

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 31st March, 1910.

We have the honour to submit our report on the public schools of the South Canterbury District for the year 1909.

During the year there were eighty-one schools in operation, an increase of five from last year. Of the five schools making the increase, two were household schools, one of which at Middle Valley was closed again in September, and the other at Riverlands during its brief existence of six months had three changes of teachers. The schools at Cannington and Upper Waitohi Flat have been reopened after being closed for seven and three years respectively, and Allandale was opened in December.

With the exception of the new school at Allandale and the household schools, which were closed while we were in their neighbourhood, all the schools have been visited twice during the year. In addition to the public schools, we examined the five Roman Catholic schools in this district.

The following table shows the number of pupils on the roll of the public schools, the number present at the annual examination, and the average age of the pupils in each class :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	..	..	..	..	..	149	145	15 6
" VI	..	..	..	..	..	382	370	14 1
" V	..	..	..	..	..	540	510	13 2
" IV	..	..	..	..	..	617	596	12 1
" III	..	..	..	..	..	585	562	11 3
" II	..	..	..	..	..	649	631	10 2
" I	..	..	..	..	..	641	622	9 2
Preparatory	..	..	..	..	..	1,993	1,920	7 0
Totals	..	..	..	..	..	5,556	5,356	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

The figures in this table show for the year an increase of 150 in the roll-number and of 239 present at the annual examination.

The following is the summary for Roman Catholic schools :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of the Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	..	..	..	..	..	10	8	15 8
" VI	..	..	..	..	..	39	37	14 8
" V	..	..	..	..	..	39	37	13 5
" IV	..	..	..	..	..	53	48	12 10
" III	..	..	..	..	..	67	60	11 10
" II	..	..	..	..	..	60	58	10 10
" I	..	..	..	..	..	63	61	9 8
Preparatory	..	..	..	..	..	139	138	7 2
Totals	..	..	..	..	..	470	447	12 0*

* Mean of average age.

Promotions of children from class to class are made by the teachers, who for this purpose hold periodical examinations, the last of which is called the "annual examination." These examinations are based upon schemes of work drawn up by the teacher for all the classes in the school. For the sake of uniformity throughout the district, early in the year we issued registers in which a record of the nature and results of these examinations might be entered, each register containing full space also for the programmes of work and for a record of the work actually covered during each term. In the main we have found the marks duly entered, and a faithful attempt made to draw up suitable schemes of work. During the year it was found a difficult matter to cover the ground laid down for each term within the prescribed time on account of the attendance of the pupils being broken by an epidemic of measles from which few schools escaped. In the awarding of marks we still find the less efficient teachers disposed to be generous to a degree that we can find little warrant for in the work done for us during our visits; and the weaker the teacher the less critical he is. In the schools that we have classed as "moderate" in efficiency, the registers show almost universal promotions for the pupils. The head teachers of our large schools, and our experienced teachers generally, show discrimination in marking, and are exceedingly careful in granting promotion only where it is deserved.