

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. mos.
S 7	10	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	64	6	1	20	37	14 5
S 5	136	10	2	35	89	13 3
S 4	206	27	7	68	104	12 6
S 3	234	25	8	35	166	11 0
S 2	265	19	5	37	204	9 11
S 1	252	21	4	18	209	8 7
P.	557	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	1,724	108	27	213	809	*

* Mean of average age, 11 years 7 months.

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit my fourteenth annual report on the primary schools in the Westland District:—

The number of schools in operation during the past year was the same as at the date of my last report—namely, twenty-four, all of which, with one exception, have been examined, and nearly all have received one or more visits of inspection. The Lower Kokatahi School was closed by the Committee at the time fixed for the examination, and the circumstances under which it was closed are well known to your Board. The number of children on the rolls of the schools examined was 1,790, and of these 1,181, or 66 per cent., were presented in standard classes. This is about 1 per cent. more than the proportion existing between the corresponding figures for 1887. The percentage of passes on the roll number this year was 45·2, as against 45·7 in 1887; and the percentage of passes on the number actually examined was 77, as against 79 for the year 1887—a decrease of 2 per cent. As it is manifestly impossible that an improvement can be recorded every year (or otherwise our schools must by this time have approached absolute perfection), it is not necessarily a subject of regret that so much (I might almost say so little) of the educational results of the year's work as comes within the grasp of mere statistics should exhibit the decrease above indicated, or even a greater one. If it could be shown that this, or any slight lessening of the percentage of passes, was fairly distributed throughout the schools of the district, there would be room for nothing but satisfaction, since so small an increase might easily occur through a slight difference in the nature of the examination. It will, however, be found, upon a careful consideration of the detailed statements appended to this report, that this is far from being the case, the percentage of failures (leaving out very small schools) ranging from 5 per cent. at Woodstock to 86 per cent. at Upper Kokatahi.

Now, although, in common with all who have had many years' experience in the examination of public schools, I have always felt, and frequently expressed in my reports, that the most carefully-contrived system of examination by standards is, after all, but a rough and ready test of the amount of instruction imparted, and only affords indirect evidence of the value of the true education enjoyed by the pupils, yet I have rarely or never found satisfactory evidence of the latter to be attended by a serious falling off in the results of the application of the examination test; and I think it is not unreasonable to expect that under ordinarily favourable conditions no school should be considered as having given satisfactory proofs of its practical efficiency that produces more than 25 per cent. of failures, as calculated under the Government regulations, in which provision is made for the exception of children failing whose attendance has been very irregular. This is supposing that the class and additional subjects have also received a fair amount of attention; otherwise a much lower percentage of failures should be expected. Judging by this standard, and exclusive of any extenuating circumstances, there are ten schools that have failed to come up to even these moderate requirements. Of these, however, six are very small schools under sole teachers, some of whom are so miserably paid that one is almost tempted to say that the results are quite equivalent to the amount paid for them. But, although the individual teacher's remuneration is wretched, yet the cost to the State of the scholars that pass is comparatively enormous. As a rough method of illustrating this, let us suppose that the cost of the scholars who pass is nine-twentieths of the amount paid in salaries (and this is about the ratio of the passes to the roll number), then the cost per pass at the different schools is approximately as follows, where the schools are arranged according to the ascending scale of cost: Kumara, £2 2s. 3d.; Hokitika, £2 7s. 2d.; Gillespie's, £2 11s. 7d.; Okura, £2 16s. 3d.; Stafford, £3 2s. 11d.; Waitangi, £3 15s.; Wanganui, £4 10s.; Bruce Bay, £4 10s.; Rangiriri, £4 17s. 6d.; Upper Kokatahi, £21 5s. 3d.; Ross, £2 4s.; Woodstock, £2 7s. 8d.; Donoghue's, £2 12s. 10d.; Blue Spur, £3 1s. 10d.; Goldsborough, £3 4s. 7d.; Kanieri, £4 7s. 7d.; South Beach, £5 12s. 6d.; Waikukupa, £5 12s. 6d.; Arawata, £14 12s. 6d.; Lake Brunner, £33 15s. This comparison, so far as it goes, is, if anything, somewhat in favour of the smaller schools, on account of the number of children in Class P. at the larger schools, which also