

The education of blind children is provided for at the Jubilee Institute for the Blind, Auckland, which is a private institution recognized as a "separate institution" under the Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act. Provision is made in this Act for the appointment of nine Trustees—five by the contributors and four by the Governor-General.

The Trustees are required by law to admit and maintain any blind children between the ages of six and twenty-one years that the Minister of Education directs to be sent to the institution. For the maintenance and education of such children the Department pays at the rate of £25 a year each. At present there are 20 children so paid for (13 boys and 7 girls) but this does not represent the total number of children receiving instruction. The Trustees are at liberty to admit any suitable case when the parents are able to pay the full fee.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR MENTALLY-BACKWARD CHILDREN.

There are two such special schools—one at Richmond (near Nelson) for girls, and one at Otekaike (near Oamaru) for boys. The number of girls in residence at Richmond at the end of the year was 85, and the number of boys at Otekaike 185. These institutions are for children who are educable to a certain degree, but who for various reasons cannot be provided for in their own homes.

SPECIAL CLASSES FOR MENTALLY-BACKWARD CHILDREN.

In order to deal with pupils who are of somewhat subnormal mentality special classes to the number of twenty have been established in connection with some of the primary schools in the larger centres. At the 30th June, 1927, there were in attendance at the special classes 305 pupils (191 boys and 114 girls). In these classes a special curriculum is offered including a very large amount of manual training and handwork occupations. For the most part the pupils react quickly to the specialized curriculum, and in some instances appear to make better progress, so far as their mental capacity permits, in the ordinary subjects of instruction. The scheme has been considerably extended during the past year, and several lines of development are under consideration. One of these is the linking-up of the work of the senior pupils with the work of the technical schools. In one centre the experiment is being tried of placing the fourteen-year-old pupils of the special class in ordinary technical-school classes, groups of boys being drafted to manual-training classes and groups of girls to millinery and dressmaking. In addition, girls who are twelve years of age or over attend the manual-training centres for cookery, and the boys for woodwork. It is hoped by this means to ascertain the special aptitudes of the children, so that they may later on find a suitable niche in the industrial world.

Three teachers have returned from periods abroad, whither they had gone to acquire further training and to observe methods of work. One went to Canada and Great Britain, and two to Vinelands, New Jersey, which is regarded as the best training-school in the world for teachers of backward children. All three returned eager to put newly-acquired ideas into practice but convinced that our own classes are being conducted along right lines. Arrangements are under way for other special-class teachers to proceed abroad at an early date.

Two health camps for special-class children were held this year, one being in Wellington and one in Hawke's Bay. In both cases funds were raised locally and subsidized by the Department. The benefit to the children was most marked and well worth the labour involved.

HIGHER (UNIVERSITY) EDUCATION.

The number of students on the books of the four University colleges affiliated to the University of New Zealand increased from 4,653 in 1926 to 4,878 in 1927. The figures for each of the four colleges were as under:—

						1926.	1927.
Auckland	..	..	..	..	..	1,270	1,455
Victoria	..	..	..	..	..	930	975
Canterbury	..	..	..	..	..	1,229	1,248
Otago ..	..	..	..	..	..	1,224	1,200
						4,653	4,878