

work by the Inspector. The interest displayed by the teachers in attendance was most gratifying, and it is hoped that much good will result from the fortnight's work. The number of teachers who took advantage of the provision of free tuition by correspondence in connection with their certificate examination-work was very small compared with the number so working during the previous year, and it would seem that an arrangement for the engagement of local coaches would meet with the approval of candidates and would be attended by better results.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Grey Education Board.

WM. S. AUSTIN, Inspector of Schools.

WESTLAND.

Sir,—

Education Board Office, Hokitika, 28th January, 1915.

I have the honour to present the annual report for the year 1914, on the work of the primary schools of the district, including five private schools. Separate reports have been presented on the secondary classes of the Hokitika District High School.

A summary of the numbers and average age of the pupils at the end of the school year is supplied in the following table:—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	
								Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	68	65	15	0
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	80	76	13	10
" V	...	...	...	...	...	120	115	13	0
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	113	109	12	1
" III	...	...	...	...	...	123	116	11	3
" II	...	...	...	...	...	133	123	9	4
" I	...	...	...	...	...	148	138	8	9
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	470	428	6	10
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	1,255	1,170	9	9*

* Mean of average age.

Attendance.—The conditions under which the schools have been in operation have not been as favourable as usual. During the last half of the year a great deal of sickness has been prevalent throughout the district, and this cause, together with exceptionally bad weather during the same period, has resulted in a fall of the average attendance to 87.9 per cent. of the average roll, as against 90.2 per cent. for the previous year. It has also had the effect of reducing the length of the actual school year. Ten schools failed to remain open on 400 half-days, and only five recorded as many as 420 half-days.

Efficiency.—The chief feature in this district is the large proportion of schools under sole teachers, the number being twenty-seven out of thirty-six schools. Fifteen of the teachers are without special qualification or experience, and most of these have no ambition to advance, by obtaining certificates, to more important positions. Six have teachers' certificates, and six others have passed examinations of a higher grade than the proficiency certificate. There has been a number of changes, and the schools suffer accordingly while novices are gaining even local experience. It is for such reasons that the small schools require constant supervision, and that the teachers have to receive frequent direction in their work. Much of this direction has been given by advice as to method and by the supply of specimen schemes of work. The teachers have, further, been required to forward for inspection the corrected test exercises of the pupils. Efforts have been made, as a result of the receipt of a special grant from the Education Department, to assist such teachers by means of correspondence lessons to improve their status, but very few have availed themselves of the opportunity. The scattered position of the schools and the absence of funds for the purpose have rendered it impossible to establish observation schools to provide other means for the training of inexperienced teachers. Of the schools with a staff of more than one teacher, one has been recorded as satisfactory, three as good, and four as very good. The schools under sole teachers of the new second grade—that is, from twenty upwards—also range from satisfactory to very good. The general condition of all these schools may therefore be regarded as very satisfactory. The schools in the Grades 0 and I at the end of the year numbered twenty. Of these, six failed to obtain a satisfactory record and seven presented good results, the remainder being satisfactory. It is hardly to be expected that greater efficiency can be achieved in view of the conditions under which these small schools are working. The majority of the five private schools are recorded as good or very good, and all were at least satisfactory.

Certificates.—The number of pupils in the Sixth Standard at the end of the year was eighty, and five others had left school after presenting themselves for examination. Of the eighty-five pupils, fifty-five, or nearly 65 per cent., were awarded proficiency certificates, and eight, equal to 9 per cent., obtained competency certificates. Of the fourteen candidates from private schools presented for certificates, ten obtained the higher and two the lower certificate. When it is considered that a number of pupils in Standard VI prepare the arithmetic only of Standard V