

In our estimate of their efficiency we group the schools as follows: "Good to excellent," thirty-five schools, with 4,258 pupils; "satisfactory," twenty-five schools, with 785 pupils; "fair," twelve schools, with 396 pupils; "moderate" or "inferior," six schools, with 112 pupils. Of a total of seventy-eight schools reported on, sixty, with 4,943 pupils, are in a "satisfactory" condition, the remaining eighteen schools, with 508 pupils, ranking below "satisfactory." The corresponding figures last year were fifty-eight schools, with 4,887 pupils, and eighteen schools, with 509 pupils. With regard to the schools we have classed as "fair," there are good grounds for anticipating that some of them will advance to the next higher division, but no such anticipation can be indulged in so far as five out of the six schools classed as "moderate" or "inferior" are concerned, unless the teachers give place to others of a better stamp.

The number of adult teachers in the Board's service was 141, of whom twenty were uncertificated. Of the uncertificated teachers, ten were in charge of small schools of grade I; one was in a household school of five children, one was in a school of grade 3, and the others were female assistants. Though technically uncertificated, most of these teachers have had some experience, and have done something towards the attainment of their certificates, and two of them are graduates of the University of New Zealand. Holding their positions only as temporary teachers, those that are uncertificated must bestir themselves if they wish to remain in the service, for to all appearance there will soon be a sufficient number of certificated teachers awaiting engagement to whom the uncertificated will require to give place. Besides the adult teachers, twenty-six pupil-teachers and eight probationers were in the Board's service. For appointment as pupil-teachers and probationers candidates of a very fine type are coming forward. With one exception during the past two years, all have matriculated before appointment, and many fully qualify by examination for the D certificate by the end of their first year. We draw our supply from the high schools and from the district high schools, most of the candidates having attended the secondary classes in these schools for three or four years after obtaining their proficiency certificates in the primary schools. These young people are from seventeen to nineteen years of age at the beginning of their apprenticeship, and enter on their professional career under much happier conditions and with brighter prospects than did those of a few years back. The service is proving attractive enough to draw in some of the brightest boys from the secondary schools. Of the thirty-four pupil-teachers and probationers now serving, twelve are young fellows of good parts and good physique, whom we heartily welcome into the ranks of the profession.

In last year's report attention was called to the wide range in the number of times schools were open for instruction, and it was then stated that a special column in the summary would be set apart to show the number of times each school was open during the year. The figures as made up from the quarterly returns will be found in Appendix I. For schools that were in operation throughout the year the number of half-day attendances ranges from 344 to 439. With an allowance of eleven weeks in the year for holidays, there would remain 410 half-days for school-work. Last year the number of half-day attendances was 410 or over in twenty schools; this year a similar result has been attained in twenty-seven schools. Eleven schools show less than 380, and the average over all is 398. We commend this column to the careful consideration of the teachers. Some will read it with a glow of satisfaction; many with feelings of surprise, and perhaps some prickings of conscience; and all with the resolve to give a full year's work for a full year's pay, and with a desire that no epidemic will come along to spoil their efforts in the way the measles did this year. Several years ago this district held a higher place than it now does for regularity of attendance. It still holds a good place, but there is no apparent reason why it should not stand first in this respect. The district is well supplied with schools; we pride ourselves on the excellence of our roads; and no South Canterbury man will hear a word in disparagement of the climate. In 1908 Otago, Wellington, Southland, Marlborough, and Westland showed a higher standard of regularity of attendance than South Canterbury.

The examination of the pupils of Standard VI was conducted by us in the beginning of December, the examination being held at nine centres, to which the children came on the appointed days. Happily our district is so compact that the system of centralising for the Sixth Standard examination can be easily carried out, and we have so arranged that the work required from the pupils does not take up more time than that of an ordinary school-day. Of the 387 pupils who entered for the examination 376 were present, 230 gained certificates of proficiency, and ninety-three gained certificates of competency, the percentage of passes for the higher certificate being sixty-one and for the lower twenty-four. The corresponding percentages last year were sixty-six and twenty. From the Roman Catholic schools thirty-eight were presented, thirty-seven were present, twenty-one gained certificates of proficiency, and nine gained certificates of competency. It may be noted that the average age of Sixth Standard pupils is fourteen years one month in the public schools, and fourteen years seven months in the Roman Catholic schools. This central examination is looked forward to by the great majority of the pupils with the keenest interest, and we have observed that the boys and girls have a holiday air about them, and evince the elation of mind and joyous determination to excel that one associates with a gathering of pupils for a competition in school sports. The teachers generally are satisfied that their pupils do as well as if they were examined in their own schools; indeed, to many teachers it seems that the boys and girls of the Sixth, going forth as the élite to be examined in the company of others from neighbouring schools, are more on their mettle to do their best than if they faced the test in their everyday surroundings.

Our reports of the schools have dealt with the quality of the instruction in the various subjects that make up the school course, and on the whole these have been favourable. Wherever methods have been faulty and results unsatisfactory we have discussed matters with the teachers, and have done whatever we could to make straight the crooked ways of the inexperienced teachers and to make the rough places plain for the children. It is gratifying to find evidence from year to year of the establishment of a kindlier relationship between teachers and pupils. The closer in sympathy the teacher brings