

At the end of 1944 there were 14,328 Maori children attending 866 public schools throughout the Dominion.

In addition to the 156 Native schools mentioned above, there are 10 Native mission schools and convents in various parts of the North Island, and the Department also administers 4 schools in the Chatham Islands.

Again our most difficult problem was the staffing of the schools, particularly during the second and third terms, when there was a good deal of sickness. We were, however, greatly assisted by some of our superannuated teachers, and I desire to thank them for their willing co-operation.

At the end of 1944, 499 teachers were employed in Native schools, as indicated in the table below :—

	Males.	Females.
Certificated teachers	138	178
Uncertificated teachers	8	39
Probationary assistants	3	19
Junior assistants	7	107
	156	343

A gratifying feature about these figures is the steady increase in the number of young Maori men entering the Native Schools' Service in the last two classes. Formerly our recruits from the Maori people were confined almost solely to the women, but now the young men are displaying an increasing interest. There is ample scope for young Maori men to assist in the welfare of the coming generation of their own race.

Again I have to report with pleasure an increase in the number of Maori students entering training college. In 1940, 4 students were admitted ; in 1941, 9 ; in 1942, 18 ; in 1943, 16 ; and in 1944, 19. With the increase in the number of Continuation Scholarships last year, giving a third and fourth year of secondary education and thus bringing the holders approximately to the School Certificate standard, we may expect an even larger increase in two or three years. It may be of interest to know that, in addition to these teachers, we have also more than sixty fully qualified Maori nurses on the Nurses' Register.

The steadily increasing roll numbers in Native schools have created a very difficult problem in the matter of finding suitable boarding accommodation for assistants. In the days when our schools were staffed mainly with married couples there was little difficulty, but as schools have increased in size, additional assistants have been needed. The schools are situated in predominantly Maori districts, and the Maori people are not able to provide the accommodation for assistants. Some idea of the growth of this problem may be seen from the following figures, which show the increases in staffs during the past ten years :—

	1934.	1944.
Head teachers	138	156
Assistants	86	229
Junior assistants (mainly Maori)	116	114
Totals	340	499

It will be noted that the number of assistants has grown in ten years from 86 to 229. In six districts the Department has provided residences for assistants, but there is urgent need for similar provision in a number of other districts.

2. PRIMARY EDUCATION

In spite of the large proportion of male teachers serving with the Armed Forces, and other difficulties due to war conditions, it was possible to keep all schools functioning efficiently, and I desire to express my thanks to the teachers for their record of service during the past year. In the Native Schools' Service a teacher has to do many duties outside the walls of the schoolroom, and his success is judged as much by the value of his social service as by his class-room results. The Maori is quick to sense a sympathetic attitude on the part of the teacher, and wherever there is harmony between the school and the community it serves, the school will prosper.

The importance attached to the teaching of English was again emphasized, and in response to our circular on the teaching of this subject an improvement was noted, more especially in regard to business and general correspondence, telegrams, the accurate filling-in of forms, and other aspects of every-day English, which are so necessary in adult life. Oral English continues to be stressed, for the tone and efficiency of a school depend upon the keenness and interest of its pupils, and these can best be promoted by a brightness in all forms of oral work.

Practical work and club work, including Maori arts and crafts, received the attention that is their due. A fine variety of handwork was produced, even though materials for this work were difficult to obtain. The ingenuity of teachers in this respect compensated largely for the shortage of supplies.