

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

In accordance with the requirements of the Education Act, 1914, the Education Board of the District of Southland has the honour to submit the following report of its proceedings for the year 1927 :—

The Board.—The members in office at the beginning of the year were as follows : Messrs. P. A. de la Perrelle (Chairman), W. Carswell, G. Johnson, A. W. Jones, S. Rice, H. Smith, J. C. Thomson, and J. D. Trotter. No alteration in the personnel of the Board occurred throughout the year. During the year to which this report refers, the Board held twelve ordinary meetings and one special meeting. The Executive Committee, which consists of all the members of the Board, met twenty-four times. In addition to the regular meetings of the Board, members have devoted a considerable amount of time to visiting various parts of the district to confer with Committees and residents on various school matters.

Schools.—Eight schools were closed at the beginning of the year to which this report refers ; these schools were Beaumont, Glendhu, Walter Peak, Whitehead, Flint's Bush, Paradise, Skipper's Point, and Cainard. In each of these cases the closing was due to decreased attendance. One new school, Lora Station, was established, and that at Longridge North was reopened.

The Hospital School, established in 1924 for the benefit of child patients, continues to do good work in the way of providing facilities for the continuation of the education of such pupils as are not completely incapacitated.

Attendance of Pupils.—In his annual report to the Board the Attendance Officer states that during the year there were 208 notices sent out to defaulters, forty-six summonses issued, and thirty-nine convictions secured, the fines inflicted totalling £12.

Organizing Teachers.—The Board's two organizing teachers, Messrs. D. Brown and H. Romans, continue to do good work in assisting the untrained and inexperienced teacher, but the steady reduction in the number of such teachers points to a day not far distant when the services of organizing teachers will no longer be required.

Instruction of Teachers.—After having been held regularly every year for more than twenty years, Saturday classes for the instruction of teachers were discontinued last year. In view of the number of fully trained teachers now leaving the training colleges annually, and the fast disappearing number of uncertificated teachers, the necessity for such classes no longer exists. Believing, however, that a refresher course would be helpful, the Inspectors organized a series of classes for adult teachers during the term holidays in August. These classes were conducted by the Inspectors themselves, and, dealing as they did with the various subjects of the school syllabus in as practical a manner as possible, the classes proved decidedly helpful. Altogether 152 teachers were in attendance.

Conveyance and Board of Pupils.—The amount expended by the Board under this heading shows a steady increase year by year, as will be seen from the following figures for the past three years : 1925, £1,923 18s. 7d. ; 1926, £2,573 19s. ; 1927, £2,942 6s. 11s.

School Medical Service.—Excellent work continues to be done in this most important branch of the Health Department, and the Board would like to place on record its appreciation of the inestimable services rendered to the rising generation by Dr. Collier and her staff. The Board has been pleased to note from the monthly reports submitted the improved conditions now prevailing as a result of the closer co-operation of parents and teachers with the School Hygiene Division. It is to be regretted, however, that the recommendations of the School Medical Officer have not in all cases been given effect to immediately, and that sometimes parents have had to be notified again and yet again. The Board has noted with pleasure the satisfactory reports received in connection with goitre treatment, which has been carried on throughout the district during the year, and it was therefore somewhat of a surprise to hear that the treatment is now to be discontinued. Immunization against diphtheria was carried out in various districts during the course of the year.

Dental Clinics.—Three dental clinics are now in operation in this district, a double-chair clinic in Invercargill and a single-chair clinic at Gore and Otautau. The Board has noted with satisfaction the excellent reports received from the School Medical Officer regarding the improved conditions now prevailing in connection with hygiene of the mouth in the case of pupils in those schools that have been receiving attention. The Board would, however, again urge upon your Department the necessity for the establishment of travelling clinics, to enable the children in the smaller centres to be placed on a similar footing to those more favourably situated in the larger centres.

Physical Instruction.—The high standard of work for which this district has been noted in the past continues to be well maintained in this most important branch of education, and the Board fully recognizes the enthusiasm in this direction displayed by its teachers as a whole.

Instruction in Swimming.—In view of the large number of lives annually sacrificed through lack of a knowledge of how to swim, the Board regrets that there should be so little encouragement offered towards securing a more widespread proficiency in this most valuable art. The Board rejoices at the facilities now available in Invercargill through the erection of up-to-date public baths, which will enable a forward movement to be made in the direction of the establishment of classes for town-school children, but the Board regrets that your Department has not approved of proposals submitted with a view to enabling children coming into Invercargill for manual instruction to receive instruction in swimming also.

Needlework.—In forty-nine sole-teacher schools staffed by males instruction in needlework was given by local sewing-mistresses appointed by the Board. It is to be regretted that in quite a number of schools it was found impossible to secure the services of a local resident able to devote two hours per week to giving girls some instruction in this most important subject.