

From figures compiled from the weights and heights of some fifteen thousand children returned by school-teachers last year, it appears that the average New Zealand child is heavier and taller than the average English child of the same age.

The Medical Inspectors also report on the schools in respect of the lighting, heating, ventilation, cleanliness, &c., and there are many instances in which suggested improvements involving no expenditure have been effected. Emphasis is placed on the value of fresh air, and teachers are encouraged to teach out of doors or in open shelters whenever it is possible. It can scarcely be questioned that great benefits must follow this spread of hygienic principles among parents, teachers, and scholars.

The expenditure on medical inspection for the financial year ended the 31st March, 1914, was—salaries, £1,385; travelling-expenses, £458; material, apparatus, forwarding charges, &c., £2,340: total, £4,183.

2. REPORT OF THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF SCHOOLS.

The INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF SCHOOLS to the Hon. the MINISTER OF EDUCATION

SIR,—

I have the honour to place before you the following report in regard to the medical inspection of schools and school-children:—

The scheme was carried on during the year 1913 by four Medical Inspectors working from the four chief centres. Public schools of Grade IV (average attendance 36–80) and upwards were included in the scheme. Owing to the outbreak of smallpox the services of the Inspectors were required for several weeks by the Department of Public Health, thus materially reducing the amount of inspection work done during the year. The number of schools visited was 333, distributed as follows:—

Education District.	Number of Schools.
Auckland	48
Taranaki	15
Wellington	33
Hawke's Bay	14
Marlborough	8
Nelson	16
Grey	9
Westland	6
North Canterbury	56
Otago	96
Southland	32
Total	333

At these schools the children of S2 were medically examined as well as special cases from other classes. All of the pupils of the four normal schools were also medically examined. The number of children examined at the routine examination was 7,661, and the number of special cases dealt with was 4,696, making a total of 12,357.

Table Q1 shows the number and percentages of defects reported among children inspected at the routine examination, variation in the percentages in different districts being probably due to some extent to their having been visited by different Inspectors.

The high percentage (72) of cases of defective teeth is noticeable. The Inspectors report that in a great number of cases quite simple preventive measures would afford much improvement, and it is gratifying to find that their advice is being acted upon to a large extent. The expense of dental attention is, however, a great obstacle to many of the poorer parents, and in country districts it is almost impossible to obtain the required services.

The number of children with enlarged glands shows the next highest percentage. The presence of these is largely due to septic absorption from carious teeth. The number of cases requiring special treatment is small.

Thirty-three per cent. of the children were found to be suffering from obstructed breathing. Much stress is laid upon the injurious effects on health following unnatural conditions of the nose and throat, and the marked improvement that follows in the whole physical and mental condition of a child when the obstruction has been removed. In addition to those mentioned there are numbers of milder cases which require as remedies only correct breathing-exercises and sufficient fresh air.

The number of children suffering from physical deformity is too high. Twenty-two per cent. have stooped shoulders. This condition should be curable by means of physical exercises, and it is hoped that with the adoption of the new system of physical training good results will be noticed in this respect. Seven per cent. of the children have lateral curvature. Unsuitable desks and seats, together with the system of lighting from the back that exists in a great number of school-rooms, are largely blamed for this. To avoid throwing his shadow upon his work the child twists himself into an unnatural position, with harmful results. A large amount of physical deformity was observed in the dairying districts. The cause seems to be excessive manual labour performed by the children before and after school hours.

Malnutrition was observed in some 23 per cent. of the children examined, this percentage, however, including cases of medium nutrition besides those that are decidedly bad. This unsatisfactory condition appears to be seldom due to actual poverty. Unsuitable and badly cooked food given to the children by uninstructed parents, or, in the country districts especially, by parents who have not time to attend to their children's wants, is reported to be one of the causes. Over-