

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 28th January, 1916.

We have the honour to submit our annual report for the year ended 31st December, 1915.

At the beginning of the year 100 schools (including two half-time schools) were in operation, and during the year a side school was established at Vogeltown and two household schools were opened at Astwood and Pehu. In addition to the public schools, six Catholic schools, two private schools, and the primary departments of the Boys' and Girls' High Schools were visited.

The following table shows for each of the standard classes the number on the roll and the number present at the annual examination :—

					Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.
Standard VII	..	..	..	..	152	152
„ VI	...	..	..	..	421	418
„ V	...	..	..	..	597	585
„ IV	..	..	..	..	712	699
„ III	..	..	..	..	825	811
„ II	..	..	..	..	812	791
„ I	..	..	..	..	735	717
Preparatory	..	..	..	..	2,264	2,146
Totals	..	..	..	..	6,518	6,319

Compared with the return for 1914, the roll number shows an increase of 127, while there has also been an increase of 170 in the number present at the annual examination.

Catholic Schools.—The following is the summary of examination results for each of the Catholic schools examined and inspected by us. [Not printed. The table shows six convent schools inspected; roll, 478; present at annual examination, 455; certificates of proficiency, 12; certificates of competency, 2.]

Results.—The following table shows the State schools that gained the highest results for 1915. [Not printed.]

Environment.—We are pleased to be able again to report that it is evident from the marked improvement in the grounds and general surroundings of many of our schools that teachers continue to recognize the important part that environment plays in the education of the child. The shield presented in 1909 by the late Mr. Tisch to encourage schools to improve their surroundings was this year secured by the Korito and the Mahoe Schools (equal) after a very keen competition.

Manual and Handwork Subjects.—In all our schools, with the exception of one or two of the very smallest, handwork in some form or other has been taken up. Teachers have at length realized that handwork is to be treated not as a subject, but as a method of teaching many of the existing subjects, and that the object aimed at is not the mere acquiring of manual dexterity, but rather the acquisition of a mental and moral equipment. The subjects usually chosen are paper-folding, cardboard-modelling, carton-modelling, and brick-laying. In addition to the ordinary handwork subjects, instruction has been imparted in woodwork, cookery, agriculture, dairy-work, physiology and first aid, physical measurements, advanced needlework, botany, chemistry, ironwork, surveying, and laundry-work. At three centres—New Plymouth, Inglewood, and Stratford—there have been established schools fully equipped and staffed for providing instruction in woodwork and cookery. Close on six hundred children from the neighbouring schools attend these classes.

Rural Classes and District High School.—[See E.-6, Report on Secondary Education.]

Agriculture and Dairy-work.—Instruction in elementary agriculture is being given in most of the schools of the district, and it is satisfactory to know that the primary object of such instruction—viz., the awakening of an intelligent interest in the problems of agricultural life and work amongst the pupils—is being gradually attained. One pleasing feature of the work of the year is the increase in the number of schools which have established classes in agriculture; another being the marked improvement effected in the methods employed and work done in a number of places where instruction was already being given. During the winter vacation the instructor took about a score of teachers to the Government Experimental Farm at Moumahaki, where they spent a profitable week under favourable conditions, receiving theoretical and practical instruction in the various departments of agricultural work represented there. Some at least of those who paid that visit will have carried away impressions which will never be effaced. Another important feature of the year's work has been the establishment at Stratford of an experimental area comprising 2 acres of land (in addition to the plots adjacent to the school), where pupils not only of the Stratford School but those from other schools receive instruction under the personal supervision of the instructor. The schools that have so far benefited by this arrangement are Whangamomona, Pohokura, Huiroa, Douglas, Matau, Huiakama, Toko, and York Road, from which nearly forty pupils have come, forming classes in practical agriculture and dairy science, which were held on Saturdays. In order to stimulate interest in the agricultural work in the primary schools, Mr. T. Cuthbert, of Pembroke Road, who has on many former occasions shown his very keen interest in the subject, has presented a "challenge shield" for competition amongst the schools. Valuable contributions of manures and seeds for use in the school-gardens have been made by several well-known firms, whose generosity in this respect is very much appreciated.

Training of Teachers.—During the course of the year Saturday classes for the training of teachers were again held at New Plymouth and Stratford. Instruction was given in hygiene, home science, cardboard-work, geography, history and civics, mathematics, English, and school method. The following are the roll numbers of each class: New Plymouth—Cardboard-work, 22; home science, 8; hygiene, 15; geography, 2; school method, 1; history and civics, 2; English, 1; mathematics, 2; drawing, 17.