

Details of interest taken from the reports of the respective Principals are as follows :—

(a) *Sumner*.—There were 148 pupils (87 boys and 61 girls) on the roll at the 31st March. There were 20 new admissions during the year, and 15 children left. Of the 20 admissions, 3 had previous training in a school for the deaf. Of the remainder, 14 were congenitally deaf or became deaf before reaching school age, 2 were hard-of-hearing and failed to make progress in a public school, and 1 was a case of acquired deafness.

The average age of the congenitally deaf children admitted was 5.12 years, which is the lowest on record, and compares with 5.6 years and 6.9 years for 1945 and 1946 respectively.

There is no doubt that the school is now obtaining great benefit from the special training given during the past several years to student teachers selected for teaching positions in the Schools for the Deaf.

There has been no serious illness amongst the pupils in the past year, and in general the health of the children has been good.

During the year a Parent-Teacher Association was formed.

(b) *Titirangi*.—There were 102 pupils (52 boys and 50 girls) on the roll at the 31st March, 1947. There were 22 admissions, and 15 children left. The average age of all admissions was 6.4 years and for pupils leaving 15.75 years.

During the latter part of the year under review some relief of the pressure on existing accommodation for resident pupils was obtained through a number of parents residing in Auckland arranging to send their children to school daily. Steps have been taken to provide new class-rooms and an additional dormitory block for up to 20 children.

It is of interest to note that the increase in enrolments of children for the schools for the deaf to which I drew attention in last year's report has been maintained. From 103 in the year 1940 the roll number grew to 238 for 1946, and it now stands at 250. There is, however, a decline in the annual figures for excesses of admissions over withdrawals, and this suggests that the peak "deaf school" population may soon be reached.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of scholars attending as day pupils—33 at Sumner and 40 at Titirangi at the 31st March. This has come about mainly through the provision of a special daily bus service for each school.

REGISTERED CHILDREN'S HOMES

Eighty-two children's homes are conducted by private organizations registered under the provisions of the Child Welfare Amendment Act, 1927. These homes are subject to inspection by officers of the Child Welfare Branch. At the end of last year there were, according to their returns, a total of 2,570 children in residence, as against 2,685 the previous year.

It was reported that in the case of 99 children both parents were deceased, in 211 cases the fathers were deceased, and in 442 cases the mothers were deceased. It is understood that in many other cases the parents were separated or were missing.

In some of the homes necessary improvements to buildings were held over during the war. The authorities are, however, fully alive to the position and intend to proceed as soon as circumstances permit. Officers of the Health Department gave valuable assistance in many cases with recommendations regarding dietary and other matters affecting the health and general welfare of the children.

PLACEMENT IN FOSTER-HOMES

As stressed in previous reports, experience has shown that the boarding of children in selected private homes is, in general, preferable to their placement in institutions. Only a small number of the children under the Department's care require institutional training, and every effort is made to restrict admission to these cases. It is essential, therefore, that there be a sufficient number of homes available in order not only to obviate unnecessary admissions to institutions, but also to allow of an adequate choice of suitable homes so that each child can be placed in the one most suited to his individual needs.

Unfortunately, as I have mentioned earlier in this report, the Department has for several years experienced difficulty in securing sufficient foster-homes, and an improvement in this position still remains one of its most urgent needs. There are,