

EFFICIENCY OF METHODS.

One of the most noticeable improvements in this connection is the cultivation of a sound school spirit. Even in the small country schools the effect of this change is most apparent, and is exhibited in the keener interest taken by parents in all matters pertaining to the school. The ready response which is given to all appeals for funds for additions to the libraries and for school improvements is most gratifying. In the large town schools the change amounts almost to a reformation. Here the organization of the outside activities of the pupils is now so very complete that school-life has a charm about it which was totally absent a few years back.

In order to overcome the absence of a model school in this district we have adopted the practice of sending the weaker teachers to observe their stronger comrades at work. In this connection we have been very much indebted to the Department for allowing us to have, for a year, Miss Kemp, an exchange London infants' mistress. Every opportunity was given to our infant-teachers to observe Miss Kemp's methods, and we are pleased to state that full advantage was taken of the opportunity. Others of our own proved teachers have also done excellent work in helping their weaker fellows, and the Department might consider whether these teachers should not be rewarded for the work they are doing in the same way as are the associated teachers in the larger centres.

An extension of the team system has been made in most of the larger schools, and by this means promotions throughout the year have been made much more frequently.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.

The training given to the probationers and pupil-teachers has been highly satisfactory, as the results of the 1924 teachers' examinations go to show. In this examination, out of a total of forty-four pupil-teachers and probationers, one gained a full C certificate, nineteen gained full D, eighteen gained partial D (failing in one subject only), and three gained partial pass in two or in three groups.

SCHEMES OF WORK AND WORK-BOOKS.

These now receive very satisfactory attention, and, with the aid which has already been given by the Inspectors in drawing up these books, little difficulty should now be found in extending and improving the existing plans of work.

RETARDATION.

Though the ill-effects of the past are still apparent in certain districts, we are pleased to report that during this last year there has been a marked improvement in the progress of the pupils in most of our retarded schools. Better infant-teaching, a keener all-round interest in school matters, and the firm attitude of the Hon. the Minister and the Education Board in abolishing hop-picking holidays have been chiefly responsible for the change.

SCHOLARSHIP EXAMINATIONS.

Although the efficiency of a district cannot be judged from the results of the scholarship examinations, still the results may in some way point a lesson. It has been noted that the Junior National Scholarship is not fully serving the purpose for which it was originally intended—namely, to enable the promising primary pupil to continue his education at a secondary school. A review of the winners of these scholarships at the last examination shows that the majority of them are already in attendance at a high school, and that, therefore, to them at least, the scholarship is superfluous. Moreover, the better a district is served with secondary schools the greater will be the number of scholarships falling to that district. The idea of lowering the scholarship age to thirteen years, and possibly of limiting the entrants to primary pupils only, would be a step in the right direction. Something might also be done to lessen the work entailed in the examination of so many candidates. If, a considerable time ahead, teachers were required to nominate to the Inspectors of their respective districts the probable candidates for these examinations, these officers could, during their visits, inquire into the chances such candidates might have, and where necessary veto the application to be examined. In this way the number of legitimate entrants could be reduced by fully 50 per cent.

INTERCHANGE OF SENIOR INSPECTORS.

The action of the Department last year in interchanging these officers for three months has been the source of much good to the Inspectors themselves, to their own districts, and to the districts into which they were sent. Not only did it enable them to form a better estimate of the grading of other districts as compared with their own, but it allowed them to see good features in the work of their fellow Inspectors, and where possible to copy them, thus bringing about a general improvement in the work.

SCHOOL FURNITURE AND APPARATUS.

One thing especially that the exchange has revealed is the poor supply in the Nelson District of up-to-date furniture and school apparatus. Many of the desks now in use have long outlived their usefulness, and should ere this have been replaced by a more hygienic type; the supply of apparatus, moreover, should certainly keep pace with the demands of modern education.

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.

Special reports have already been submitted to the Department on the secondary divisions of our three district high schools. From these it will be seen that Motueka and Reefton are highly satisfactory, and the former is rapidly increasing its roll. The work being done in secondary departments of these two schools would do credit to any separate high school. The Lower Takaka School, however, still fails to attract any increased attendance.