

concord and government, though they are frequently unable to give reasons for their corrections. In our larger schools especially, grammar is becoming more and more the handmaid of composition and reading, to the improvement of all three subjects. Oral composition should be more freely practised, and answering in sentences should in the main be insisted on even in the lower standards.

In our larger schools and in some of our smaller schools science is satisfactorily taught. The teachers' science programmes provide a fair, in many cases even a large, amount of practical work. The elements of agricultural knowledge are generally taught in the country schools, but seldom satisfactorily. Most of the teachers have only such knowledge of the subject as can be acquired from text-books, and they teach it without enthusiasm and with poor results. There are great possibilities for our country schools in this subject, but they cannot be realised until provision is made for the instruction and training of those who are to teach it. A beginning has been made in cottage gardening, and we shall watch its development with much interest. The school cottage garden might be made an object lesson for the whole neighbourhood.

Singing is taught in almost every school. In most of the large schools and in a fair number of the small ones it is well taught; but in only a comparatively small number of them does it enter into the school life as it should. We cannot but condemn the infant-room management that does not make full and free provision for music, with and without marching and physical exercises.

The remaining subjects call for no special remarks.

As may be seen from the special reports on their work, the new district high schools have made a creditable beginning; and we are glad to be able to say that, notwithstanding the numerical inadequacy of the staffs, all the schools of this class are doing a large amount of good work. It is, however, our opinion that the Department's scale of staffs does not make adequate provision for district high schools, and in support of this view we may give an example. On inspection day there were present in one of those schools 193 pupils, grouped and taught as follows: (1.) Class P. (forty-eight pupils) and Standard I. (fifteen pupils), taught by the mistress, assisted now and then by the pupil-teacher. (2.) Standard II. (twenty-two pupils) and Standard III. (twenty-three pupils), taught by a female teacher. (3.) Standard IV. (nineteen pupils) and Standard V. (twenty-three pupils), taught by a male assistant. (4.) Standard VI. (ten pupils) and Standard VII. (thirty-three pupils—first- and second-year students), taught by the head master, assisted now and then by the pupil-teacher. No competent judge would, we venture to say, pronounce as adequate the staffing or grouping of (1) and (4). In our judgment, it is distinctly inadequate, and we have no doubt that the present head of the Department would be in entire agreement with this judgment. The secondary pupils even of the smallest district high school need the entire service of a competent teacher.*

In the district high schools there were 326 Seventh Standard pupils; in the Dunedin and suburban schools, 192 pupils; in the Oamaru, Pukeuri, and Weston Schools, twenty-one pupils; and beyond reach of high schools and district high schools, 144 pupils.

In our last report we urged that the Department should do for Dunedin children what it had done for those of the larger country towns—namely, make special provision for extending their instruction beyond the requirements of the Sixth Standard. At the end of the year, the work of which is now under review, the Department announced a scheme that provides such instruction for every pupil whose age does not exceed fourteen years on the 31st December following the date of his passing the Sixth Standard. This age-limit is, we think, a mistake, for it excludes from participation in instruction at the high schools a large number of boys and girls, many of whom are better equipped than are many of those whom the accident of beginning their school life at five years of age instead of at six or seven has enabled to pass the Sixth Standard at a lower age. Our contention has all along been that special provisions should be made for the more advanced instruction of all children who are willing to remain at school for a year or two after passing the Sixth Standard, and nothing short of this will, we consider, provide for the necessities of Dunedin and suburbs, where there are at present over five hundred Sixth and Seventh Standard pupils who, on the 31st December next, will be over fourteen years of age. Many of these will certainly wish to continue their education. What provision is to be made for them?

There yet remains the question of providing advanced instruction for the children who live beyond reach of high schools and district high schools, and whose needs we have set forth in previous reports, to which we beg to refer the Board. Should the Department not make provision for these children, modification of the scholarship regulations might, to a certain extent, meet their needs.

We have, &c.,

P. GOYEN,
W. S. FITZGERALD,
C. R. RICHARDSON,
C. R. BOSSENCE, } Inspectors.

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 12th March, 1903.

We have the honour to present our report for the year ended the 31st December, 1902.

The schools, with the exception of three—Half-moon Bay, Holmesdale, and Hokonui—were examined, and nearly all were inspected. Through stress of work we could not find time to visit Half-moon Bay in November, the usual date of examination. Holmesdale, a new school, had been

* The staffing of district high schools is a matter for the Boards, subject to the approval of the Minister.—
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION.