

## APPENDIX C.

## REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

## AUCKLAND.

**PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION.**—The pupils in Standard VI were examined for certificates of proficiency and competency during the latter part of November and during December, the town and suburban schools and most of the country ones being visited by Inspectors for this purpose. In those schools which, in the opinion of the Inspectors, were most efficiently conducted and taught a system of accrediting was again adopted, and a percentage of the pupils were granted certificates without examination. In every such case, however, before the certificate was granted, the headmaster's records were consulted, the work of the pupil at the various periodical examinations was reviewed, and his daily attendances, conduct, and attitude towards his work were considered. We are of opinion that this system of accrediting, with the sufficient safeguards provided, is having a beneficial effect, for it serves as an inducement to the pupils to attend punctually and regularly, and as an incentive to good daily work throughout the year. A synchronous examination was held for the pupils of many of the smaller country schools, the questions being set by the Senior Inspector and the examination supervised by the head teachers. In every case the papers were marked and the award of certificates made by the Inspectors. The work done at the Proficiency Examinations was in general of high quality, the town and suburban schools especially securing excellent results.

**CLASSIFICATION AND PROMOTION OF PUPILS.**—In general, the classification and promotion of pupils at the end of the year is determined by the headmaster with sound judgment, and pupils are well able to deal satisfactorily with the work of the standard class to which they have been promoted. Some head teachers still consider that promotions should be made only at the end of the year, but it is pleasing to note that the large majority are adopting the principle of promoting the pupil when the latter is ready. To some extent the question of accommodation in the next higher room has unduly influenced promotion, but by the subdivision of classes into upper and lower groups the difficulty has been overcome. Accelerated promotions have in many cases resulted in a large number of pupils covering the year's syllabus in six months and then proceeding to the next year's allotment. The incentive to work under these conditions is considerable, and we have noted no ill effects due to overstrain. Many pupils by rapid promotion now miss a standard class, and almost invariably are found to be in the upper part of the new class during the ensuing year. Especially is this noticeable in the secondary departments of district high schools; in many cases the top pupils in the junior secondary class are those who passed through Standards V and VI in one year. In a few large schools a system of special classes has been fostered. Standards III, IV, and V pupils are subdivided into two groups, A and B. Class A consists of the bright pupils, who are taught by one teacher, and Class B of the duller ones, who are taught by another teacher. The results in one case were remarkable: in Special A Class there were nine pupils in Standard V all of whom gained Standard VI certificates of proficiency with marks averaging higher than those of Standard VI pupils in the same school. Of Special B, three of the Standard V pupils sat for certificates, one gaining a certificate of proficiency and two of competency. Under ordinary treatment none of these pupils either in Special A or Special B would have sat for examination.

**RETARDATION.**—Teachers are much more alive to this problem, and most head and sole teachers have made genuine attempts to reduce the time that their pupils spend in the primer classes. During the past two years there have been more promotions in the course of the year within the department than in previous years. In the absence of a system of mental testing it is, of course, impossible to estimate with a reasonable degree of accuracy the amount of retardation in any group or groups of pupils. It must be borne in mind that most teachers are faced with one or more of the following difficulties, which tend to lengthen the time spent by the pupils in the primer department: (a) Frequent changes of school due to shifting population; (b) late entry to school; (c) loss of time owing to distance from school, weather conditions, or sickness (although the time at school on the roll may appear as twelve or eighteen months, the actual time at school may be only a few months); (d) some five-year-old pupils develop very slowly. Still, the retardation or non-promotion of the bright pupils is a serious weakness, most noticeable in the larger schools, where possibly the lack of accommodation may be urged as an excuse. A competent and efficient headmaster should be able to solve the difficulty. One remedy would seem to lie in the teacher in, say, Standard I room promoting part of her class, retaining them in the same room, and thus pushing them forward in the work of Standard II. This should not be impossible to the efficient teacher; the promoted pupils will naturally be very keen, and will not be a source of worry to the teacher, as they might be if they went to another room; their teacher will reap all the honours, since they will remain as exhibits in her own room. And if all the staff pursue the same policy, then the general promotion at the end of the year will not unduly congest any room. There is another aspect of the matter which calls for serious consideration. Many headmasters demand in the highest preparatory class a standard of attainment much beyond that prescribed in the syllabus, and this is especially so in the case of arithmetic. One frequently finds the work of Standard I completed before the pupils reach that class, with the consequent result that somewhere