

INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS.

The following table gives an indication of the efficiency of the village schools inspected during the year 1915 :—

Very good to excellent	...	...	...	...	35
Satisfactory to good	...	...	...	...	71
Inferior to weak	...	...	...	...	10

One school which was temporarily closed at the time of the visit to the district was not inspected. At the annual examinations fourteen certificates of proficiency and thirty-nine certificates of competency were gained by the pupils.

NEW SCALE OF SALARIES AND SYLLABUS OF INSTRUCTION.

As provided for in the Education Act, 1914, a new scale of salaries came into force from the beginning of the year 1915, the result being a general increase in the salaries of teachers in Native schools. A complete revision of the Regulations relating to Native Schools was thus rendered necessary, and the revised regulations containing the new syllabus, which conforms in most material respects with that of the public schools, were issued to teachers early in the year.

The following table shows the gradual increase in the amount paid to teachers as salaries for each period of five years since 1905 :—

Year.	Number of Teachers.	Average Attendance of Pupils.	Total Salaries. £
1905 ...	182	3,428	15,980
1910 ...	208	3,714	23,184
1915 ...	244	4,616	30,927

Of the total expenditure on Native schools during the year 1915, the salaries, excluding allowances, paid to the teachers form 77·2 per cent.

GENERAL REMARKS.

In respect to the work done in the various subjects of the school course the following remarks are submitted :—

English.—Reading: In this subject a general and steady improvement is observed. The substitution of the *School Journal* for the old miscellaneous reader and the introduction of additional reading-matter in the form of continuous readers have been productive of satisfactory results in fostering a love of reading, and there is now a greater demand on the part of the children for books in those schools where school libraries have been established. The suggestions contained in last year's report regarding the reading of newspapers by the elder pupils in order to stimulate their interest in current events do not appear to have been extensively taken up. The teachers have thus lost valuable opportunities of using additional reading-matter as well as of obtaining material for geographical teaching. Greater attention should be given to distinctness of utterance and to proper phrasing. To secure intelligent reading there must be thorough comprehension of the subject-matter, and in this respect it is satisfactory to note much improvement. In a few schools, however, the reading is more or less mechanical. Only in those schools where the purposes of the recitation of poetry are fully appreciated does the work reach a satisfactory standard.

English language: Although many schools have made distinct progress during the year, the results and the methods of treatment are still in a large number of schools somewhat disappointing. When it is understood that 98 per cent. of the Maori children in the Native village schools speak Maori as their mother-tongue, the difficulty of the problem of teaching what is to them really a foreign language will be readily recognized by those who understand the task of acquiring a new language. English has been made the language of instruction because linguistic unity is the most important step towards national unity, and expert opinion and practical experience prove that the keynote to the correct teaching of English to beginners is the practically exclusive use of that language in the schoolroom. Great diversity of opinion exists in regard to what constitutes satisfactory progress in the teaching and the acquiring of English, and results that in one school are apparently considered quite satisfactory are entirely cast in the shade by results that in other schools are accepted as merely ordinary. Often beginners are practically at a standstill, while in schools operating amid substantially similar conditions the general progress is surprisingly rapid. A problem clearly realized is almost half solved, and in many cases teachers meet with indifferent success simply because they have failed to analyse the complex influences that make the task difficult. The real measure of the children's progress is the teacher's skill.

No diversity of opinion as regards the importance of the pupils' attaining a mastery of English exists among the teachers—that is, a mastery of the vocabulary at their command, and not merely the possession of such vocabulary; but great diversity does exist as to the methods securing that mastery. To secure it the importance and value of oral practice are paramount: the pupils' efforts to think in English must be encouraged from the very first by this practice, and until they succeed in thinking in English just so long will this mastery be delayed. The pupils in the schools are taught to read and understand English, but this is not sufficient—they must be taught to *speak* it; and if they are to gain any facility in the use of the language they must have constant practice in it. Teachers are here enjoined to guard against monopolizing the opportunities belonging to the pupils in this matter. The only method by which peculiar usages, grammatical peculiarities, and idiomatic expressions can be impressed is that of per-