

were painted or in any way improved, and they now present a dullness and heaviness that ought not to exist in rooms where children assemble for instruction and training. Good environment is of great importance in the early associations of children, and it is again urged that the improvements recommended by me some time since be carried out so soon as funds are available. In some schools the desks are very old and worn, and worm-eaten. These should be renewed; but whenever the change is made the dual desk would replace the type of school desk now in use.

In most of the districts where schools have been erected the accommodation is sufficient for present wants. The marked falling-off in the attendance at schools like Napier (Main), Clive, Taradale, and Port Ahuriri, compared with the attendance of a few years ago, leaves these schools with an excess of accommodation, but generally the school provision is just sufficient for present requirements. Dannevirke South, Kiritaki, Mahora, and Mangapapa, a suburb of Gisborne, are perhaps the only places where extension of the present buildings is required; but there are still sixteen schools under the Board that are carried on either in hired buildings or in rooms that are provided rent-free by the settlers. In the majority of the sixteen districts the attendance is too small for the expectation that school provision will be made by the Board, but this does not apply to Port Awanui, Tokomaru, Mohaka, and Ngapaeruru, where the school attendance is such as to call for separate consideration, as each district named has suffered serious educational disabilities for years past.

Some difficulty is being experienced with the newly constituted Board of Health in consequence of defective latrines and drainage at some of the schools. It would save a good deal of expense and trouble if some arrangement were made between the Board's architect and the Health Officer as to the best and most economical means of providing latrines, drainage, and a good water-supply to the several schools under the Board. At most of the schools earth-closets are in use, but the drainage from the urinals is at times very bad, for the reason that little or no attention is paid to school hygiene in the construction and arrangement of school buildings.

Many improvements are noticeable in the school grounds. Committees that make an attempt to plant ornamental trees and shrubs for the beautifying of the school-surroundings and the enjoyment of the children are doing much good for the respective districts. At Woodville specimens of all the more important deciduous forest trees from the Home-land have been planted, and the example set has been followed in many other districts within the limits of the Seventy-mile Bush.

School gardens continue to flourish, and instruction is given by the teachers in three schools in gardening and elementary agriculture. Ormond, Matawhero, and Patutahi still hold the premier positions, the former for its well-kept gardens, and the latter for the best-arranged school grounds, but there are quite a number of other schools where teachers and children are interesting themselves in flower and vegetable gardens. If the Board offered a banner for competition among the schools of the district for the best-kept school gardens and ground, it would foster this aspect of school training and directly benefit "nature study" in the schools.

The establishment of a district high school at Dannevirke and Woodville respectively has supplied a great educational gap in the southern portion of the district, and there is every promise that both schools will be successful. The attendance at Dannevirke requires already the services of two teachers of secondary subjects, and the numbers will show a further increase as soon as proper school accommodation has been supplied. Both at Dannevirke and Woodville a separate building for secondary pupils is badly needed.

The application for a district high school at Hastings, although approved by the Board, has not yet been sanctioned by the Minister of Education under section 55 of the Education Act.

The district high school at Gisborne continues to be carried on with much success. The rooms now in course of construction for secondary and technical work will provide a long-felt want. This school was thrown open free to all pupils passing the Sixth Standard, more than two years before the Government brought in the regulation for free instruction in district high schools; but, curiously, little or no advantage has been taken of the privilege by parents on behalf of their children. The flourishing state of the district is calling into requisition the services of all Sixth Standard pupils, and this may account for the slow increase in the attendance in the secondary department at the Gisborne School.

The summary of promotion results that is given below gives 114 pupils in Standard VII. class in all the schools of the district. Omitting the district high schools, there were fifteen others where Standard VII. pupils were under instruction. All pupils who pass the Sixth Standard may attend a district high school free. Curiously, this rule does not obtain in the case of a high school. Hence pupils who pass the Sixth Standard in Napier, or within travelling-distance of it, are debarred from attending as free pupils at the Napier High School if more than fourteen years of age, but the same pupils would be admitted to a district high school if one were available. The outcome of this inequality of treatment is to be seen at the Napier Main School, where a special class for Standard VII. pupils is carried on, without any compensating advantage to the school, although secondary or district high school work is being done. It seems but reasonable that either the Napier Main School should be constituted a district high school for the benefit of children in the district who have passed the Sixth Standard and are over the age limit, or the same advantage should be given to pupils to attend a high school as is given to attend a district high school.

But, useful as district high schools are, they do not meet the educational wants of country districts. The majority of teachers are now able to carry on the instruction of pupils beyond the elementary stage. Such knowledge as they have is in a measure lying idle. A great gap would be filled if schools classed as "efficient" in essential subjects were permitted, on the recommendation of the Inspector, to take such higher subjects of instruction as would meet the local demands of a district, payment being made to teachers for Standard VII. pupils at the same rate as is now the case with district high schools.