

## CANTERBURY.

Sir,—

Christchurch, April, 1918.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the schools of this district for the year 1917.

The number of public schools open at the close of the year was 381. To each of these, with the exception of two or three small schools, two visits were paid. Forty-five private schools were also inspected. The annual examination lists show an enrolment of 34,285 pupils in the Board's schools and 3,792 in the private schools under inspection. The following is a summary of the results of the proficiency examinations :—

|                             | Pupils<br>examined. | Proficiency<br>Certificates. | Competency<br>Certificates. |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Public schools ... ..       | 2,356               | 1,528                        | 482                         |
| Private schools ... ..      | 265                 | 157                          | 70                          |
| Special examinations ... .. | 240                 | 104                          | 88                          |
|                             | <hr/> 2,861         | <hr/> 1,789                  | <hr/> 640                   |

Thus 63 per cent. of those presenting themselves obtained proficiency and 22 per cent. competency.

The returns from district high schools showed 655 pupils on the roll. Owing to the shortage of adult labour a keen demand has arisen for the services of boys and girls, and the existence of some of the smaller schools has been threatened. This is to be greatly regretted, as these schools have in the past rendered excellent service to the cause of secondary education.

During the year there has been considerable extension of handwork classes. This has been largely due to the energy, enthusiasm, and able administration of the Board's Supervisor of Handwork. Lack of sufficient centres has handicapped his efforts, but it is to be hoped that in the near future adequate woodwork and cookery accommodation will be provided.

The medical inspection of pupils has been zealously carried out by the Medical Inspector of Schools, and the increasing interest shown is abundant proof that its importance is recognized by the general public.

The physical instructors have had a very successful year, and many of the pupils by their improved physique and carriage bear testimony to the benefits derived from regular and systematic training. The results of the corrective classes have exceeded expectations, the whole-hearted support of the teachers being most encouraging. It is, however, to be regretted that there are still some schools in which the harmful bodily attitudes assumed by the pupils while at their work appear to escape the teachers' observation.

In connection with the various subjects of the curriculum there is little change to report. Reading, though on the whole improving, still suffers in some schools from the fact that the pupils simply say the words without much regard to thought-interpretation. More, too, might be done in the direction of systematic training of the vocal organs, in which connection the voice-production exercises associated with the singing-lessons should be of great value. Spelling is generally good. Composition varies in quality from very good to poor. In our better schools there is evidence of excellent teaching, but in the poorer group instruction is often haphazard and unsystematic. Recitation in many instances shows an advance both in choice of matter and in mode of rendering. Writing is mainly satisfactory. In arithmetic, although the majority of the schools do sound work, there are still some that underestimate the importance of mental practice. History continues more or less unsatisfactory, and many teachers have yet to realize that success can be achieved only by definiteness of aim and inspirational methods. In geography steady improvement is noticeable, but observational work and a proper correlation of the commercial, physical, and political aspects of the subject should receive more thoughtful consideration. Drawing, while on the whole satisfactory, suffers in too many schools from lack of systematic instruction. Teachers themselves should assume the responsibility of framing properly graded schemes for the different sections of their pupils. In nature-study, too, they often fail to realize that the children themselves should do the most of the seeing, thinking, and talking.

Order and discipline are distinctly good, and there is every indication that this pleasing state of affairs is secured without resort to unduly repressive measures.

In conclusion, we would place on record our appreciation of the zeal and enthusiasm shown by the teachers of this district. In spite of the distracting influences of the last two or three years, they have worked loyally and faithfully. Although a few—and their number is rapidly diminishing—still fail to acquaint themselves with existing regulations, still neglect to have their schemes completed at the appointed time, and still omit to send in their returns promptly, the great body of teachers are men and women who have a fine conception of duty, and are endeavouring as far as lies in their power to promote the physical, mental, and moral welfare of those under their charge.

Our thanks are due to the Board and its officials for many acts of courtesy.

We have, &c.,

|                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| WM. BROCK,       | } Inspectors. |
| JAS. GIBSON GOW, |               |
| CHAS. D. HARDIE, |               |
| S. C. OWEN,      |               |
| J. B. MAYNE,     |               |
| J. A. VALENTINE, |               |

The Director of Education, Wellington.