

SPECIAL SCHOOLS.

(See also E.-4.)

STATE CARE OF DEPENDENT AND DELINQUENT CHILDREN AND INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION.

The Special Schools Branch of the Education Department provides (1) for the maintenance, training, and general upbringing of neglected and homeless children committed by Courts to the care of the State, for the maintenance and guardianship of children who lost both parents as a result of the influenza epidemic in 1918-19, for the training of delinquent children and juvenile offenders, for the supervision of all young persons (male and female) placed on temporary probation by the Courts; (2) for the supervision of all infants under the age of six years maintained apart from their parents or adopted with premium, for the general supervision of children for whose upkeep pensions are paid, either under the widows or epidemic pensions scheme, and for the investigation of all applications for the adoption of children; and (3) for the education and maintenance of all afflicted children—deaf, blind, feeble-minded, and for children with defective speech.

The total number of children in the care of the State in 1920 was 5,233, classed under the following headings:—

Boarded out, industrial schools, receiving-homes, &c. ..	..	..	3,839
Juvenile probation..	..	..	281
Infant-life protection	..	..	797
Deaf children	..	..	118
Feeble-minded children	..	..	198
Total	..	..	5,233

The number of children committed to the care of the State during the year was 535, classified according to reason for committal as follows: Destitution, 172; vagrancy, 17; associating with disreputable persons, 10; not under proper control, 207; transferred from gaol, 14; accused or guilty of punishable offences, 78; and in addition 37 were admitted by private arrangement.

Classified according to age at the time of admission the numbers are as follows: Under six months, 57; over six months and under one year, 23; from one to five years, 108; from five to ten years, 155; from ten to fourteen years, 135; and over fourteen years, 57.

During the year receiving-homes for the temporary care of such children were established at Napier, Hamilton, and Wanganui, and lady officers who are all qualified nurses were appointed to Palmerston North, Greymouth, and Invercargill for the purpose of investigating all cases reported as coming within the terms of section 17 of the Industrial Schools Act and for placing out either with relatives or friends or in foster-homes any children dealt with by the Courts in these districts, and for the purpose of supervising infants maintained apart from their parents or adopted with premium.

Numbers under Control.

At the end of the year there were 3,839 children under control (excluding those mentioned under separate headings below), and of these 151 were in residence at Government receiving-homes, probation homes, training-farms, and training institutions, and 207 in private industrial schools; 1,886 children were boarded out in foster-homes, 788 were in situations, and 520 residing under license with relatives and friends. Of the boarded-out children a number are over the age of fourteen years and are still attending primary schools, 27 are receiving higher education—(17 technical and 10 secondary), and 28 are apprentices partly maintained by the State.

The children over school age in employment number 683 males and 338 females (included in the total of 3,839). Of the males, 494 are farm workers (11 skilled in dairy-work and cheesemaking and 483 competent to milk and carry out general farm-work), 41 are apprentices, and 148 others are employed in various trades. Of the girls there are 292 domestic workers, 16 apprentices, 13 factory employees, and 17 engaged in various employments such as shop-assistants, nurses, dress-makers, typists, kindergarten trainees, &c.