

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 31st March, 1910.

We have the honour to submit our annual report for the year ending the 31st December, 1909. At the beginning of the year eighty-eight schools (including eight half-time schools) were in operation, and during the year new schools were established at Kina and Pukeho. The following table contains a summary of the examination-results :—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	106	100	Yrs. mos. 14 10
" VI	...	...	...	...	330	313	13 10
" V	...	...	...	...	474	455	13 3
" IV	...	...	...	...	629	602	12 1
" III	...	...	...	...	689	672	11 4
" II	...	...	...	...	668	631	10 3
" I	...	...	...	...	706	683	7 11
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	2,204	2,039	7 1
Totals					5,806	5,495	11 4*

* Mean of average age.

The mean of the average ages is virtually the same as that for last year.

Compared with the return for 1908, the roll-number shows an increase of 469, while the increase in the number present at the inspector's annual visit was 399.

STANDARD VII.—There has been a slight falling-off in the number of pupils in Standard VII. Those teachers in the smaller schools who undertake the self-imposed task of giving the children in the backblocks some of the advantages of a secondary education deserve every credit, and it is worth the consideration of the Department whether such teachers should not receive a special grant for the extra work they have so willingly undertaken.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.—The work done in these schools still continues to compare favourably with that done in the State schools of this district.

The following is a summary of examination-results for each of the Catholic schools examined and inspected by us :—

Convent Schools.	Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.	S6 Certificates granted.		Quality of the Instruction.	Order, Discipline, and Tone of the School.
			Proficiency.	Competency.		
New Plymouth ..	101	98	4	3	Good ..	Very good.
Inglewood ..	87	87	6	1	Satisfactory	Satisfactory.
Stratford ..	118	111	1	..	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory.
Opunake ..	65	59	..	..	Very fair..	Good.

READING.—In a number of our schools there has been a noticeable improvement in the treatment of this subject. Last year we had to report that many of the lessons we had seen given lacked that essential of any successful lesson, a definite predetermined and well-thought-out aim, and, as a consequence, we too often looked in vain to see special treatment given during the course of a lesson to any one of the elements of good reading. This year, however, more attention has been paid at least to the subsidiary features of the mechanism of reading, and more definite and intelligent methods have been adopted in order to secure purity of enunciation and readiness and correctness in syllabification. And it is pleasing to note that an increasing number of our more painstaking and earnest teachers, not content with teaching the merely mechanical side of reading, go beyond this stage, and set aside a time for special lessons on some of those principles of reading that tend towards elocutionary effect, such elements as pitch, volume, pause, or duration forming the subject of a lesson in itself. We are satisfied that until this practice of having a definite aim becomes more common the reading will fall far short of the standard that we wish to reach. Though, no doubt, the limited time at the disposal of the teacher makes it almost impracticable that in every reading-lesson the special aim should be rigidly followed, yet the departure from the predetermined plan should not be so great as to completely hide the aim that was intended to form the main subject of the lesson. Far too often, however, in the hands of our weaker teachers a reading-lesson resolves itself into a mere hearing-lesson. The teacher follows on the old traditional lines of hearing each individual pupil read a paragraph or portion of a paragraph, and then correcting in a more or less perfunctory fashion some of the errors that occur. Such purposeless treatment renders the lesson in a large measure lifeless and ineffective. No one denies that the pupils must have plenty of practice, but it should be methodical and intelligent practice, and not the mere repetition of words.