

BLIND CHILDREN.

The education of blind children is compulsory, and where necessary the Department arranges for the admission of pupils to the New Zealand Institute for the Blind, a private institution situated at Auckland. There were 17 Government pupils in residence at 31st March, 1938, but many parents arrange privately with the Institute for the admission of their children.

The annual report which is issued by the institution gives a full account of its various activities.

TABLE 14.—INSTITUTIONS FOR BACKWARD CHILDREN: NUMBERS AT 31ST MARCH, 1938.

(*Special School for Boys, Otekaieke, and Special School for Girls, Richmond.*)

					Richmond (Girls).	Otekaieke (Boys).	Total.
In residence	..	..	..	..	60	200	260
On vacation	..	..	..	..	1	1	2
Day pupils	..	..	..	..	3	..	3
At day service	..	..	..	..	1	..	1
In hospitals, &c.	..	..	..	..	7	18	25
Totals	..	..	..	..	72	219	291

These two institutions provide for children who, being mentally retarded, cannot, for one reason or another, be taught efficiently at the ordinary school or provided for at a special class. The ordinary school curriculum is adjusted to meet the needs of the pupils and is administered by specially trained teachers of long experience in this particular work. Handwork, of course, occupies a prominent place. The health of the children at both institutions during the year was very good. A competent nurse is attached to the staff of each institution.

SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR BOYS, OTEKAIKE.

In 1906 the Government purchased 159 acres of the property of the Hon. Robert Campbell situated at Otekaieke, near Oamaru, and in the following year a further area of 342 acres.

The land purchased was subdivided and disposed of by lease with the exception of the homestead and 65 acres of grounds and plantations immediately surrounding it, which with the addition of 277 acres were handed over to the Education Department. This land and the homestead block were gazetted as land reserved for the establishment of a school for mentally backward children. The first pupils were admitted towards the end of 1908. At that time there were 4 pupils in residence, although accommodation for 22 was available. Later provision was made for approximately 70. The growth of the institution has been rapid, and with improvements to the land and the addition of buildings there are at present 140 pupils in the day-school section and 60 in the industrial section.

The climate of Otekaieke is invigorating, the rainfall light, and, although the temperature is sometimes low in winter, the altitude and the dryness of the atmosphere make climatic conditions unusually favourable.

The annual report of the Manager of the Special School for Boys is appended.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MANAGER OF THE SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR BOYS, OTEKAIKE.

I beg to submit herewith my report for the year ended 31st March, 1938, on this School, which was established in 1908 for the purpose of educating and training boys of subnormal mentality who are considered able to benefit by instruction.

On the 31st March, 1938, the number of boys in residence was 200; of these, 140 were in the day-school section and 60 in the industrial department. Seventy new pupils were admitted during the year, and 79 left the institution. Of those who left, 75 returned to ordinary life in the community, 4 were found to be unsuitable for training in the institution; of these, 3 were transferred to the Templeton Farm Home and 1 to the Boys' Training-farm, Weraroa.

In the industrial department the boys received training in farm, garden, and orchard work, bootmaking and repairing, coir-mat making, seagrass-furniture making and basketmaking, carpentry, and general domestic work (laundry, kitchen, &c.).

The farm supplied the requirements of the institution in fresh milk, meat, and potatoes. The garden produced an abundant supply of fresh vegetables, and, in addition, all the fruit required for jam-making, &c. In the boot-shop the boots required by the inmates during the year were made, together with the horse and cow covers required on the farm; and all the repairs necessary to boots, harness, &c., were carried out. Coir mats, seagrass furniture, and basketware were made in the basket-shop.

Of the 140 boys in the day school, the average chronological age was twelve years four months, average mental age eight years seven and a half months, with an average intelligence quotient (Terman) of 0.70. Of these pupils, all were either retarded boys of definite temperamental instability or subnormal boys, the great majority of whom are mentally unstable.

The aim of the School is to re-place in public schools retarded boys as soon as they give promise of making satisfactory social adjustment, and to train the subnormal boys, so that on leaving the school they may be replaced in the community and ultimately become self-supporting.

In the curriculum, although emphasis is laid on physical, manual, and musical work, academic work is not neglected, and the academic classes for the year ended 31st March, 1938, comprised Primer 1 to Standard 4. Training in woodwork was given by the Woodwork Instructor. When it is found that a pupil has advanced as far as possible in academic work he is transferred to the senior manual class for special manual training to fit him to be generally useful and to enable him to accept responsibility.