teachers—are slow in breaking away from old traditions; and, forgetting that