

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 14th March, 1917.

We have the honour to submit herewith our annual report on the work of the schools in this district for the year 1916.

The following table gives a summary of inspection results for the public schools :—

				Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.
Standard VII	...	...	...	249	237
„ VI	...	...	...	1,428	1,372
„ V	...	...	...	2,135	2,093
„ IV	...	...	...	2,436	2,405
„ III	...	...	...	2,731	2,683
„ II	...	...	...	2,757	2,710
„ I	...	...	...	3,131	3,058
Preparatory	...	...	...	7,374	7,040
Totals	...	...	...	22,241	21,598

During the year 261 schools were in operation. Of these, two were half-time schools, seven were household schools, and one was the small school at the Pleasant Valley Sanatorium, in which the hours and courses of study have to be suitably modified to meet the physical condition of the pupils.

With the exception of five household schools and one full-time school, which was temporarily closed towards the end of the year, all the schools were inspected, and in nearly all cases two visits were paid. In addition to visiting the public schools, the Inspectors visited and reported on seventeen private schools. In the first visits to some of these schools Mr. Gill was associated with one of the local Inspectors. The omission of the second visits to some of these and to some of the public schools was due to the dislocation of inspection-work caused by the enlistment of Mr. Robertson in May, and to the temporary withdrawal of Dr. Don for the inspection of secondary schools.

Throughout the district the school buildings are well cared for, and in only eight cases have the reports on buildings been lower than satisfactory. Fences are, on the whole, kept in satisfactory condition, while the work of planting trees, shelter-belts, and ornamental shrubs has been extended, in most cases with material supplied from the Training College nursery plot. In several instances the attention of the Board has been directed to the prevalence of noxious weeds in teachers' glebes, and teachers will do well to note that the Inspectors are requested to furnish special reports on this matter after each visit. In all the larger and in many of the smaller schools the condition of the playgrounds reflects great credit on the interest shown by Committees in the maintenance of comfortable surroundings for the pupils, but there are still a few districts in which the apathy of Committees and parents is very marked. Last year we referred to the pressure on the accommodation in some of the schools in the city area, and this year the position has become acute at Maori Hill, where the pupils of the infant department are housed in the Municipal Hall, a building quite unsuitable for the purpose; and at Macandrew Road, where the Sixth Standard pupils are working under conditions that are very uncomfortable, not to say unhygienic. In several of the rural schools provision has been made for the accommodation of the junior classes by converting play-sheds into temporary class-rooms—an expedient that is not at all satisfactory, owing to difficulties connected with lighting and ventilation. On the whole, the interiors of the schools are tidily kept, and the furniture is generally well cared for.

Uncertificated Teachers.—At the end of the year the number of uncertificated teachers employed in this district was considerably higher than at the corresponding period in 1915. The scarcity of suitable qualified applicants for vacancies, particularly in the rural areas, became acute about the month of June—a fact that seems to point to the necessity for increasing the output from the training colleges, either by increasing the enrolment there or by allowing students, after a year's training, to take a position for a year or two, and then complete the training-college course. Owing to the reduction of the grant for training teachers, the classes for assisting uncertificated teachers were materially curtailed. Courses of instruction in first aid, agricultural botany and chemistry, and elementary hygiene were held in Dunedin; while during the early part of the year Mr. D. W. M. Burn kept in touch by correspondence with some of his students of 1915, and towards the end of the year met them at Owaka for personal tuition. The students at the city classes showed keen interest in their work, and Mr. Burn's students are deeply grateful to him for his earnest efforts to help them to improve their educational status.

Medical Inspection.—Prior to her transfer to Wellington Dr. A. G. Paterson visited the Training College and some of the schools of Grade IV and upwards, in several of which special attention was given to the selection of pupils for corrective work. In addition, the Medical Inspector met parents at several of the schools and delivered addresses on matters pertaining to the welfare of children. These meetings were well attended, and are indicative of an increasing parental interest in the work of medical inspection. During the latter part of the year the work of medical inspection was continued by Dr. McCahon.

Physical Instruction.—As in the case of medical inspection, the visits of the physical instructors have been confined to schools of Grade IV and upwards, to the Training College, and to the corrective classes at the large schools in Dunedin and Oamaru—in all, about forty schools. Their reports show that the work done in these schools has been generally satisfactory. In schools below Grade IV the work in physical instruction was reported on by Inspectors at their annual visits.