

Discipline continues to be satisfactory on the whole. The majority of our teachers insure obedience, attention, and regularity in the ordinary work of their schools without any exercise of undue severity.

This record of the past year's work is, then, one that may fairly be said to afford sufficient evidence of substantial progress. It will, however, be seen, on referring to the schools classed as unsatisfactory, that a yet higher degree of efficiency may not unreasonably be expected in this district. It is not in the small schools that the most pronounced cases of failure occur. In ten of the sixteen schools in which attainments fall below the lowest level that can be recognised as satisfactory the staff is numerically so strong as to make the defects of instruction all the more inexcusable. One is staffed with five certificated teachers and six pupil-teachers; another with five certificated teachers and three pupil-teachers; three with a master, mistress, and three pupil-teachers; two with a master, mistress, and two pupil-teachers; and the remaining three have a master, mistress, and pupil-teacher each. And the most disappointing feature in each case is that the breakdown invariably takes place in the upper division of the school, where the best-remunerated labour is employed. Of 669 pupils presented in Standards VI.—III. only 315, or 47 per cent., passed the standard test, the rate of failure varying from 45 per cent. in the best of the ten to 64 per cent. in the worst. There were, of course, extenuating circumstances to account for the shortcomings in some instances, and these were duly set forth in the school reports; but it would be idle to pretend that our system of administration is anything like perfect when it allows so large a proportion of important schools to exist in an inefficient state. The fault seems to me to lie in the exercise of a dual control by the School Committees and the Board in appointing and removing teachers. At the moment of writing a disagreement has arisen between the two powers in making an appointment to the one post in the ten schools specified above from which a teacher has been dismissed in consequence of bad reports. The Board, on submitting the complete list of applicants to the School Committee, suggest that the election should lie between certain candidates. The Committee decline to have their choice limited, and recommend an outsider, whose appointment the Board refuse to confirm. And so the matter stands, with some probability that an inferior selection will eventually be made. Of even greater importance is the question of dismissing teachers. There are in the Board's service some teachers—few in number, I am glad to say, but occupying by no means insignificant positions—who year after year, in the performance of their duties, sail so perilously near the lowest water mark of meritorious effort that some day they must surely find themselves stranded high and dry without any chance of their being retained in office. Too frequently this contingency is removed beyond all reasonable limits of time owing to the want of unanimity between the Board and the Committee concerned. To remedy such defects of administration the Board must, in my judgment, practically retain in their own hands the control of appointments and dismissals.

The merits and demerits of the work of instruction in the various subjects prescribed by the syllabus have been so fully discussed in the reports of the three preceding years that I refrain on the present occasion from offering any further criticism of these topics.

I have, &c.,

L. B. WOOD, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, North Canterbury.

2. DR. ANDERSON'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 15th March, 1889.

I have the honour to present a report on the work of the past year. The usual duties have been undertaken in connection with the inspection and examination of schools, the compilation of results, and the examination of pupil-teachers and candidates for scholarships.

INSPECTION.—The discussion of certain matters of exceptional importance to the district, either referred by the Board to its Inspectors or otherwise arising, left the work of inspection late in beginning. In the distribution of schools for the year, forty-six, having a roll number of 9,181 children, and consisting of the city schools, a small group in the neighbourhood of Lincoln, and those to the south of the Rakaiia, were assigned to me. These, with the exception of one closed for diphtheria, were inspected in accordance with the Regulations, the reports dealing with the subjects of distribution of staff, time-tables, methods and quality of instruction, order and discipline, buildings, registers, &c. Special recommendations were also periodically made on the organization of the Normal School.

EXAMINATION.—The examination of schools occupied substantially the second half of the year. The schools inspected and the schools examined, roughly speaking, correspond. In all fifty-four schools were examined by me—forty-seven separately, and seven, including the five largest schools of the district, in conjunction with my colleague, Mr. Hogben, the total roll number at the time of examination being 9,919. Of the forty-seven schools examined separately four, with a total of 256 attendants, were not under the Board's control, and were examined merely through the courtesy and by the direction of the Board. They are therefore not included in the tables of results given below. These tables are accompanied by a few comments; but I purpose referring in this report to matters in connection with inspection chiefly. The customary liberty is taken of including suggestions or opinions not strictly of the nature of a report.

TEACHING STAFF.—The necessity of retrenchment led in the early part of the year to a review of the basis on which our school staffs were organized, and to the adoption of an amended scheme, the chief features of which were: (1) An increase in the proportion of adult teachers as compared with pupil-teachers; (2) a relative improvement in the status of mistresses in charge of infant departments, and the substitution of second masters for what were called "head mistresses" in certain classes of schools; and (3) a small rise in the increment of average attendance entitling the