

2. REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

SIR.—

I have the honour to present the report for the year 1937 :—

STAFF.

During the greater portion of 1937 the staff numbered three only—Miss M. W. May, who took over the duties of Miss Hetherington during her absence on leave, Mr. J. E. Leaming, and Mr. E. Caradus. Mr. Caradus acted as Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools during my own absence on sick-leave throughout the whole year.

Mr. H. B. Tomlinson, M.A., formerly Principal of the Wairarapa High School, was appointed Acting-Inspector in June, but did not take up his duties until 1st August.

ROUTINE WORK.

Owing to the epidemic of infantile paralysis, no school opened before 1st March, and many schools were closed subsequently for periods of as much as six weeks' duration. In consequence partly of the shortened school year and partly of the fact that the strength of the Inspectorate was below normal, it was not possible to carry out as many inspections as usual. During the first half of the year full inspections were made of fourteen secondary and combined schools, and at various times during the year twenty-two registered private secondary and endowed schools were inspected and reported upon. The secondary departments of one district high school (Hokitika) and of the Correspondence School were also visited for inspection purposes.

During the second half of the year the usual visits were paid to all secondary and combined schools in connection with the award of senior free places and of higher-leaving certificates by recommendation and with the annual classification of assistant teachers. With the elimination of the distinction between junior and senior free places the Inspectors will not, in future, be required to devote so much of their time to the work of the Fourth Forms, but will be able to see more of the work of the school as a whole and to be of much greater assistance to teachers.

Only one teacher lodged an appeal against his classification, but this appeal was subsequently withdrawn.

SCHOOL ROLLS AND STAFFING.

The number of departmental secondary and combined schools remained the same as in 1936 (forty and six respectively), but Sacred Heart Girls' College, Timaru, was added to the list of registered private secondary schools, the total of which is now fifty-three.

The total rolls of the forty-six schools on 15th March (the date fixed for determining the grades of secondary schools) was 18,513, as compared with 18,960 on 1st March, 1936, and of the fifty-three registered private secondary schools 4,797, as compared with 4,451 on 1st March, 1936. The decrease in the first group was not unexpected, and was undoubtedly due in the main to the delayed opening of schools at the beginning of the year.

The number of pupils residing in the school hostels was 1,475, as compared with 1,133 in 1935 and 1,284 in 1936. This increase bears testimony to the returning prosperity of the country, but the number of boarders is still 16 per cent. lower than it was in 1929.

In consequence of falling rolls, twenty secondary schools dropped in grade in 1937, and in order to prevent disorganization arising from reduction in staffing and possible hardship to teachers it was decided to modify the normal staffing of schools in cases in which the Board of the school made application to the Department for favourable consideration. Seventeen of the above-mentioned schools and four others were given an additional assistant in a D grade position until 28th February, 1938. Not all schools, however, experienced a fall in the roll, and some twelve schools actually rose in grade in 1937.

FREE PLACES AND LEAVING CERTIFICATES.

The number of senior free places granted to pupils from departmental secondary and combined schools on the Principals' and Inspectors' recommendations was 4,268 (3,962 in 1936). Of the candidates who failed to obtain free places by this method, 373 sat for the Intermediate Examination in November (278 in 1936), but only 45 of these—that is, 12·1 per cent.—succeeded in securing senior free places by passing the examination. The increase in the number of candidates sitting the Intermediate Examination was undoubtedly due to the fact that for the first time for some years no fee was charged for the examination. As was to be expected, there was a very marked increase in the number of failures (328, as against 234).

The School Certificate Examination has now been held for a fourth time in conjunction with the University Entrance Examination. For the conjoint examination 4,340 candidates sat, as against 4,132 in 1936. The number of those who sat for the certificate alone fell slightly from 233 to 225. Unfortunately, these in the main still comprise the weaker types of candidates. Only 24 per cent. of them succeeded in obtaining certificates, whereas of those who sat for the conjoint examination 54 per cent. were successful.