

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—During the year capitation, under the Manual and Technical Regulations, was earned by 116 schools, as compared with 121 in 1908, and 116 in 1907. The following table shows the numbers under instruction during the year in the various manual and technical subjects :—

Subject.	Number of Schools.	Number of Pupils.
Handwork	97	11,822
Elementary agriculture	55	1,072
Needlework (with instructor when head teacher is a male) ..	17	217
Elementary chemistry	8	291
Physiology and first aid	8	361
Swimming and life-saving	8	534
Elementary physical measurements	8	313
Dairy-work	1	18
Dressmaking	5	64
Cookery (Wairarapa and Pahiatua centres)	9	281
„ (Wellington centre)	11	467
„ (Petone centre)	2	80
„ (Manawatu)	2	58
Woodwork (Wellington centre)	11	892
„ (Petone centre)	2	99
Total		16,569

Instruction in cookery and woodwork was extended to Petone, where large classes received instruction in the technical school. It is hoped to see next year a centre for cookery and woodwork established at the Mount Cook Schools. The Board has decided to undertake at the Normal, Carterton, Greytown, Masterton, Pahiatua, and Levin Schools the rural course at district high schools as proposed under Manual and Technical Regulation 27 (g), and since the end of the year the necessary additional instructors have been appointed. The development of this plan of instruction will be observed with the keenest interest. While the number of schools earning a grant has slightly decreased, on the other hand the number of pupils shows a substantial increase, especially in handwork, chemistry, physical measurements, woodwork, cookery, and agriculture. The number of instructors in the last three has now increased to three, three, and two respectively. The Board observes with pleasure the report of the Inspectors as to the steadily growing recognition of the high educational value of the school garden, and as to the excellence of the agricultural work accomplished at a number of schools.

PHYSICAL AND MILITARY DRILL.—The Inspectors report that in most of our schools breathing-exercises are taken daily, and physical drill, consisting mainly of free exercises and exercises with wands and clubs, is generally satisfactory. Military drill is taken in the larger schools, in most of which the reports range from good to very good.

MEDICAL INSPECTION.—The question of the compulsory medical inspection of school-children has from time to time engaged the serious attention of my Board. An examination of between three and four hundred children, conducted by two medical men of recognized standing, was undertaken. While the report shows that the physical condition of the children was, on the whole, good, there were disclosed quite a considerable number of cases of defect preventible and remediable, but in many instances previously unrecognized. My Board is strongly of opinion that, from humanitarian, educational, and national economic considerations, the establishment of a well-considered State system of medical inspection of school-children is highly advisable, even if it be begun on a very small scale until actual requirement is determined by experience. My Board is convinced that from the point of view of national efficiency it will cost less to undertake this work than not to undertake it. It is found that the Boards of the Dominion are in substantial agreement, and you are aware that the more progressive Legislatures of other countries are in advance of New Zealand in this matter. State inspection of schools has been undertaken in Tasmania, New South Wales, England, France, Argentine, Switzerland, Japan, and other countries.

BUILDINGS.—New schools were erected by grant at Petone West (brick), Pukehinau, and Putara ; reconstructions and additions were completed at Waikanae, Upper Hutt, Martinborough, and Pahiatua. New residences were erected by grants at Waikanae, Reikiorangi, Hastwell, Muhunua East, Tokomaru, Horoeaka, and Pukehinau. There were overhauled thirty-one schools and nine residences, and, besides, minor improvements were effected at five residences. New latrines were erected at eight country and two city schools. The Board is face to face at the present time with a very large outlay in the suburbs of Wellington for connection of the conveniences with the drainage system. Renewal of fencing at many of our older schools is now very necessary, and has received attention so far as the means at disposal have permitted.

The building programme of the year was compiled with care, and, as the Board believes, with a due regard to the best interests and the most pressing requirements in the district. It included the reconstruction of several rooms in different schools, which became necessary because at the same time enlargements of these schools were required. This programme it has carried out, only to be informed, for the first time after the end of the financial year, that the maintenance of buildings grant, which for five years had averaged £5,000 and last year amounted to £5,501, was reduced to £3,455 through the omission of amount for reconstruction. Further, the necessary expenditure of large sums in the purchase of sites during past years has seriously reduced the sum available for building operations of even a pressing character. If the full amount of the maintenance of buildings grant is required in districts where the expenditure on sites is inconsiderable, how can it suffice where there is a steady drain on the building funds of a Board which finds that, owing to rapid settlement of suburban areas, the purchase of costly sites has become not a luxury but a costly necessity. The purchase of such sites cannot be delayed, nor can it be undertaken piecemeal. The Board must either purchase a sufficient site or to some extent sacrifice the future interests of the school. In five years it has expended over £4,800