

It can also be claimed with justification that the type of new school building is one of which the Dominion may be proud, seeing that it meets all reasonable requirements of lighting, ventilation, heating, sanitation, school hygiene, and educational method. The various Education Boards of the Dominion have rendered welcome and valuable service in the way they have co-operated with the Department in carrying out this most difficult work.

Interesting experiments are being made at Christchurch in a new type of open-air school.

The following table shows the expenditure, &c., in connection with public-school buildings during the last eight years:—

Financial Year.	Applications received.	Special Grants approved.	Expenditure on New Buildings for Public Schools.
	£	£	£
1916-17	95,849	36,973	43,790
1917-18	129,202	66,750	47,106
1918-19	238,817	124,162	80,780
1919-20	496,153	319,225	109,981
1920-21	790,296	380,977	279,476
1921-22	152,335	72,615	328,228
1922-23	394,941	212,811	184,674
1923-24	477,333	244,593	208,817

CORRESPONDENCE CLASSES FOR BACKBLOCKS CHILDREN.

The correspondence classes for isolated country children which were established in 1922 have become very popular, and the number of pupils is very rapidly increasing. With one or two exceptions, certainly of less than 2 per cent. of the whole, the children now being taught through correspondence are children who could not attend even a Grade 0 school with from three to eight pupils under an uncertificated, untrained teacher. The total enrolment is now about 450. There is a staff of six teachers employed at the Head Office, Wellington, and a weekly or fortnightly quota of work is sent out by post to each pupil, with instructions for the guidance of parents or elder members of the family who generally supervise and assist the children's work. The progress made by children who have belonged to this class for about two years is remarkable. The children take the keenest interest in their work, and numerous letters of appreciation and thanks have been received from the parents. It is not too much to say that though this venture touches only some 450 children, it deals effectively with a difficulty of the greatest national importance. It is not merely a question of improving education. It means a distinct advance from no education at all to an education and an association with the outside world that cannot fail to have a beneficial influence on the children and bring hope and encouragement to the parents.

REDUCTION OF LARGE CLASSES.

Large classes have always existed in New Zealand. Twenty-five years ago the classes under assistants were very large, and in addition to this nearly half the staff of a large school consisted of pupil-teachers, each of whom had to take charge of a class of thirty or forty pupils, with almost the same responsibility as a junior assistant of the present day. In more recent years the proportion of pupil-teachers to assistants has been steadily reduced, until now there are not more than three in even the largest school. This large increase in the proportion of assistants has made great demands on the supply of teachers. This, together with the rapid increase in population, especially in the North Island, and the existence of many of the older type of large class-rooms, has resulted, to a regrettable extent, in the continuance of a number of large classes. Preparatory to making an improvement in this respect the number of students at the training colleges was very largely increased, so that there are now about 1,270 in training. Last year approval was