

to his present classification. At three schools, however, which had each been twice inspected previously during the year, we held pass examinations of all standard classes. The results at two of them went far to justify the head teacher's classification, and gave us much more reason for being satisfied with his discretion than we had been at the previous inspection visits. All Sixth Standard pupils were again examined by us for certificates either at their own schools at the inspection visit or at special centres in November or December. The following centres were made: Nelson Girls', Nelson Boys', Technical School Nelson, Wakefield, Motueka, and Westport. In order to make as little alteration as possible in our form of procedure at inspection visits, we have at the first visit dealt mainly with such matters as the marking and keeping of registers, regularity of attendance, time-tables, order and discipline, state of buildings grounds and fences, school accommodation, cleanliness and tidiness of rooms and premises, school material and apparatus, class-books used in school instruction given to pupil-teachers, &c. At the second visit we have paid special attention to the discretion displayed in the grouping of classes, the classification of the pupils, the determining of the promotions from class to class, the organization, the suitability of schemes of work, and the method and quality of the instruction given.

One hundred and four schools were inspected by us, and, as usual, most of them were visited twice.

The following schools under other control than that of the Board have also been inspected in the early part of the year:—

	Number on Roll.	Present.
St. Mary's Boys', Nelson .. .. .	56	43
St. Mary's Girls', Nelson .. .. .	52	48
St. Mary's Orphanage, Nelson .. .. .	55	51
Nelson College, preparatory .. .. .	25	23
Nelson Girls' College, preparatory .. .. .	11	11
Stoke Industrial (boys) .. .. .	92	88
St. Mary's High School, Westport .. .. .	25	21
St. Canice's, Westport .. .. .	213	180
Sacred Heart, Reefton .. .. .	67	56
Totals .. .. .	596	521

Zephyr Lodge (twenty), and Cabragh House (fifteen)—private schools, Nelson—were also inspected when the examinations for certificates were being held, but St. Mary's Orphanage and Stoke Industrial were not revisited. The totals at the later inspections were 555 and 548. There were in all, then, 699 private-school pupils either inspected or examined by us. Sixty-three were presented in Standard VI, and thirty-seven proficiency and seventeen competency certificates were granted. The general work of six of the schools was classed "satisfactory to good," and of one "good."

On different occasions twenty-two candidates who were not on the rolls of the schools undergoing inspection took advantage of the opportunity to present themselves for examination in Standard VI. Five proficiency and ten competency certificates were gained. We have, besides, held four special examinations, at which twenty-nine candidates presented themselves. The number of certificates obtained was seventeen proficiency, ten sixth competency, and one fifth competency. (A special examination may be held at any convenient time on payment of the regulation fee, which varies according to the number of the candidates.)

The average weekly number on the rolls for September quarter was 5,734, again higher (this time by thirty-six) than for the corresponding quarter of last year. This is the highest return for that quarter since the year 1900, the total number of children in attendance having increased during the last two years. The teachers' returns show that the number on the rolls of the schools at the time of the annual examinations was 5,795, and of these 5,540 were present. Except for increases at Westport of thirty-one, at Granity of twenty-nine, at Summerlea of eleven, and at Cape Foulwind of ten, no very marked alterations are to be noted in the number attending at individual schools, and the numbers lost by the closing of a few small schools have been more than counterbalanced by the opening of other household schools. The largest decreases are to be noted at Charleston, ten, and at Lyell and Dovedale, each nine.

Decided improvement in the regularity of the attendance is noticeable this year. The yearly average attendance, 4,992, is the highest yet recorded for this district, and is 86.9 per cent. of the average weekly number on the rolls. This also is the highest percentage yet attained, and as such represents the maximum degree of regularity with which the children of this district have attended school for any one year. Last year, with 85.8 per cent. of attendance, Nelson was bracketed with Taranaki and Wanganui as the lowest in the Dominion, so that in spite of the improvement it will probably stand badly in comparison with those districts in which good attendance is habitual. Otago, with 89.2 per cent. for 1908, still holds the premier position for regularity, and sets an example that is difficult to emulate. Fruit and hop-picking holidays throughout a large proportion of the district (some forty-five schools), however nicely adjusted, induce such a broken time before and after the holidays themselves, for the negligent and necessitous are continually allowing their children to stay away beforehand or return some days late, that in the matter of attendance we cannot hope to excel more favoured districts. Considerable improvement might be effected by the appointment of one of the Board's officials as truant officer, and instituting a system of monthly, or if necessity requires of weekly, returns from each head teacher to the office. We note that the Minister's report of last year shows that ten of the Boards have already paid truant officers. If moral suasion, instead of enforcing legal penalties, is still to be the general method adopted, an appeal to the Committee and teacher of a school at which the yearly attendance has been poor, urging upon them the necessity for encouraging