

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.

There are now twenty-five district high schools in operation in this district, the number of such schools, and the number of secondary pupils enrolled therein, having increased considerably during the past few years. Special attention is given by Inspectors to these schools, in view of the fact that their establishment makes it possible for large numbers of country pupils to receive some form of secondary education. The pupils cover for the first two years a rural course, and in the third or fourth year the Matriculation course. The work presented by the secondary departments of these schools can, on the whole, be classed as good; the success of pupils at examinations reflects credit on the teachers and their school. The work, however, varies considerably from school to school, the variation being due to the class of secondary teacher obtainable. Prior to the establishment of junior high schools the position of secondary assistants in a district high school was somewhat of a "dead end," with the result that a relatively poor type of teacher was obtained for these positions; now, however, with the increased salaries for secondary assistants, and with the prospect of promotion to a junior high or secondary school position, more efficient teachers should be available. Generally speaking, the weakest work in these schools is done in the junior divisions, and frequently at the end of their first year the pupils' work is not much in advance of that of a good Sixth Standard. The success of the high-school department depends in very large measure on the personality and efficiency of the headmaster, who should at all times realize that the secondary department is just as important a branch of his school as the primary division.

Of the subjects of instruction, arithmetic is in general only fair; this is due probably to two causes: firstly, there are insufficient blackboard illustrations, too little instruction in short methods and in quick mental arithmetic, and a lack of insistence on accurate and neat setting-out of all work; and, secondly, there is a lessened amount of time given to the subject. Mathematics, both algebra and geometry, are somewhat better, but here again too great a reliance on books, too little blackboard exercise, and a lack of application of matter taught to practical examples are weaknesses which should be eliminated. English receives better treatment. The grammatical portion of the subject, however, requires more attention; a test given to district-high-school pupils on formal grammar, even that of a practical kind such as correction of sentences, sequence of tenses, difference between active and passive, &c., gives disappointing results. Literature is much better treated; the essays written are of good quality and full in matter, while there is abundant evidence that the pupils are encouraged to read widely. In nearly if not all such schools a good library has been established, and a complete record is kept of the books read by the pupils. One would like to see on the shelves of such libraries more books of travel, biographies, and some useful reference-books in geography and history. Oral expression is grievously neglected; as far as fine, accurate speech and the reading of poetry and plays are concerned the pupils are virtually dumb. It is unfortunate that after Standard VI is passed no oral test is ever applied in examinations. Debates should be a regular feature of secondary-school work. Science is well taught, and the Board's instructors kept in close touch with the work. Frequent visits are paid, and the instructors devote the major portion of their time during such visits in giving advice and assistance to the class-teachers. Geography and history are satisfactory. In history a serious weakness is that too little attention is paid to New Zealand history, while the civic instruction is of too formal and mechanical a nature. French is taught fairly well, the best results being obtained where the teacher adopts the conversational method. In a very few cases Latin is taught.

ORGANIZING TEACHERS.

We desire to record our appreciation of the valuable work done by the organizing teachers in this district. Each organizing teacher has a group of some twelve to fifteen schools, which are situated in remote places and staffed by inexperienced but promising young teachers. Several visits, varying in length from two days to a week at a time, are paid to those schools during the year. The organizing teacher takes charge of the school and either himself teaches or watches the teacher at work, giving helpful advice and assistance. So soon as a teacher becomes efficient in his control and conduct of the school the organizing teacher ceases his visits, and another school is added to his list. A report as the result of each visit is forwarded to the Senior Inspector, and a copy of such report is submitted to the Inspector of the area, who is thereby enabled to keep in close touch both with the organizing teacher and the teacher of the school visited. Schemes of work and time-tables for sole-charge and part-time schools have been drawn up by the organizing teachers, and are available on application to the Board. The work of the organizing teachers is arduous and in some degree uninteresting, but they continue to display a keenness and enthusiasm which merit commendation. Our thanks are due to the Board for granting these officers permission to spend a week during the year in visiting the best city schools to enable them to keep in touch with modern methods. At the end of each year the organizing teachers submit a joint report indicating clearly the weaknesses noted by them and the methods suggested for improvement. A separate report by each organizing teacher is also forwarded to the Senior Inspector, giving in detail the work done by each school, a brief statement of the efficiency of the teacher, and suggestions as to future work.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.

We note with pleasure the improvement in school environment. Many schools are surrounded by grounds which are exceptionally well kept, reflecting credit on Committees, parents, teachers, and scholars. The influence of interior environment seems also to have been fully recognized by the majority of teachers, for most class-rooms have been rendered attractive by displays of pictures, pot-plants, and flowers. The good work done by School Committees and teachers in raising funds to