

SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF, SUMNER.

The number of pupils under instruction is shown in the following tabulated statement —

	Boys.	Girls.	Totals.
Pupils of 1916 who returned to school in February, 1917	48	44	92
Admitted at beginning of year	4	7	11
Admitted later	4	2	6
Absent owing to illness	..	1	1
Total number	56	54	110
Left in March, 1917	..	1	1
Left in December, 1917	7	10	17
Pupils returning in 1918 after vacation ..	49	43	92

Of the 110 pupils, 28 came from the Auckland District, 4 from Taranaki, 12 from Hawke's Bay and Gisborne, 24 from Wellington, 2 from Nelson, 1 from Marlborough, 1 from Westland, 20 from Canterbury, and 18 from Otago.

Seven boys and three girls attended as day pupils.

The ages of the seventeen pupils admitted ranged from five years eleven months to fourteen years and four months. There were seven under seven, four between seven and nine, three between nine and eleven, two of twelve, and one of fourteen years of age. The two aged twelve were cases of acquired deafness, but the boy of fourteen had been totally deaf from birth, and should have been sent to the school at the age of six years. He is a very intelligent boy, and should make good progress, but nothing will be able to make up for the eight wasted years. Apart from the two cases of acquired deafness, the average age at the time of admission was just under eight. In 1916 and 1917 it was over nine, so that some improvement in this respect is evident. An encouraging feature is that more than one parent has made application for the admission of a child at an earlier age than under present conditions the school is able to admit. This is an indication that parents are becoming alive to the necessity of commencing the education of the young deaf child as soon as possible.

Of the seventeen pupils who left, two had been at the school eleven years, five ten years, four nine years, two eight years, two seven years, one for one year and a half, and one for one year. The last two cases were of acquired deafness, a sister and brother, the former completely and the latter partially deaf. The girl had completed her education, and the boy had acquired a sufficient knowledge of lip-reading to enable him to return to the public school that he had been attending previously to his admission here. Exclusive of these two the average number of years under instruction of the pupils leaving was nine years, which in the case of deaf children is utterly inadequate.

Besides the ordinary school subjects the girls received training in dressmaking, cooking, laundrywork, and general housework, and the boys in woodwork and gardening. A class of fourteen boys also attended the Technical College at Christchurch for instruction in woodwork with very good results.

Applications have again been made for the admission of pupils at an earlier age than under present conditions the school is able to receive them. In view of the good results that have been obtained elsewhere by the early education of the young deaf children and of the general consensus of expert opinion on the subject, it is necessary to consider at as early a date as possible the opening of a preparatory school for young deaf children. When this is done it will be possible to commence the education of the deaf at an age more closely approximating to that at which hearing children learn to speak, and when the vocal organs are still plastic and the imitative faculties most active.

The medical inspection of schools has resulted in a large number of cases of defective speech and of defective hearing being brought to light. Where the two are associated it is probable that the defect in the hearing is such as to necessitate