

The order, discipline, and tone of our schools may be adjudged as ranging from satisfactory to excellent, the number of schools in which the mark "fair" is given being so small as to be negligible. This report is indeed a gratifying evidence of the great work that is done by our schools as moral agents, and of the earnestness displayed by the teachers in their calling.

We are glad to note that the Department is taking a direct interest in the architecture of the schools. There is certainly a great need for the brightening of the interiors of the schoolrooms. At present, while there are comparatively few class-rooms that are attractive, there are a great many that are drab, cheerless, and uninviting, with a suggestion of barracks. In this matter it must be recognized that the teacher as well as the Board has a duty to perform, for he can by attention to neat arrangement at least avoid the reproach of neglect; a good many teachers brighten up their rooms by tasteful arrangement of flowers. A few schools have led the way in rendering the school-grounds attractive. In this movement the enterprising enthusiasm of the teacher has been the main driving-force. We sincerely hope that the beginning thus made will inspire School Committees and well-wishers of the primary schools with a zeal that will not rest till all the schools have become what they ought to be—the "showplaces" of their districts. How far the reality falls short of this ideal will be appreciated when we state that there is a fairly large number of playgrounds so ill-drained that they are unfit for games and physical exercises during a great part of the year. We wish also to put forward a plea for the improvement of teachers' residences, which should be modernized so as to compare on even terms with those of other citizens. Bath-rooms and high-pressure ranges should surely be regarded as indispensable in these days.

We are glad to be able to report that the quality of the applicants for entry into the service as pupil-teachers and probationers is improving. A higher percentage of the applicants have qualified for matriculation or partial matriculation than in former years; moreover, a few promising boys of good personality are beginning again to be attracted to the profession. It was deemed necessary to examine those pupil-teachers and probationers who had not passed either the Matriculation Examination or the first two groups of the D Examination. The results of this examination, which was held in September, were on the whole satisfactory. There is evidence, however, that those who are appointed with no higher educational attainment than the Intermediate Certificate in most cases find preparation for examination burdensome, and that some of them are deficient in the general knowledge that is required every hour of the day in the schoolroom.

The Saturday classes for uncertificated teachers had to be closed down for a lengthy period owing to the restrictions placed upon railway travelling. To the earnest young teacher bent upon improving himself these classes are a much appreciated boon. The services rendered by the devoted band of instructors are worthy of all praise.

The appointment of a physical instructor for the Southland schools will enable physical instruction to be systematized throughout the district. Ever since the inception of the present scheme of physical instruction in 1913 the Southland schools have as a whole taken a keen interest in this branch, and we believe that the results in improved physique have justified the attention given to it. We are convinced, too, that indirect benefits have accrued in respect of discipline and of the relation between teachers and pupils. The corrective classes in the large schools appear to be finding favour with the parents. Very successful classes for the training of teachers were held in September. These were attended by pupil-teachers, probationers, and adult teachers who had recently joined the service or who wished to refresh their knowledge of the subject.

Last year was also signalized by the appointment of a resident Medical Inspector of Schools for Southland. Although we are not so directly in touch with the work of the medical branch, we have had opportunities of noting the magnitude of the work involved and the growing interest taken in it by parents. We therefore trust that a separate Medical Inspector of Schools for Southland will become a permanency.

When the Lady Supervisors visit the district we shall have a number of problems to submit—*e.g.*, the duration of the sewing-lesson, the character of the sewing taught, the utility of advanced needlework as a school subject, the feasibility of providing a hot meal for pupils that do not go home at dinner-time, and the procuring of supplies of infant-teaching apparatus.

During recent years the urgent need for a more up-to-date method of travelling for Inspectors has become more apparent. Other travellers who cover the same routes as Inspectors of Schools now almost universally use motor-cars when they diverge from the railways, with the result that in most centres horses can no longer be hired. Inspectors of Schools, who in this district depend for conveyance on the railway, on horse-drawn vehicles, and on ordinary bicycles, have accordingly to endure hardships and suffer inconveniences that other travellers escape. The alternative, which has often to be resorted to—*i.e.*, the hiring of motor-cars, involving as it does a double journey for the car, in the morning and in the evening—is unduly expensive. If Inspectors were provided with motor-cars they would be able not only to carry out their duties more expeditiously and efficiently, but also in this district to escape the discomforts inseparable from using open conveyances in a rigorous climate.

We have, &c.,

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A. INGLIS,	
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The Director of Education.