

Recent developments in education have added greatly to the work of the Inspectors. In some districts there has been a substantial increase in the school population, and it is becoming necessary to strengthen some inspection staffs. The largest increase in roll numbers is in the Auckland district, where an increase of some 10,000 pupils has been recorded.

STANDARDS OF WORK

The importance of sound standards of work, especially in "tool" subjects, has been emphasized by the Inspectors of all districts. Special efforts or "drives" in such subjects as spelling, composition, and writing have been undertaken, and some districts report a definite improvement in the fundamental skills of English and arithmetic. One district, however, reports: "Frankly, we have been disappointed with much of the work in the basic subjects, but realize that many factors during the war period made for instability both in the staffs of the schools and amongst the children themselves. . . . From this it must not be inferred that teaching in the tool subjects in all our schools is poor, for there is much sound and creditable work being done, especially under experienced and dynamic head teachers."

During the past six years, schools have encountered considerable difficulties, of which the chief was staff changes arising mainly from war conditions. The syllabus of instruction has been under review, but unavoidable delays have occurred in issuing new text-books. Materials and equipment have been in short supply. No country perhaps has emerged from the recent crisis with less impairment to its educational system than New Zealand has. But this situation is not one that should be accepted with equanimity. There has been criticism of the work of our schools, and this must be considered in the spirit in which it is offered. The new prescriptions of work in written English and arithmetic place great emphasis on thoroughness, neatness, and accuracy, and there is nothing in content or method that can be construed as condoning careless, inaccurate work on the part of the pupils.

As an effective means of assisting teachers in obtaining good standards of work, it is intended to establish norms of attainment in basic subjects. In several districts initial steps in compiling tests for the various stages have been taken, and when the work is completed, suitable tests and appropriate norms will be available for teachers. Ultimately standardized tests for the whole Dominion can be provided. This work will take some time, as new prescriptions in certain subjects have been in use only for a short period, and in others—*e.g.*, spelling—the revised syllabuses have not yet been issued.

In such phases of school work as physical education, art, crafts, music, reading, and oral expression, substantial improvements are generally noted.

CHARACTER-TRAINING

The supreme purpose in education is character-training, and the whole life of the school should be directed towards this end. This is recognized in the schemes of work of every teacher. Contacts in class-room and playground, attitudes in sport, the team spirit, and behaviour in and out of school are well exploited. In most schools a good tone is in evidence, and some have built up fine traditions. Teachers, however, must constantly keep in mind the fundamental importance of the development of right attitudes in the everyday tasks of the class-room. In oral phases of instruction most schools succeed admirably and the children are responsive, courteous, and self-reliant. In written phases, however, it is only the good schools that really succeed. In these schools the teaching inculcates habits of good work, pride of achievement, and the desire to excel. The personality of the well-trained child expresses itself in careful, neat performance of the daily written tasks. Failure to develop desirable attitudes results in imperfect character-training.