

SPECIAL SCHOOLS.

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 and orphan children committed by Courts to the care of the State, 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 under the widows' pensions scheme, and for the investigation of 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 1922 was 5,182, classed under the following headings:—

Boarded out, industrial schools, receiving-homes, &c.	..	..	..	3,798
Juvenile probation	..	..	..	277
Infant-life protection	..	..	..	742
Deaf children	..	..	..	135
Feeble-minded children	..	..	..	230
Total	..	..	..	5,182

The number of children committed to the care of the State during the year was 410; classified according to reason for committal as follows: Destitution, 163; vagrancy, 8; associating with disreputable persons, 16; not under proper control, 136; uncontrollable (complaint by parents), 9; transferred from gaol, 15; accused or guilty of punishable offences, 54; and, in addition, 9 were admitted by private arrangement.

Classified according to age at the time of admission the numbers are as follows: Under six months, 49; over six months and under one year, 23; from one to five years, 83; from five to ten years, 100; from ten to fourteen years, 94; and over fourteen years, 61.

Numbers under Control.

At the end of the year there were 3,798 children under control (excluding those mentioned under separate headings below), and of these 153 were in residence at Government receiving-homes, probation homes, training-farms, and training institutions, and 153 in private industrial schools; 1,969 children were boarded out in foster-homes, 780 were in situations, and 464 residing under license with relatives and friends. The remainder were in various homes or institutions. Of the boarded-out children 48 are over the age of fourteen years and are still attending primary schools, 30 are receiving higher education (5 technical and 25 secondary), and a number are apprentices partly maintained by the State.

The children over school age in employment number 610 males and 378 females (included in the total of 3,798). Of the males 468 are farm workers (124 skilled in dairy-work and cheesemaking and 344 competent to milk and carry out general farm-work), 49 are apprentices, and 93 others are employed in various trades. Of the girls there are 333 domestic workers, 9 apprentices, 23 factory employees, and 13 engaged in various employments such as shop-assistants, nurses, dressmakers, typists, &c.

Juvenile Probation System.

The functions of Juvenile Probation Officers are to assist the Courts in ascertaining the full facts regarding parents, conditions of homes, and environment of all children brought under the notice of the police, to supervise and befriend any juveniles placed on probation by the various Magistrates, and to undertake, on the application of the parents, the supervision of any children who are inclined to become uncontrollable. In addition, all male inmates of industrial schools or training-farms placed in situations, or with relatives or friends, are supervised by the Juvenile Probation Officers. There were 1,080 cases dealt with by the Courts