

Table II.—Thirty-five Registered Private Schools.

	Roll.	Present.	Average Age.	
			Yrs.	mos.
Standard VII	78	77	15	11
„ VI	402	384	14	4
„ V	375	360	13	6
„ IV	394	378	12	4
„ III	425	406	11	3
„ II	446	423	10	2
„ I	404	383	9	2
Preparatory	1,190	1,124	6	11
	<u>3,714</u>	<u>3,535</u>		

Table III.—Estimate of Efficiency.

Good to very good	80 schools.
Satisfactory to good	123 „
Fair to moderate	34 „
Inferior	6 „

The schools in which the work is recorded as less than satisfactory are, with three exceptions, small aided schools for which it has been impossible to find teachers with even a minimum experience. Of the 2,099 pupils on the S6 roll, 1,311 succeeded in gaining certificates of proficiency and 386 certificates of competency, or 62 and 18 per cent. respectively. The standard of efficiency of the district as a whole has been well maintained, though the effect of the closing of the schools early in November, 1918, owing to the epidemic, was noticeable in S1, and to a less extent in S6.

Criticisms and recommendations on the various subjects of the syllabus have been detailed in reports already submitted, but some matters call for special mention. While the essay-writing and composition in set subjects are, as a general rule, well done, and as a matter of fact in many cases show distinct literary taste and merit, we are unable to express similar satisfaction with the results of very simple tests in commercial correspondence. It is very evident that pupils need more systematic instruction in the wording and setting-out of ordinary business letters. Instruction and practice in essay-writing will not provide a substitute for this. It should be borne in mind also that one of the severest critics of our primary schools English is the ordinary business man, who forms his judgment not from the primary boy's formal essay or dictation exercise, but from his written answers to advertisements for vacancies in his office; and if these are anything like some specimens which have lately come under our notice we are not surprised at adverse criticism from a business man or anyone else. In arithmetic we find that inadequacy of oral treatment and neglect of mental processes are still too much in evidence. We admit that the average S6 arithmetic card is partly responsible for this, but it is to be hoped that the reforms in the new syllabus will give scope and opportunity for a more rational treatment of the subject.

Manual and Technical.—The senior instructor in agriculture reports favourably on the work done under his direction. In addition to the supervision by the Instructors of the work at six district high schools and 130 primary schools visits are paid to schools where the classes are too small for recognition for capitation. Instruction is also given in nature-study in the lower standards. One weakness in the organization of this branch still exists—viz., the inability of the majority of the district high school staffs to undertake the responsibility of the rural course instruction, the consequence being that the time of the agricultural instructors is too much occupied with the high-school classes to the detriment of the work in the smaller rural schools.

Good reports are to hand from the senior instructor regarding the woodwork and cookery classes. Seventy-nine primary and nine secondary classes received instruction in woodwork, scale drawing, and cookery; the secondary classes in addition took laundrywork and dressmaking, as also did two of the primary classes. In the matter of accommodation and equipment the new centre at Thorndon is meeting all requirements, but at Petone matters are in a most unsatisfactory condition, and the necessity for improved accommodation is urgent.

Organizing Teachers.—Two appointments were made in the latter part of the year, one organizing teacher working from Blenheim as a centre and one from Pongaroa. It is early to speak definitely on the working of the scheme, but judging from the reports of these teachers so far the results look promising.

Summer Schools.—Two very successful summer schools were held in December, one at Blenheim and one at Pongaroa. In each case a full report of the work and general conduct of the classes has been submitted to the Department. A larger school which it was proposed to hold at Masterton had to be abandoned owing to the curtailment of the railway service.

Staffing of Country Schools.—In common with other districts we are finding the greatest difficulty in properly staffing our country schools, the main cause being the lack of decent accommodation for the teachers, more especially the female teachers. While, for a junior position of £130 to £140 in a town there may be from twenty to thirty certificated applicants, frequently for positions of £160 to £200, and even of £210 to £240, in the country, there is not a single fully qualified applicant. Remedy might be found by increasing the board-and-lodging allowance of country teachers, or by giving special grading consideration for country service, or by compelling trainees to take up appointments in country districts; but in any case something must be done in the interests of the country children, as at present matters are fast reaching an acute stage.

We have, &c.,
 F. H. BAKWELL,
 F. G. A. STUCKEY,
 A. B. CHARTERS,
 D. A. STURROCK, } Inspectors.

The Director of Education.