

lead to their neglect or ill treatment. Unless licensed as a foster-parent, no person in consideration of any payment or reward may receive or take charge of an infant for the purpose of nursing or maintaining it apart from its parents or guardians for longer than seven consecutive days. "Infant" means a child under six years of age. Besides the district agents, duly appointed officers who are qualified nurses have full power to inspect the licensed homes. If necessary the Education Department may take over the maintenance of a child, recovering the cost from the parents or guardians, and the foster-parent's license may be revoked, the children in the home being otherwise provided for as the Minister may direct. Payment of a premium on the adoption of a child brings the case within the provisions of the Act.

The number of homes licensed at the end of the year was 1,060, and the total number of children in them during the year was 1,349, a decrease of 12 for the year. Of this total, the number of infants under one year was 293; 6 children died, being 0·44 per cent. of those in the homes. Of that number, 3 died in foster-homes and 3 in hospitals or nursing-homes to which they had been removed for treatment, so that the deaths in foster-homes represented 0·22 per cent. only of the total number dealt with.

The expenditure in connection with infant-life protection for the year ended 31st March, 1919, was £1,194; for the preceding year the amount was £1,219.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS.

SUMMARY SHOWING COMPARATIVE COST OF UPKEEP AT SPECIAL SCHOOLS, 1916, 1917, AND 1918.

School.	Number of Pupils maintained.			Net Maintenance Expenditure.			Average Annual Cost per Head.		
	1916.	1917.	1918.	1916.	1917.	1918.	1916.	1917.	1918.
				£	£	£	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
School for Deaf, Sumner	112	109	104	4,277	3,393	3,625	38 3 9	31 2 7	34 17 1
Special School for Boys, Otekaike	64	95	88	4,902	5,608	5,324	76 11 0	59 0 0	60 10 0
Special School for Girls, Richmond	..	48	50	..	1,756	1,092	..	36 11 8	21 16 9

SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF, SUMNER.

The number of pupils under instruction during the year is shown in the following tabulated statement:—

	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Pupils of 1917 who returned to school	.. 49	41	90
Admitted early in the year	.. 15	7	22
Admitted later	.. 5	2	7
Under instruction during the year	.. 69	50	119
Temporarily absent all the year	2	2
Left during the year	.. 8	7	15
Number expected to return in 1919	.. 61	43	104

The average age of the congenital deaf cases admitted was seven years and six months, which is a distinct improvement over former records, but still considerably higher than is desirable. There were five cases whose ages at the time of admission exceeded eight years, and of these one was aged ten years and six months, and another eleven years and two months. The waste of time before the commencement of their education, especially in these two cases, is greatly to be deplored. It is extremely gratifying, however, to find that in quite a number of cases application has been made by the parents of deaf children of four and five years of age to have them admitted without further delay. It is also very satisfactory to find that these parents have been taking advantage of the instructions that have been given them for the home training of their young deaf children, with very beneficial results to the latter.