

SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR.

SIR,—

School for the Deaf, 28th April, 1909.

I have the honour to lay before you my report for the year, 1908.

The number of pupils who have been under instruction during the year is shown in the following tabulated statement:—

	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Pupils of the previous year who returned to school	36	27	63
Admitted at or near the commencement of the year	11	8	19
Admitted later	2	2	4
Total number to be accounted for	49	37	86
Deaths	1	1	2
Left at the end of the school year	2	0	2
Pupils expected to return in 1909	46	36	82

Of the 86 pupils, 24 came from the Auckland District, 3 from Taranaki, 1 from Hawke's Bay, 19 from Wellington, 1 from Marlborough, 19 from Canterbury, 2 from Westland, and 17 from Otago.

It will be seen from the above table that the unusually large number of twenty-three new pupils was admitted during the year, being seven in excess of the number previously recorded in any one year. Of the four cases admitted towards the middle of the year, two were sent here to learn lip-reading. One of these was a boy of ten and the other a girl of eighteen years of age, both of whom had recently become deaf. The former was soon able to take his place in the lower division of the pupils admitted in the previous year. In the case of the latter, as she had already received a public-school education, it was not necessary for her to go through the whole course of instruction, two hours' instruction in lip-reading per day being sufficient. At the close of the year, though somewhat short-sighted, she had made remarkable progress in the art. Another late admission was that of a boy of thirteen, who had previously been a pupil here, having been admitted in 1902, but subsequently removed owing to ill health. It was gratifying to find that this boy had retained much of the language acquired by him during the fifteen months of his previous residence at the school. He was soon able to take his place in the upper division of the pupils who were admitted in 1907.

The fourth late admission was that of a girl of nearly seventeen years of age, who, though mentally bright and physically robust, had, through the mistaken tenderness of her relatives, been kept at home until this advanced age. It is to be hoped that as the work of the school becomes more familiar to the general public, cases such as this will become impossibilities. By the end of the year this girl was able to overtake the upper division of the pupils admitted at the beginning of the year.

Two of the nineteen pupils admitted then belonged to the class of dull hearers. One of these was a girl of nearly thirteen, who should have been sent here years ago; the other was a bright little Maori boy of seven. By the end of the year these two children were able to take their places among the pupils admitted in 1906.

A very interesting case amongst the new admissions was that of a very intelligent little girl of ten, a recent immigrant from Scotland, where she had been taught for four years on the combined system. On her arrival she expressed herself almost entirely by means of signs. It is pleasing to note that she has now discarded their use, and that she relies altogether on speech and lip-reading.

With two exceptions the other new-comers were able to master the course of work prescribed for the first year, and six turned out to be of more than ordinary ability.

The results of the school-work taken as a whole were very satisfactory, and the general progress of the pupils up to the expectations of the Director. In the case only of a comparatively small number of pupils of less than average mental ability was the rate of progress less than normal. Better results would be obtained if it were possible to educate these dull children separately.

The progress of the semi-blind girl referred to in my last annual report, though of course unequal to that of pupils not handicapped by a double affliction, was greater than had been expected. She is now able to articulate and to write short easy sentences, and her mental horizon is consequently much enlarged.

Only two pupils left at the end of the year. One of these is now employed on his father's farm; the other was a boy who had been admitted in 1906 to be educated by means of lip-reading. The same illness that had robbed him of his hearing had also affected his eyesight. The boy made, considering his affliction, excellent progress in lip-reading, but, his eyesight continuing to deteriorate, it was considered advisable to have him removed from the school with a view to his being sent to the School for the Blind.

A very sad occurrence in connection with the opening of the school in February was the death of a little Maori girl, a newcomer from Hokianga. On her arrival at the school she was found to be suffering from an acute brain-disorder caused by a tumour. She was removed to the Christchurch Hospital, where she died a few days after her admission.

The health of the pupils was not so good as in the previous year, and the work of the school suffered considerably in consequence. There were several cases of pneumonia in the autumn, and one