

CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOLS.

The Government has continued to extend the system of consolidation of country schools, and is more and more convinced of the advantages thus provided for the children of farming districts. In a number of additional cases in which local opinion has been favourable, the extra expenditure inconsiderable, and the conditions suitable, small schools have been replaced by larger schools in central positions. Conveyance of the children by motor-vehicle to the central schools has generally been arranged by contract, but in some cases the buses used are owned by the Government and the service is maintained by the Education Board with the help of a staff mechanic and teacher-drivers. In other cases the railways are used as the means of conveyance to consolidated schools.

The children, instead of being taught in isolation in very small schools, have been able to receive the advantages of instruction in larger and better-equipped schools, and very often by better-qualified teachers than they had under former conditions.

The most complete consolidations carried out recently have been that on the Ruawai Plains, North Auckland, and that of Hawarden, North Canterbury. In the former case five small schools have been closed and in their place a large up-to-date school with a secondary department and a manual-training centre attached has been established. At Hawarden the consolidation involved the closing of five small schools and the substitution of the present large one, in connection with which a district high school is likely to be established shortly. The children are brought to school from the surrounding districts in four buses, in the daily run of which a total mileage of 117 is covered.

The fears sometimes expressed that the land-values in a district will decline if the small local school is removed and conveyance to a larger school instituted are not found to be realized, though such fears are still the basis of opposition to consolidation. It is pleasing to find that wherever consolidation has been carried out the residents appreciate the improved educational facilities that it affords for their children.

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL.

The Correspondence School continues to function efficiently. The number of pupils on the roll at the end of December, 1928, was 720, an increase of 100 on the figures of the previous year. Of the pupils on the roll, 301 were in the primer class, the remainder (419), were in standard classes. The school is under regular inspection by an officer of the Department, who reported very favourably on the work. Twenty pupils of Standard VI were presented for the Proficiency Examination, all gaining proficiency certificates.

The work of the school is under the management of a head teacher, ten assistant teachers, and five clerical assistants. A high standard of work is maintained, and pupils from this school can successfully compete with others in secondary schools. A fine spirit of co-operation has been engendered, pupils, parents, and teachers working harmoniously to a common end. Towards the end of the year a school paper, *The Postman*, was compiled by the teachers from material supplied by the scholars. Many ex-pupils keep in touch with their teachers, who are thus enabled to offer timely advice or assistance, where needed.

During the year the establishment of a secondary department was authorized, and by the end of the year preliminary arrangements had been made to commence operations in 1929. The courses offered include English, Arithmetic, agriculture, mathematics, book-keeping, geography, and history. Three courses are available—a general course with an agricultural trend, a course leading to Public Service Entrance, and another to Matriculation.

The addition of sewing to the curriculum of the primary department was also authorized, and arrangements made for a commencement in 1929.