

## 1. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 14th June, 1928.

I have the honour to present the report for the year 1927. So far as inspection work is concerned, this has proceeded on much the same lines as hitherto. Advantage was taken, however, of a complete and unchanged inspectorate to attempt to convert the previous triennial round of full inspections into a biennial one by visiting in the earlier half of the year as many as nineteen of the secondary schools, ten in the North and nine in the South Island. All but four of the forty-one secondary schools have now been fully inspected within the past two years.

At various times during the year opportunity was also taken to inspect thirteen of the private registered secondary schools. The number of these schools has grown considerably in the past few years—from nineteen in 1920 to thirty-nine in 1927—and several of them have developed into comparatively large schools of from 200 to 300 pupils. It is obvious that more time will need to be set aside in the future for supervising the work in the private schools. Many of them are doing quite good work on their own chosen lines, but others, owing chiefly to cramped conditions and meagre roll numbers, are doing little more than just struggling along, and are providing a narrow and mediocre type of education.

Reference was made in the last report to the initiation of a system whereby the secondary school Inspectors have been enabled to visit the secondary departments of district high schools. It was felt that by this means a closer correlation between the two types of post-primary schools might be obtained and that the district-high-school teacher might be brought into closer touch with secondary-school methods and aims. The benefits derived from the system in its first year of operation were undoubtedly such as to justify its continuance. During the past year its application has been somewhat improved by visiting the whole, or nearly all, of the district high schools in one education district at a time, in this way a more accurate estimate has been obtained of the methods followed in a district than by visiting odd schools when opportunity served. The majority of the district high schools in the Auckland, Taranaki, and Nelson Districts, some twenty-three in all, were thus visited during the first half of the year and round-table conferences subsequently held with district Inspectors. The discussions at these conferences were found most helpful to both groups of Inspectors, and there is every reason to continue with the procedure in the future. In this connection I should like to express my appreciation of the willing co-operation of the district Inspectors in the various centres.

The sittings of the Classification Appeal Board were attended in April. The Board met in Wellington and Dunedin only. Of the nine appeals lodged, three were disallowed by the Board and six were withdrawn. The attendance of one or more of the Inspectors was also required at Appeal Courts sitting in Wellington, Gisborne, and Invercargill. These Courts are specially constituted for the purpose of hearing appeals by teachers against dismissal or reduction in grade of position by the employing Boards. It is noteworthy that these three appeals were the first of this nature to be lodged by secondary-school teachers since 1918.

The latter portion of the year was, as usual, devoted almost entirely to investigating the standard of candidates recommended for senior free places and for leaving-certificates, and to the classification of assistant teachers. For these purposes each of the forty-one departmental schools was visited between July and November. The practice hitherto followed of setting a number of simple written tests to the free-place candidates was abandoned last year in all but a few instances and the Principals' recommendations were accepted, as a rule, without any appreciable amendment when once the Inspectors were satisfied that the general standard of the Fourth Form work was adequately satisfactory. In other words, the accrediting system has been applied more unreservedly than in the past. Whether the larger measure of freedom and responsibility accorded to Principals will make any appreciable difference in the proportion of candidates obtaining senior free places by recommendation remains to be seen when the new procedure has been given a few years' trial. The number of senior free places obtained on recommendation by candidates from departmental secondary schools was 2,992 in 1927, as compared with 2,563 in 1926. The total number of candidates eligible for recommendation rose at the same time from 4,140 to 4,397.

In the past the Department has been faced annually with the inconvenience and the cost of examining large numbers—some hundreds in the aggregate—of weak candidates for senior free places who had not the remotest chance of passing the Intermediate Examination. With a view to reducing the number of such obviously useless entries an entrance fee of 10s. was instituted last year and is now required from all candidates who fail to obtain their Principal's recommendation. The same fee, it may be added, is paid by candidates in the Intermediate Examination who are not using it for the purpose of obtaining senior free places—*i.e.*, by candidates from private secondary schools. It is interesting to note that though the number of candidates from departmental schools who actually sat the examination fell from 1,010 in 1926 to 736 in 1927, yet the number who were successful in obtaining senior free places by passing the examination fell from 157 to 140 only. It is obvious, therefore, that the imposition of the entrance fee has accomplished what it was hoped to do without inflicting hardship upon the mass of candidates.

The abnormal rate of increase in the number of awards of higher leaving-certificates, referred to in the last report, has not been maintained; only 648 were issued to secondary-school pupils at the close of the year, 69 of them going to pupils from registered private schools, whereas the corresponding