

TARANAKI.

REPORT OF THE SENIOR INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

In the enlarged Taranaki Education District the schools including secondary classes are Hawera, Eltham, and Stratford. Of the first two the roll number was, at the end of the year, twenty and nineteen respectively. The programme of both included an examination course and a general course. The former programme contemplated preparation for Public Service Entrance, Intermediate, and Matriculation Examinations, and the latter a rural course including agriculture, dairy science, woodwork for boys, and home science, hygiene, cookery, and dressmaking for girls. Those preparing specially for examinations were required to prepare some of the work of the rural course, thus rendering the total requirements rather heavy. It is difficult in some cases for parents and teachers to decide, in the case of pupils joining the classes, which course will ultimately meet the requirements of the future. It has been recognized, however, that while for many pupils desiring secondary education a technical course is more suitable, there is a demand for preparation in programmes providing for passes in public examinations. Both the schools mentioned obtained success in examinations, the Hawera successes including three passes in the Matriculation Examination.

The secondary classes of the Stratford District High School had a roll number at the end of the year of 144. Of these, sixty followed the rural and eighty-four the examination course. The standard of work is high, as the following successes at the end of the year indicate: One in the credit list of the University National Scholarship; one in each of the Taranaki University, Senior National, Junior National, and Bayly Memorial Scholarships; eight Matriculation passes; three passes in from two to five subjects of the Public Service Senior Examination; twenty-two in the Public Service Entrance or Intermediate Examination. Forty-eight in all gained senior free places.

The staff consists of seven secondary assistants and six special instructors in connection with agriculture and other technical work. All pupils receive instruction for at least three hours each week in science, and those preparing the rural course seven hours. The school is well staffed and well equipped, and is supported by attendance of pupils from a wide area.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURAL INSTRUCTION.

Rural classes were held at district high schools at Stratford, Eltham, and Hawera during 1916. This year Eltham has dropped out owing to a fall in attendance at secondary classes. At Stratford some ninety pupils take the various subjects of instruction—viz., botany, horticulture, agriculture, and dairy-work. Owing to the large number on the rolls here, and to the fact that over a hundred primary-school pupils take similar subjects of instruction, the whole agricultural staff is fully occupied on one day of each week at this centre. In each case the class-teacher is present during instruction, and will take an increasing share therein, until finally the instructors will handle only the more specialized parts of the work. The experimental area at Stratford has been sown in lucerne. At Hawera some twenty pupils take the "combined course" in agriculture and dairy-work.

WANGANUI.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

The attendance at the secondary classes in the six district high schools has been greatly affected by the shortage of labour, and by the difficulty the Board has had in securing teachers of sufficient special qualifications for the exceedingly varied work demanded in the classes. As was pointed out in last year's report, the curriculum has been simplified as much as possible, but provision has still to be made for both professional and practical vocations. There are two courses of instruction, general and examination. All pupils in their first year are required to take the general course, which includes English, practical mathematics (arithmetic, with simple algebra and geometry), book-keeping, geography, history, handwork (woodwork, metal-work, cookery, dressmaking), and science (agriculture for boys, home science for girls). After their first year the pupils branch off either towards the examination course of studies, the instruction being conditioned by the requirements of the public examinations, or towards further special instruction in housecraft or in farmcraft. The boys continuing on the practical side are very efficiently taught, partly by the regular staff at their own school, and partly by the Board's specialists at the Marton School Farm, at an animal husbandry camp of instruction held at Mr. Short's stud farm, Feilding, and at a shearing-camp, also held in the vicinity of Feilding.

Notwithstanding the manifest advantages gained by pupils attending the practical vocational courses of instruction, we find it difficult to persuade parents that any course is worth while that has not as its main object the passing of one of the public examinations. Unfortunately the present syllabus for the Public Service Entrance Examination does not encourage a pupil to specialize on the practical side. If the Senior National Scholarship B syllabus were added to the Public Service Entrance Examination syllabus the difficulty would be removed. We are glad to say the Education Board gives whole-hearted support to the idea of vocational education, but it is still difficult to convince teachers academically trained that the majority of their pupils can be better employed than in cramming for examinations.