

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 8th February, 1916.

We have the honour to present our annual report on the schools of the North Canterbury Education District for the year 1915.

Visits paid.—The number of schools open at the close of the year was 222. To each of these, with the exception of four household schools, two visits were paid. Two visits also were paid to each of twenty-five private schools. In addition to the work of inspection, examinations for the purpose of awarding certificates of proficiency were held at practically the same centres as in the previous years. A special Standard VI examination was held early in the year, and from time to time opportunities of presenting themselves were given to candidates desirous of obtaining certificates of competency in Standards III–VI.

Age of Pupils.—Standards III and I and P. classes remain the same; Standards VI and IV decrease one month; Standards VII, V, and II increase (Standards V and II, one month; and Standard VII, ten months).

Standard VI Certificates.—The following is a summary of the results of examinations held for the purpose of awarding certificates of proficiency and competency :—

				Number examined.	Proficiency Certificates.	Competency Certificates.
Public schools	..	..	..	1,473	967	346
Private schools	..	..	..	117	77	26
Special examinations	..	..	..	171	72	78
Totals	..	..	..	1,761	1,116	450

District High Schools.—[See E.-6, Report on Secondary Education.]

Elementary Handwork and Manual Instruction.—During the year the Board has supplied a considerable amount of apparatus and material in order to give the teachers reasonable opportunities of complying with syllabus demands. A distinctly pleasing feature is the wider recognition of the educational value of handwork, and the correlation of the subject with the other subjects of the curriculum. In all schools some form of handwork is done, while where the staffing-conditions are favourable several branches are undertaken. There has been considerable extension of cardboard-work, and many teachers now recognize how helpful it may become in connection with arithmetic. Pupils that are unable to attend a woodwork centre are required to take carton-work. The rural areas brought into touch with woodwork and cookery centres have also been extended. This has been the case especially in the Ashburton and Malvern Counties, where at the present time facilities are afforded for all the upper standard children of attending at either the Ashburton or Darfield centres. In other parts of the district there is still room for further extension. While recognizing, however, the advance made, we hope the teachers generally will continue to give to the whole subject of manual instruction, in correlation with the educational life of the school, the attention its importance demands.

Although Canterbury is mainly an agricultural district, elementary agriculture does not receive that degree of public support that might be expected in such circumstances. The chief instructor is most enthusiastic and has excellent ideals, but the maximum of success cannot be reached until the schools are staffed with teachers who have themselves been trained. In the earlier stages of the work the schools vied with each other in trying to grow show produce, but it is now recognized that the school-garden can best fulfil its proper function when it becomes an educational ally in connection with the ordinary curriculum of the school. By skilful correlation agriculture may be found helpful not only in geography, arithmetic, and nature-study, but also in elementary science and, indirectly, in English work. The progress made during the past year shows a wide range of values, varying from poor to very good, but we trust that the energy and enthusiasm shown by Mr. Martin since his appointment will meet with substantial success during the coming year.

Physical Instruction.—The teachers speak in terms of highest praise of the benefits derived by the pupils, and this opinion is fully borne out by our personal observation. We are especially gratified with the attention to organized games. These have given opportunities of enjoyment, and brought a fuller school life to many pupils who previously took little or no interest in sport. Nowhere is this more apparent than in country schools. Teachers have shown considerable enthusiasm in connection with the work, and it was very pleasing to find the readiness with which they accepted the invitation to attend the various classes for training. We would like to testify to the tact and energy with which the instructors in this district have carried out their duties.

Organization and Management.—The organization of the work in the various schools is, with few exceptions, good or very good. Excellent programmes are in evidence, and, although a small number of teachers are content to use old schemes year after year, the majority remodel them from time to time in the light of their wider experience. There is much good and effective teaching in all grades of schools, the pupils on the whole receiving good training in habits of initiative and self-reliance, while care is taken to develop their reasoning and observing powers. The head teachers take a keen interest in their assistants, and have a strong sense of their responsibilities in regard to the junior members of their staffs.

Of the work done in the larger and better-equipped infant schools it is impossible to speak except in terms of highest commendation, but in some of the smaller country schools the atmosphere needs brightening, and more use should be made of the childish activities of the very young pupils. To condemn little ones fresh from the freedom and liberty of home to long periods of inaction, and what is often little better than enforced idleness, is almost criminal. To stimulate the interest and to win the