

CONDITION OF SCHOOLS, BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS.

In a large majority of the schools a very considerable amount of care and attention is bestowed upon the condition and general appearance of the grounds, and the efforts of the teachers in the direction of beautifying and improving the school property are to be warmly commended. The success of the teachers' efforts is largely due to the enthusiastic interest they display in this phase of school activity, and also to the power of arousing similar interest amongst their pupils. With encouragement and direction the pupils willingly co-operate, and both they and their parents take much pride in attractive and well-kept school-grounds. Such schools as are referred to form an object-lesson to the settlements where they are situated, with the result that the people are induced to improve the surroundings of their own homes. At many of the schools a good deal of attention is given to tree-planting. These schools have small nurseries where suitable trees are reared and eventually planted out. The trees not required for school purposes are eagerly accepted by the pupils and their parents for planting near and around their homes. There are still too many schools, however, where apathy and neglect on the part of the teachers are much in evidence, and where the condition of the school-grounds is certainly no credit to them. A very large number of the schools have now the benefit of visits from the instructors in agriculture, who are prepared to give sound advice in the matter of ground improvements. The teachers of the following schools deserve special commendation for the condition of the school-grounds: Otatau, Pukepoto, Te Paroa-Totara, Manutahi, Whakara, Matangirau, Wharekahika, Mangataua, Tangoio, Waimarama, Opoutere, Pāmapuria, and Karetu.

With regard to the cleanliness of the schools, little fault, as a rule, can be found. Usually they are kept scrupulously clean, and so are the desks. The work of sweeping and washing the floors is undertaken by the elder pupils in turn, under the supervision of the teachers. The system employed in keeping the schools clean works very well indeed, and is, moreover, economical, the only expense involved being that incurred in supplying the necessary materials. One thing that particularly impresses visitors to the schools is the cleanliness of the schoolrooms and the desks. Some improvement has been noted in the interior attractiveness of the schoolrooms where previously this important matter has been but imperfectly realized. In a number of schools the condition of the shelter-sheds and out-offices indicates lack of inspection and proper supervision. In these instances it appears necessary to remind the teachers that there must be regular and effective supervision of the condition of the buildings, and particularly of the out-offices.

INSPECTION ; ORGANIZATION ; METHODS OF TEACHING.

The number of schools visited by the Inspectors during the year was as follows: 132 Native village schools, 11 Native mission schools, and 12 boarding-schools. Two village schools which began operation towards the end of the year and after the visits to the district had taken place were not visited. The annual reports upon the village schools and the mission schools indicate that generally a good standard of work is being maintained and that the schools in the main are fulfilling very satisfactorily the purpose for which they were established. Improvement is recorded in many of the schools which do not yet reach the standard of "good." From the view of general efficiency the schools may be classified as follows: Weak, 11; fair, 15; satisfactory to good, 49; good to very good, 56; excellent, 12. The secondary schools are dealt with in the section of this report referring to secondary education.

The great majority of the schools are efficiently taught, and the quality of the instruction is reflected in the very good progress made by the pupils. The teachers, as a rule, shew themselves interested in their work, and eager to adopt methods and suggestions likely to be of benefit in their teaching. In a fairly large number of the schools, however, there is a very considerable amount of ineffective teaching. The need for thoroughness in the work and for revision of work is not always properly recognized. The work of the assistant teachers in many schools is not efficiently supervised by the head teachers, and the practice of placing inexperienced junior assistants in charge of infant divisions and of leaving them practically to their own devices is still persisted in. It is found, too, that in many schools simultaneous or snap answering is permitted. This practice is not in the interests of the children, and must be discouraged. The practice of allowing the pupils to call out their answers indiscriminately and to answer by means of single words will undoubtedly produce two bad results—the laggards will not respond, and the oral expression of the pupils will deteriorate.

The preparation of the schemes of work is faulty in many respects in many of the schools. The schemes are frequently meagre and scrappy in outline, and the contents generally often betray a lack of recognition of their purpose. The work-books, likewise, are unsatisfactorily attended to, and clearly indicate an absence of preparation of lessons. It must be clearly understood that the purpose of the work-book is to indicate with sufficient detail the work proposed to be undertaken in the various subjects daily. It is certainly not intended that the work-book is to be used as a diary, to be made up at the end of the day, or, as some teachers would have it, at the end of the week. Such a misuse of the daily work-book betrays a serious misunderstanding of its purpose.

The health, cleanliness, and general welfare of their pupils are matters with which the teachers of Native schools rightly concern themselves, and in these matters the great majority of the teachers show commendable interest. They co-operate with the Health officers and nurses, and their activities extend to the adult population also. Ample supplies of medicine are provided by the Health Department, and the teachers are thus enabled to administer to the needs of the adults as well as of the children. In a very large number of schools the pupils are provided during the winter months with hot cocoa, and are undoubtedly benefited thereby. Funds for this purpose are obtained either from money subscribed for the purpose by the parents or from part of the proceeds of the school concert.