

RETARDATION.—The causes which have been shown to underlie retardation in another district no doubt hold good generally. The frequent changes in school and consequent loss of time do explain most cases, as is seen in considering applications for junior free places from pupils over the age of fifteen. Remoteness is also a common factor. We note, however, that in some of the largest schools there is a tendency to hold back the children in the preparatory classes longer than we consider necessary. In one school, for example, half the number in the highest preparatory class had already been two years at school, and should have been promoted to S1. In another case we noted that thirteen pupils classified in P1 had been over a year in school, and, indeed, the whole class showed insufficient progress for the time since admission. The organization in such circumstances cannot be considered satisfactory, and we have informed the head teachers concerned that more rapid promotion is required. The retention of pupils for a whole year in a P4 class cannot be justified. We think, however, that, especially in the case of the large city schools, children who are entering for the first time should be admitted only at the beginning of each term.

Special Class for Retardates.—To meet the needs of exceptional pupils, a special class was established during the year. In its establishment we were fortunate in having the co-operation of the Schools Medical Officer, Dr. Clark, who is specially interested in what are termed ungraded children. The results have fully justified the establishment of the class and, we understand, gave satisfaction to the Department expert who visited it towards the end of the year.

Hospital Special Class.—During the year a special class was also established, in the interests of child inmates, at the Napier Hospital. This class, which comprises all standards (P—S6) is fulfilling a long-felt want, and is much appreciated by the children and by their parents.

ORGANIZING TEACHERS. Two organizing teachers are engaged in the district, each having a dozen small schools under his supervision. There is no doubt as to the value of the assistance given—these little schools with very few exceptions are doing remarkably good work, and especially in the northern end the visits of the organizing teacher are eagerly sought by the parents. We have been assured that none of the recent provisions of the Department has given more satisfaction to parents in the backblocks than that by which the teachers in charge of their little schools are regularly visited by a capable and experienced adviser.

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—There are now five district high schools in operation in this district, and we consider that they are all doing satisfactory work and meeting a real want.

The programme prescribed by the rural course is adopted by all pupils in the first two years, and thereafter the ordinary matriculation course is followed. Agricultural science, comprising general physics and chemistry, agriculture, dairy science, and, for girls, home science, is studied in the first and second years, and natural science, physics and chemistry, agriculture and dairy science, with home science for girls, are taken up to the matriculation standard in the third and fourth years. In three of the district high schools the science subjects are in the hands of the special instructor in agriculture, and we consider that this has contributed very largely to the success which has been achieved. Nor can we see at present any advantage to be gained by dispensing with the special instructors. We have found it very difficult, if not indeed impossible, to get as teachers in district high schools those who are qualified in every subject of the curriculum, including science, and adequate provision should be made for the training of teachers in this important branch.

The establishment of the Isabella Siteman Scholarship, of the value of £80 per annum, offered every two years, and tenable for four years to pupils from secondary schools in Hawke's Bay Education District who take a prescribed course in science at the University of Otago, should prove a great stimulus to science in our schools.

SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION.—In the following paragraphs our impressions of the quality of the instruction in the various subjects in the curriculum are set forth:—

Reading.—Thanks to the expansion of the school library, there is a great deal more reading in the district than formerly, and the subject accordingly shows commendable improvement. The elocutionary aspect, however, still requires special attention, and the comprehension would be further enhanced were the pupils encouraged to debate the topics suggested to them by the reading-lesson. Recitation still gives us little satisfaction. In some of the larger schools the passages were not known as they should be, while style in delivery was almost entirely wanting. In only one or two schools could the recitation be said to be excellent. The best results have been obtained where pupils have offered their own selection, and we commend this practice to all concerned.

Spelling.—The written work of the pupils shows that the small error has not yet been eliminated in the upper classes, and that while there is more actual teaching of spelling, careful supervision of the pupils' own work must not be overlooked; nor do we think that the adoption of a spelling-book will relieve the teachers from dealing with the mistakes that the pupil actually makes. "If commonly used words are properly mastered and spelling attitude and ideal are right, the small specialized vocational vocabulary most of us need may be left to itself."

Writing.—The formal writing throughout the district is generally of a very high quality, so much so that there seems to be no reason why those who can write and can teach writing should make use of an ordinary copybook. It is important, however, to see that the neatness which characterizes the formal work should be maintained to some degree, at any rate, in the general written work. Every written lesson then would be more or less a writing-lesson.

Composition.—We have made some reference to this in connection with the Proficiency Examination, but we would again stress the extreme importance of the subject. We consider that pupils who have been eight years at school should have a better command of language than they frequently have, and that they should be able to express themselves correctly and freely. We have advised teachers to announce the subjects of composition beforehand to allow the children to collect information upon the topic chosen and make a rough draft and then present the finished copy. We