

WELLINGTON.

SCHOOLS AND ROLL.

The roll numbers at the close of the year were—Public schools, 259 (26,925 pupils); registered private schools, 48 (4,899 pupils).

Classifying these schools according to their general efficiency as determined at our annual visit, we have—

	Very Good.	Good.	Satisfactory.	Fair.	Weak.	Total.
Public schools	11	97	99	33	9	249
Private registered schools	3	17	22	5	1	48
Totals	14	114	121	38	10	297

EXAMINATION OF STANDARD VI PUPILS.

Except in a few remote schools the examinations for certificates of proficiency were conducted by the Inspectors, the head teachers being consulted as to the merits of candidates. For a few remote schools a synchronous examination was arranged, the results being considered in conjunction with those obtained at the annual visit of the Inspector.

We are of opinion that some teachers are apt to overlook the fact that the pupil, in addition to gaining a specific percentage of marks, must show that he has reached a satisfactory standard of attainment in at least three of the other subjects in order to qualify for a proficiency certificate, and we take this opportunity of emphasizing this provision.

In regard to competency certificates, we have to report that we insist that special merit is shown before endorsement is granted, and we have required candidates in Standard VI to take the work presented in each subject for that standard.

EDUCATIONAL INVESTIGATION.

Standardized achievement tests have been used to a slight extent by teachers and to a considerable extent by the Inspectors. Arithmetic, spelling, silent reading, history, and geography were tested by these means, and, though the tests were not altogether free from the weaknesses inherent in the older type of examination, we have found them to have many advantages. The questions cover wide ground, the answers are short (usually one word), and only one correct answer is possible. It has been found that a reliable classification can be made by allotting a maximum of 50 per cent. of the marks to the "intelligence" test and 50 per cent. to tests of scholastic achievement. The cost of the materials prevents at present the general use of these tests, but this difficulty can be overcome if the Department can see its way to provide the necessary forms. By this means we consider that it would be possible to take a periodical stocktaking of the relative progress and proficiency of the school.

CLASSES FOR BACKWARD CHILDREN.

During the year two special classes were formed in Wellington City. The results so far have more than justified the venture. The teachers carry out their responsible and exacting duties with a missionary zeal which evokes a hearty response from the pupils. Children of this type find the work in an ordinary class to be beyond their capacity, and they are usually unhappy in school. The special class, with its stress on manual training, physical exercises, &c., provides a curriculum suited to the needs of the defective child, whose self-respect is increased by a sense of achievement, while he is happy among his intellectual equals under the control of a teacher who understands and sympathizes with his natural limitations.

We hope that in the near future all the mentally or physically handicapped children in the district—and the number is considerable—will receive an education which will do something towards lessening their disabilities and making them an asset rather than a liability to the community.

SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION.

The following remarks on various subjects of the curriculum are offered principally as suggestions for the guidance of teachers:—

Reading.—There are many schools in which the reading is very satisfactory: there is no reason why it should not be so in all, and in no case should it be merely a routine performance. "Too many teachers fail to realize that reading is the recognition of the script equivalent of the spoken word. Children should, from the beginning, realize that the writing is speaking to them silently. They fail to get the pupils to read for content. In reading aloud it is the phrase and not the word that is the unit. The matter should be studied first, and reading aloud should follow and not precede the comprehension by the pupil of the passage read." Further, we think that more careful attention should be given to secure correctness in enunciation and pronunciation. In not a few cases the final consonants are dropped altogether or merged into the next word, while the vowel sounds, particularly the sound of "i" are faulty. The exercises in speech-training and phonics such as are practised in the best infant departments should be continued through the standard classes.