

as they have generally shown in recent years, and that even in the larger schools the knowledge gained has been much more unequal than heretofore. This, a direct consequence of the requirements of the new syllabus, is not a fact of happy augury. Our new syllabus, as Mr. Crowe remarks, would be none the worse if it did less in the way of prescribing the methods which teachers are expected to use.

The progress made in the primer classes is not quite as rapid as could be wished, at all events in many of the larger schools. This is a matter that head teachers should look to.

All who are acquainted with the working of different types of elementary schools, will allow that the sole-teacher schools, with an average attendance of from thirty to forty, involve on their teachers the heaviest work and the greatest difficulty of organization. In view of this, it seems to me deplorable that the heavy work and the skill and alertness required for the successful management of these schools should count for so little in fixing the remuneration of their teachers. As soon as the average attendance rises above forty a second teacher is added to the staff, while the head teacher's salary is advanced. With an average attendance of forty-one to fifty-five, or even sixty, each of the two teachers on the staff has a much lighter burden of work than has the sole teacher with thirty or forty of an average attendance. The sole teacher has all the standard and primer classes to teach, and though the actual number of pupils in each class is less, there is no very great advantage and some real disadvantage in this. Bare justice demands that the teachers of schools between thirty and forty should be paid as liberally as the head teachers of schools between forty-one and sixty. The inadequate payment of the teachers of the smaller schools must tell strongly against their efficiency as a class.

An equally serious blot on the scheme of salaries now in force is the totally inadequate remuneration of the special teachers of district-high-school classes in nearly every grade. The salaries given are quite insufficient to secure the permanent service of experienced and capable teachers for the secondary pupils. I think the lowest salary for this work should be £240 a year.

Many disinterested persons think it desirable that teachers should be encouraged to gain the higher ranks of classification, by allowing in certain circumstances a small annual bonus to those who possess certificates above Class D. For each higher class a certain salary could easily be fixed, below which teachers of that class would be entitled to this bonus. This would not mean attaching a minimum salary to each class of certificate, and would involve much less expense, but it would doubtless prove a real stimulus to young men and women to gain and give evidence of higher culture and attainments than the Class D certificate assures. Much has been done in recent years to improve the payment of teachers; but, while the defects I have dwelt on remain, we cannot say that the basis of payment is either as just or as liberal as it might be.

The fuller and freer oral answering, on which the Inspectors have been laying stress for some years past, makes but slow progress. No one pretends that good oral answering is easy to attain; but in nearly all departments of school work its value is so great that I must again urge our teachers to strenuous efforts for improvement in this direction. At bottom it is a matter of discipline, and the discipline in our schools is in most respects so good that one wonders at its comparative failure here. Mere driving will never accomplish what is desired; it can come only from the growth of more friendly and sympathetic relations between teachers and scholars. To get their pupils to try, willingly and habitually, to state fully and clearly what they know should not be beyond the power of any really capable teacher.

The Inspectors gladly testify to the diligence and hearty application of the Board's teachers as a body. In many cases they render enthusiastic service, often under discouraging conditions. A special word of appreciation is due to the considerable body of young teachers who are doing excellent work in the small schools and in the backblocks.

During the year the supply of qualified teachers for the smaller schools has run very low, and quite a number of persons without experience or professional training have had to be employed. The only alternative was the closing of a number of small schools. This dearth of qualified teachers is not confined to this district, and is certain to continue for some time. After a year or two we may expect the Training-college to furnish a steady, if not an ample, supply. The dearth may not, however, be assuaged until we employ a larger staff of pupil teachers and greatly lessen the amount of teaching required of them—a reform in every way most desirable.

In concluding, I would take occasion to record the sincere regret of the inspectorial staff at the retirement from the Board's service of Mr. Mulgan, who rendered most valuable service as an Inspector in this district, and earned to an unusual degree the confidence and esteem of all connected with the public schools.

I have, &c.,

D. PETRIE, M.A., Chief Inspector

The Secretary, Auckland Education Board.

TARANAKI.

SIR,—

Education Office, New Plymouth, 31st March, 1906.

We have the honour to lay before you our annual report for the year ending the 31st December, 1905.

During the year seventy-six schools were open. In accordance with the arrangement made with the Auckland Board, the school at Mokau was examined and inspected. Some schools in the northern portion of the Clifton County, and properly in this district, are at present administered by the Auckland Board, but when the Ohura Road is opened up we recommend that they be taken over.