

The instructors report a general improvement on the work of last year. They give the following percentages for the quality of the work for 1924 (the percentages for 1923 are in brackets): Excellent, 8 (7) per cent.; very good, 44 (35); good, 40 (40); very fair, 6·5 (16); fair, 1·5 (2).

The usual training classes were held. The pupil-teachers and probationers in Oamaru received instruction for a fortnight, demonstration lessons being given in the schools in the mornings. The female pupil-teachers and probationers from the Dunedin and suburban schools were also instructed for a fortnight. The training-college students were given their usual fortnight's course, and were joined by the male pupil-teachers and probationers from the city and suburban schools. For these classes the assistance of Miss Blackburne and Mr. Hopkirk, from Wellington, and of Mr. Cree, from Invercargill, was obtained, and their services were highly appreciated. The combined display at the end of the course showed that the instruction had been of excellent quality.

ELEMENTARY AGRICULTURE.

The practical work in the school-gardens has shown considerable improvement. Over two hundred schools have gardens, and these are not confined to the country alone. Most of the city schools have obtained plots of ground, and have undertaken elementary agriculture with varying success, while several of them have done excellent work both in the garden and in beautifying and ornamenting the grounds.

It is in the experimental and observational work that an improvement is desirable in many schools. As the Chief Agricultural Instructor writes: "The experimental method of solving many problems can be used to added advantage by the careful record by the pupils of the object of such experiment, of details as to method and observations made during its progress, and of the conclusions reached as a result. This phase of the work needs more general attention in Standards V and VI. Such notemaking rather than notetaking will be found an effective means of focusing attention on the subject of inquiry, and also of correcting inaccuracies of impression and expression."

In order to assist teachers in drawing up a programme in elementary agriculture a revised programme (for two years) was issued in September last. It contains suggestions from which a selection can be made to suit local conditions, and attention is particularly directed to the sections dealing with experimental and observational work. A copy of this programme was forwarded to the Department at the time of issue.

The Inspectors report regularly to the Board on the general condition of the gardens and the grounds. The cases are very few where little has been done by the Committee or the teacher to improve the appearance of the school environment. There is no excuse for lack of attention to such matters now, for seeds, shrubs, and trees may be obtained from the Board. As a result of the Chief Agricultural Instructor's association with the Training College, attention has been given to plant propagation, and during the last ten years approximately thirty thousand trees and shrubs have been distributed amongst the schools of the district.

MODERN METHODS.

Every encouragement is given to teachers to investigate and experiment with newer methods of imparting instruction, but the majority apparently prefer to proceed along traditional lines. In many infant-rooms, however, more modern methods are being adopted, in most cases with very good results. A few of the assistants who have adopted the "team method" in the standard classes report that such a method creates a better spirit of work than existed formerly.

In one secondary department an adaptation of the Dalton plan was under observation, apparently at first with very good results, but, owing to the removal of the headmaster and the secondary assistant to other positions, the experiment has been discontinued.

Any experiment involving a serious departure from established practice should be discussed with an Inspector before being put into operation.

APPRECIATION.

In conclusion, we have to say that we find that teachers are carrying out their important duties in a praiseworthy manner, are striving earnestly to inculcate high ideals of life and conduct in their young charges, and are laying a sound foundation for the training of the citizens of the future.

SOUTHLAND.

The number of public schools open in Southland during December, 1924 (including fifteen of Grade 0), was 196, and the total roll was 12,295. Private schools numbered thirteen. During the first half of the year 138 schools were inspected, and 186 public and thirteen private schools received a visit during the second half. The interchange of Senior Inspectors which occurred during the period April-June modified the routine of inspection, as the need to observe certain groups of teachers necessitated in some cases repeated visits.

During 1924 ten schools of Southland were placed under inspection by Otago, and similarly ten schools of Otago were supervised by the Inspectors of Southland. From the reports received a reasonably uniform standard obtains in the two districts.

EFFICIENCY.

The following summary of reports classifies the schools according to success in management: Public schools—Very good, 15; good, 48; very fair, 103; fair, 19; weak, 3. Private schools—Very good, 1; good, 8; very fair, 4.