

Arithmetic is very satisfactory up to about Standard IV, especially those portions of the subject in which mechanical accuracy plays an important part. In the two upper classes the problem work presents more or less serious difficulties, so that but few pupils are able to deal effectually with the work of Standard VI.

Handwork in general is highly commendable, pupils entering into the various occupations with genuine interest and a good deal of zest. We would be glad to see an extension of handwork, and look forward to a wider use of this method of training when the results of the classes for teachers now being held begin to declare themselves. Many teachers have a strong prejudice against the use of plasticine, one of the most valuable of all handwork materials, in that the prevalence of skin-diseases makes its use highly undesirable, if not positively dangerous. Though we cannot help feeling that there is much truth in this contention, we are of opinion that efforts should be made to remove all cause for restricting its use in order to take advantage of the many benefits certain to follow its introduction as a handwork accessory. The keeping of each child's material in a separate labelled box, and the disinfecting of the material at short intervals, so far as that is possible, would do much to ensure safe conditions of use.

History and geography are very fair. The language difficulty operates here with considerable retarding effect, and the absence of tradition reinforced by home influence is also a contributing cause to want of thoroughness.

Pupils generally are well behaved, readily amenable to discipline, courteous and respectful in demeanour, and under favourable conditions careful in the discharge of duties, and industrious in application to work.

WANGANUI.

We have little to add to our last report on this subject. In only seven of the public schools do the Maori pupils form a large proportion of the roll. Here the bilingual difficulty is a real one, and some allowance on this score has to be made to the Maori pupil right through his course. The difficulty of conducting a mixed school with Native and pakeha elements is further increased by unwillingness of many of the Maori guardians to take much trouble with the dress and personal cleanliness of the children. Teachers frequently complain, too, that it is very difficult to induce some of the Maori parents to provide school-books. Another great drawback, which affects not only the progress of the Maori pupils but in some cases also the establishment or continuance of schools, arises from the Maori custom of moving the children from place to place, from guardian to guardian. Three of our schools in particular—Moawhango, Kakatahi, and Wangaeahu—have from this cause been reduced almost to vanishing-point.

HAWKE'S BAY.

In 1916 Maori children were enrolled in fifty-four schools in the Hawke's Bay District. The total number returned as belonging to the schools in December was 742, the average number of Maori children per school being thus fourteen.

In only eleven out of the fifty-four schools referred to were Maori children presented in Standard VI, the total number thus classified being twelve. Four of these gained certificates of proficiency and three certificates of competency at the end of the year. Of the other children the great majority consists of pupils in Class P, S1, or S2, their ages varying from between five and six to between fifteen and sixteen.

From my observations in those schools which came directly under my notice I am of opinion that the methods of teaching are not well suited to the needs of Maori children. Especially is this the case in regard to English language, the absence of systematized instruction in which subject, while it affects adversely the European children in the school, is a fatal bar to the progress of the Maoris. The absence of a definite series of oral lessons in English as contemplated in the syllabus, and the consequent want of regular practice in speech, deny to the children the opportunity of acquiring as soon as possible an acquaintance with the simplest forms of the language and of expressing themselves in it. Further, my experience has convinced me that only some kind of phonic teaching—preferably the use of the "look and say" combined with phonic method—is likely to give the Maori child the power to read, with satisfactory pronunciation and good enunciation, in a reasonably short time. The alphabetic method, though generally regarded as obsolete, is followed in many of the schools under review, and this has undoubtedly led to retardation and unsatisfactory work.

While it is true that more individual attention is necessary in the case of Maori children, it is a mistake to think that entirely different methods are required or that Maori children cannot be taught until they have spent some considerable time in school. It is owing to such mistaken ideas that Maori children are to be found who have been nearly five years in Class P, and others who after being seven years at school have not succeeded in reaching Standard II.

The only other possible explanation for such cases is that no interest is taken in them. The work of the more advanced pupils shows the same unstable foundation, and in the English subjects a corresponding weakness is manifest.

With regard to the regularity of attendance, I have to report that the Board takes due precaution to see that the provisions of the Act are duly carried out, and teachers are instructed accordingly. There have been several cases in which the parents have been proceeded against for breaches of the regulations. Where, however, the children are made to feel that some interest is taken in them, and they are progressing in their work, no difficulty is experienced.

It must be realized, however, that in various parts of the district where Maoris live there is a marked objection on the part of the Europeans to the comingling of the children of both races in the one school. In two instances this has led to the provision of separate schools, a