

tion in such a limited time. Hearing children usually remain at school nine years—that is, from five to fourteen. An effort is now being made to retain all children at school until the age of sixteen years, and it is to be hoped that legislation bringing this about will be enacted. This will mean that ordinary children will have eleven years at school; and if such is necessary for normal children, how much more is it for the deaf! A hearing child commences school with a vast store of acquired knowledge that is denied to the deaf child, able to make known its wants and to interchange ideas with its fellows by means of spoken language, whereas the mind of a deaf child is to all intents and purposes a *tabula rasa*. Language has to be instilled into it slowly and patiently, letter by letter and word by word. The first years of instruction are passed in giving to it that knowledge that the hearing child gets practically without conscious effort or direct instruction. The hearing child probably learns as much out of school as in school; but not so the deaf child: during the last few years of his school life he may be able to gather knowledge for himself to some extent, but for the greater part of them he is almost entirely dependent on his teacher. For these reasons it is of the highest importance that the school life of a deaf child should not be abridged in any way, and particularly that it should commence at as early an age as possible.

In my last annual report I referred to the fact that many cases of partially deaf children attending the public schools had been brought under my notice, and that in a number of these cases it had been necessary for me to point out to the teachers the absolute necessity of placing such children in the centre of the front row of the classes to which they belong, in order that they may be in the most favourable position possible for hearing what is said by the teacher and by the other pupils. I still find that too little attention is paid in some cases to this seemingly obvious course. When one remembers that the intensity of sound diminishes with the square of its distance, and that the tick of a watch held one inch away makes 1,296 times as much impression on the auditory nerve as it does at one yard, it will be easily understood that a child may get on quite well if seated in the proper place in the class-room and miss nearly everything when seated further back.

For the proper instruction of such children as are unable to be efficiently instructed in the public schools, even when seated in the most favourable position in the class-room, special classes should be instituted in the different centres. The teachers in charge should have received adequate instruction in the special methods of instruction required for deaf children, and should be competent also to deal with cases of defective speech, which latter are very common throughout the Dominion. In previous reports I have given you details of a general scheme for the carrying-on of such classes, which should be regarded as branches of this school. What remains to be done is the training of the teachers required for them, and the sooner this is undertaken the better.

I wish again to urge upon you the desirability of instituting a home for very young deaf children. As I have again and again pointed out, it is extremely undesirable that such children should be in an institution along with older children. There are a thousand reasons why they should be kept apart from the latter, and just as many for their education being commenced as early as possible. When such a preparatory school has been established, and the special classes referred to above been instituted, the education of the deaf in New Zealand will be on a thoroughly sound footing.

Farm and gardening operations at the school were again carried on successfully, a plentiful supply of fruit, vegetables, milk, and eggs being produced. The total value of the produce raised for home consumption during the year, exclusive of sales of surplus produce, was £567 7s. 1d.

J. E. STEVENS,

The Director of Education, Wellington.

Director, School for the Deaf.

EXPENDITURE ON SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF.

The expenditure on the school for the last financial year (1919–20) is as follows :—

	£
Salaries	4,818
Maintenance of pupils and sundry expenses	1,969
Travelling-expenses	221
Maintenance of buildings, furnishings, &c.	495
New buildings and works	2
	7,505
Less Parental contributions	1,155
Amounts received from Hospital and Charitable Aid Boards	1,000
Sundry other recoveries	18
	2,173
Net expenditure	£5,332

The net expenditure for the year 1918–19 was £3,973.