

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Education Office, Dunedin, 31st March, 1914.

We have the honour to submit our annual report on the work of the schools of this district for the year 1913.

The following table shows the number of pupils on the roll, the number present at the annual visit, and the average age of each class for the whole district :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
							Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	383	356	15 1
" VI	...	...	...	...	1,265	1,230	14 0
" V	...	...	...	...	1,957	1,924	13 2
" IV	...	...	...	...	2,285	2,237	12 3
" III	...	...	...	...	2,613	2,564	11 3
" II	...	...	...	...	2,592	2,541	10 2
" I	...	...	...	...	2,656	2,594	9 0
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	7,721	7,304	6 11
Totals	...	...	...	...	21,472	20,750	9 10*

\* Mean of average age.

A comparison of the above table with the corresponding one in our report of 1912 shows that the roll number has increased in all classes except Standard II, and that there has been a slight fall in the average ages of the pupils of each class except those of Standard IV and Class P. With one exception these average ages are slightly below those recorded for the Dominion in the Minister's report for last year.

Inspection visits were paid to all the primary schools in the district with the exception of two, one of which was closed at the date of the announced visit in order to enable the teacher to attend the teachers' training classes held in November and December. During the winter months teachers' training classes in various subjects were held in Dunedin and Oamaru, and during the months of November and December continuous courses were held in Dunedin to enable teachers to prepare for the Department's certificate examinations in January. With three exceptions the students attending these courses were regular in attendance, and the instructors report that on the whole the students devoted themselves to their work with satisfactory zeal. The results of the January examination just to hand show that the courses have proved beneficial to most of the students. In connexion with these courses we have to express our indebtedness to those teachers who cheerfully came forward to assist their fellow-workers in their aim at self-improvement. To Dr. Church and Dr. Fitzgerald, and to the demonstrators who assisted them in connexion with first-aid work, our thanks are specially due for their goodness in coming to our assistance under conditions that must have proved burdensome to them.

At the end of the year there were in the service of the Board ninety-seven unclassified teachers. Of these fifty-three possess no recognized examination status, six have passed the Matriculation Examination, two have partial success towards the first section for Class D, eighteen have partial success for the D or C certificate, and eighteen have completed the examination test for D or C, but are under twenty-one years of age or have not yet completed sufficient service to entitle them to classification. Of the fifty-three teachers without recognized examination status, at least sixteen have been upwards of three years in the Board's employ, and we are not satisfied that they have made reasonable efforts to improve their status. The remaining thirty-seven are for the most part recent entrants in charge of very small schools.

During the year the work of the schools was not so seriously affected by epidemics as it was in the preceding year, but we regret to record that the number of teachers who had to be relieved from duty on account of illness was somewhat unusual.

*Medical Inspection.*—In this district practically all the schools of Grade IV and upwards have been visited by Dr. Ada G. Paterson, the Department's Medical Inspector stationed in this district. It is a matter of regret that, owing to the unusually heavy demands made upon the staff of the Department of Public Health, resulting from epidemic in the north, Dr. Paterson was unable to carry on her work in the schools without interruption. We are pleased to record that our teachers have co-operated heartily with the Medical Officer in compiling the necessary statistical work. They have recognized that the work is in its initial stage, and have done their best to assist. We can testify from personal knowledge to good results following from the doctor's visits, and to the fact that parents are eager to have and willing to follow her advice.

*Buildings, Grounds, &c.*—Throughout the district Committees continue to maintain a keen interest in the work of the schools, and in the care and preservation of buildings and fences. In too many cases, however, we find the schools left unlocked, and too little regard paid to the care of blinds and the closing of windows at night. Steady increase is shown in the number of grounds that are being improved by local effort, and a pleasing feature of this work is the attention being given to the planting of native shrubs. At some of our school gardens a considerable number of forest and ornamental trees are being reared under the directions of the Agricultural Instructors, and before long it will be possible to distribute them among the schools for