

NEW SCHOOLS, ETC., 1909.

At the end of 1908 there were ninety-seven village schools in active operation. During the year 1909 three new schools were opened, four were closed, and two were transferred to Education Boards, so that there were ninety-four schools working at the end of 1909.

The new schools opened during the year were *Whangape*, on the north side of Whangape Harbour; *Pawarenga*, on the south side of Whangape Harbour; and Waitapu, near the mouth of Hokianga Harbour.

The schools at *Ngongotaha*, Rotorua; *Lower Waihou* (side school), Hokianga; *Pamoana*, Wanganui River; and *Te Kopua*, King-country, were closed; the two last named, however, being closed temporarily only. The schools at *Hauaroa* (Taumarunui), King-country, and *Ruapuke Island*, in Foveaux Strait, were transferred to the Auckland and Southland Education Boards respectively.

There is a good prospect of establishing schools at the following places, viz.: *Rakaunui* and *Taharoa* (Kawhia); *Te Huruhi*, Waiheke Island; *Orauta*, near Kawakawa, Bay of Islands; *Waiomio*, also near Kawakawa, Bay of Islands; *Rangitahi*, Galatea, Hot Lakes District, and *Pakiri*, near Fraser-town, Hawke's Bay. The matter of acquiring the site is now in hand in all these cases.

As the result of investigations made, no action is to be taken in the case of *Waihapa* and *Taupo*, near Whangaroa, and of *Te Tii-Mangonui*, Bay of Islands. Further inquiries are to be made at the earliest convenient opportunity into the following proposals, viz.: *Horoera*, East Cape; *Whakaki*, Hawke's Bay; *Pukehina*, Maketu, Bay of Plenty; *Oruawhoro*, Port Albert, Kaipara; *Maungatapu*, Tauranga, Bay of Plenty; and *Mangatuna*, East Coast. Less promising cases appear to be *Mangatangi*, Waikato; *Okere*, Rotorua; *Pakowhai*, Gisborne; and *Hanga*, Waikato.

We have again to call attention to the delay that is under present conditions unavoidably caused in the acquisition of school-sites. We have no doubt that the prospects of new schools are seriously impaired, and the enthusiasm of the people damped by the delay.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Reading.—The reading in our schools continues to show steady improvement, and may be regarded as generally satisfactory. The weak element is the want of comprehension of the language and the subject-matter. It is true that in most schools the children know the meaning of individual words, but they fail to realise the mental pictures which the reading of an interesting story should create in their minds: they are merely saying words.

Another drawback, and one quite as serious perhaps as the former, is that we seem to make very little progress in inculcating a love for reading. Apart from the ordinary School Reader and the *School Journal*, Maori children, as a rule, have nothing to read, and read nothing. It is true that in many of the schools the teachers have endeavoured to stimulate the love for reading by establishing school libraries; but the Maori pupils, with few exceptions, do not seem generally to be very eager to read the books thus supplied. We feel sure that this is a very great drawback indeed, and shall be glad if teachers will give this matter their earnest attention. If the teacher were to read to the children at stated intervals simple stories of an interesting character, much good would ensue. Indeed, in the infant classes the telling or reading of nursery stories and fairy tales should be regarded as an essential part of the work in English. Any device on the part of teachers that will create, along with the ability to read, the desire to read will be gladly accepted.

The infant classes, as a whole, are making good progress on sound lines. Their pronunciation is generally very good, though in not a few schools we find that the children do not speak out as loudly as they should. The method of teaching reading has greatly improved during the past few years, and the use of the look-and-say and phonic methods in combination is now general. The amount of reading covered by the primer classes in some of the schools is not, however, reasonably sufficient in proportion to the time during which the pupils have been at school. Reference to some of the class lists submitted to us during recent visits of inspection shows that pupils who have been from three to six months at school have made practically no advance in reading during that time, and, in the case of a few schools, comparison of the class lists of one year with those of the previous year shows that pupils whose names appear on both lists, and who, therefore, have completed a full year at school, have not got beyond the simplest look-and-say words—which, we venture to say, could be thoroughly taught in a month. This is a matter which we think requires serious attention. We have generally laid it down that before promotion is made to P. 3, both primers should be read, and before a child enters Standard I he should have read both Infant Readers. The whole of this preparatory work can be done by the best of the children under good teaching in two years: at the most, it should not take more than three.

We note a decided improvement in the recitation, and find also that the children are taking much interest in it; the pupils in the lowest classes are especially fond of it, and do not regard their examination as being complete without it. Indeed, in one school they came back after being dismissed to demand that the Inspector should hear their recitation. The parents, too, have frequently expressed to us their appreciation of their children's learning poetry, and they derive much pleasure from it. Apart from the pleasure that the recitation of poetry thus affords, it has already been shown to play a very useful part in connection with English, and it therefore deserves greater attention as a subject of the school course than it has hitherto received.

Spelling.—There is little to find fault with in the work of the lower classes. As is only to be expected, children who have been taught consistently from word-building and sounds write words from dictation with very few mistakes. We do not find in these classes the confusion between "pig" and "big," "road" and "load," &c., that was formerly so common, though we find, in the case of pupils admitted from schools where the obsolete alphabetic method is still in vogue, that the simplest words are misspelt. With regard to the dictation in the higher classes, we think that teachers might well