

## MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Education Office, Blenheim, January, 1909.

I have the honour to present my fifth general report on the schools of Marlborough.

**NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.**—Eighty schools were open during some part of the year, and seventy-seven were met either at inspection or at examination; one of the three remaining merged in a school that was visited, and the two others, with a combined attendance of nine, were short-lived. Seven were closed during the whole of the latter half of the year, and three, with a combined attendance of fourteen, were closed when the schools in their neighbourhood were being examined. Seventy public and five private schools were examined. In addition, Standard VI central examinations were held at six centres, and various supplementary visits were paid for examination of pupil-teachers, inspection of school gardens, &c.

**INSPECTION.**—The new regulations of the Board were issued during the year. Their provisions in respect of time-tables and keeping and preservation of records should be diligently studied by the teachers. Schemes of work are improving, but there is still room for extensive development. As inspection gradually takes the place of examination the necessity for carefully composed schemes in each subject becomes more urgent. Models for model-drawing and hyloplate for wall-boards constitute the apparatus most needed at present. The easel blackboards are clumsy; they occupy too much floor-space, and many of them are too heavy for use by female teachers. The dual desk is being gradually introduced. Increased cupboard accommodation is required to store the greater quantity of apparatus, books, and collections that follow in the train of new ideas on education.

**INSPECTION *versus* EXAMINATION OF SCHOOLS.**—For many years the efficiency of schools in New Zealand was judged by the individual progress of the children. This focussed the attention of parents too much on passes, to the detriment sometimes of the teacher and sometimes of the work: "Has my child passed? If not, the teacher is unsatisfactory, whether other children have passed or not." That tended to be the parent's view. "Such-and-such subjects are compulsory, the others are only trimmings. Parents look for passes. I must give practically all my attention to the compulsory subjects. I must narrow my programme." This tended to be the teacher's view. Under the regulations now in force the view-point is changed. The State says, "Does the school maintain such a standard that we may be satisfied with the return for our money?" And the standard is not to be estimated in terms of knowledge only. There are other less tangible but invaluable results of true education in the gradual moralising of the children, in the thoughtful preparing of the ground for giving the productive activity scope, and in the training of them for citizenship. The Inspector is to give his impressions of the school in bulk as it were. Thus the individual child is submerged, and the estimate of the whole school alone counts. The Inspector is to estimate the school by dipping into the work here and there, not by examining every child. Promotions from class to class are left in the headmaster's hands. There is a tendency even to throw the giving of the proficiency certificate into his hands, for the school year is rigidly fixed as from January to December, and Standard VI examinations are supposed to be over by the 1st December, so that pupils may have every opportunity of qualifying for free places at the secondary schools. In fairness to the children the examination must be as near the 1st December as possible, so centres must be limited if the Inspector is to retain control of this examination. These methods follow those of other countries. It is questionable how far it is advisable to transplant parts of systems. In England, where the above method of inspection has been in vogue for some time, the Department gives or withholds grants according to the state of the schools. The grant system is a disciplinary measure that our Department has not hitherto employed. Nor has it its own primary-school Inspectors. Again, in New South Wales the children enter the schools; they drift up through the classes under promotion by headmasters and inspection (not examination) by Inspectors. Finally they drift out of the schools, and there is no leaving examination to test progress. I saw only large city schools, and in them the plan seemed to work very well. What the effect was in the "bush" schools I cannot say from personal observation, but I was led to understand that, allowing for the necessarily lower class of teacher—lower in qualification and in experience—a very fair standard was maintained. The success of the system is probably due to the fact that teachers are, in New South Wales, a part of the Civil Service in the immediate control of the Central Department without intervening Boards, and, if necessary, liable to certain readily applicable disciplinary measures of promotion or reduction. It may be mentioned that one gentleman holding high office in New South Wales expressed regret that his State did not have a leaving certificate of uniform value as in New Zealand, and, judging by the Under-Secretary for Education's report in 1903, he also believes in a "merit certificate"—which is much the same. In New Zealand under the latest regulations the Inspector has to see whether (taking into account the pupil's age and time at school) the teacher's examination is of a sufficient standard, the tests suitable, and the marking satisfactory. In Marlborough fifty-three of the eighty-six teachers are uncertificated, and only eight of the fifty-three have any qualification beyond Standard VI. It is not their fault if many of them do not judge accurately what standard is to be considered sufficient, what tests are suitable, and what marks are appropriate. In their case the Inspector finds it difficult to act. The necessary powers of judgment cannot always be conferred on them by one or two extra visits of inspection. Moreover, they are very frequently under pressure from parents, who confuse promotion with attainment. He has, therefore, to take a more direct share in determining the progress of the pupils in these schools than he does in those under fully qualified teachers. Where the teacher is certificated the Inspector becomes more than ever dependent on schemes of work, so that in subjects where option is allowed not only annual but monthly or weekly ones may be required to show progressive treatment. If the standard of the past is to be maintained the teacher must exercise a due sense of responsibility in