

NELSON.

SIR,

Nelson, 31st May, 1920.

We have the honour to submit our annual report on the schools of the Nelson Education District for the year 1919.

One hundred and thirty-two schools were open for instruction, though four of the smallest of these were closed before the end of the year. There were in addition eight side schools, two half-time schools, and four secondary departments of district high schools. When the number of these and of private schools, &c., is added we find that in all there were 161 schools subject to our inspection. Visits of inspection were paid to all but fourteen of these, and twenty-nine others we were able to reach only once in the year. Some of those unvisited were closed at the time of the Inspector's visit to that part of the district, and one was opened after it. By the closest concentration upon the work of inspection and the omission of no single working-day we have hitherto attempted to inspect every school in the district once between the middle of June and the end of the year. Our experience now shows that with other numerous duties devolving upon us our limited staff is unable to inspect adequately all the schools of the district twice in the year. We consider that the time devoted to each school has already been reduced to the minimum, and that even so we cannot hope to reach all, and so have made application for an increase of staff.

Private Schools.—The roll number of the private and special schools inspected was 841, 772 being present at the annual examination. Ninety-three candidates presented themselves for the S6 examination, and 44 proficiency and 29 competency certificates were obtained. In our estimate of the efficiency of the instruction five schools were classed "good," two "satisfactory to good," two "satisfactory," and one "fair to satisfactory."

Public Schools.—The following table taken from the Inspector's annual return shows the number of pupils in the various standard classes :—

					Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.
Standard VII	..	..	..	..	177	167
„ VI	..	..	..	..	546	541
„ V	..	..	..	..	689	673
„ IV	..	..	..	..	754	746
„ III	..	..	..	..	872	850
„ II	..	..	..	..	888	861
„ I	..	..	..	..	854	830
Preparatory	..	..	..	..	2,295	2,197
Totals	..	..	..	..	7,075	6,865
Totals for 1918	..	..	..	..	7,106	6,951

The number in S6 is fifty-five less than that of last year, but in other respects there is very little variation, the total being slightly lower than previously. The proportion of children in the preparatory classes is again slightly reduced, being now 32.4 per cent. of the total roll number for the district. Exceptionally fine weather was experienced during the year, and epidemics have not been general. Consequently there has been little interruption to school work, and the attendance shows such improvement that a high degree of regularity throughout the district has been attained. The yearly average attendance, 6,390, in itself a record, is 90.8 per cent. of the average weekly roll number.

	Number on Roll.	Proficiency Certificates gained.	Endorsed Competency Certificates.	Competency Certificates gained.	Percentage of Proficiency Certificates.
Private schools, &c.	106	48	7	25	45
Public schools—					
Centres	428	270	37	44	63
Not centralized	132	66	..	31	50
	560	336	37	75	60

Teachers.—There were in the employ of the Board on the 31st December 226 teachers, of whom ninety-three were uncertificated. Most of the latter were sole teachers, but the number of uncertificated assistants has also increased. During the first half of the year especially greater difficulty than ever was experienced in obtaining competent teachers, as very few qualified ones were offering for any position; consequently there was a considerable influx of uncertificated teachers into the lower grades of service. The status of the different classes of teachers is shown in the following table :—

	Certificated or Licensed.	Uncertificated.	Total.
Head teachers	36	..	36
Assistants	69	29	98
Sole teachers	28	64	92
	133	93	226
Totals for 1918	143	74	217

Twenty-three junior teachers and eighteen probationers were also employed. Of these only four were males, so that the increased allowances have not yet had much effect in attracting young men to enter the service.