

meeting. At one time the parents took a real interest in the school, giving their time and services freely to such work as fencing, ploughing, &c. A strong effort is now being made to revive this interest, and teachers have been advised that the first step should be the holding of regular Committee meetings.

I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the manner in which the agricultural instructors have worked in conjunction with your Inspectors.

7. EXPERIMENTAL AND EXPLORATORY WORK.

During 1931 two investigations were undertaken. The first was an endeavour to ascertain the extent of the progress made in oral English and in reading during the Native child's first year at school. The variation in the amount covered between schools was remarkable, and disclosed one of the most serious causes for the retardation present in some of the schools. This inquiry has also resulted in the establishment of a definite minimum standard of instruction which will be considered satisfactory for this first-year class.

The second was the trial, by a group of twenty-five schools, of an experimental time-table of which the essential feature was the allocation of the morning period, three hours, to academic instruction, and the afternoon period, two hours, wholly to cultural, handwork, and agricultural activities.

This experiment was an endeavour to lessen the formality and artificial nature of the instruction by the inclusion of more handwork and realistic teaching without any loss in efficiency in the teaching of the three R's. Club work was also included. Term reports which have been received from the participating schools are in the main enthusiastic concerning the principle involved, and all have proved helpful with instructive criticism. The greatest care is being exercised to ensure that the academic instruction does not suffer.

One of the major aspects of this experiment is the emphasis placed upon social work, and the necessity for the school to be a vital part of the community. Many schools have instituted home plots, the proper management of which requires the personal supervision of the teacher and the agricultural instructor. This means, of course, more frequent visits to the pa by the school authorities. On the other hand, the parents are encouraged to visit the school and even to participate in certain of the school activities.

8. TEACHING METHODS.

During 1931, by demonstration, lecture, and example, teachers have been encouraged to modify their methods to permit of more child activity and individual responsibility. In most cases the methods of instruction are still of too formal a nature, especially in the middle and senior divisions. Responsiveness, joyousness, initiative, sympathy, and self-confidence have been the qualities stressed as most desirable. This new curriculum is only now being grasped, after much difficulty, by many of the teachers whose habits of rigid discipline are well ingrained and difficult to discard.

9. ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION.

Every effort has been made to improve the quality of the English language, which is the only medium of instruction in Native schools. Throughout the year particular emphasis has been placed on the oral work, by which is meant pupil practice in speaking. Definite improvement can be reported in this, although the standard desired—that of free, confidently, and correctly expressed English, is far from realized.

In many schools the written English is very disappointing, showing lack of any systematic attempt to add to the vocabularies or to teach fundamental sentence work. In this aspect of English teaching little advance has been made, due, in many cases, to no constructive teaching. Little thought seems to have been brought to bear on this most important subject. The extremely low quality of work accepted as satisfactory by many of the teachers is not only another cause of the low state of efficiency, but is a definite factor in still further lowering the standard.

In reading progress of a more or less formal nature has been made. An active love of reading cannot be engendered with the present inadequate library facilities. More attention and time are being given to silent reading, the amount of which is recorded by each child. In most schools oral reading is satisfactory in quality, although still suffering from two faults—poor enunciation and word reading. The former is due to lazy mouth and lip movement. The latter is a fault inherent in the purely phonic method of teaching reading. In both cases remedial methods have been suggested, and are in operation.

In few schools is the recitation of poetry appreciated or taken in the right spirit. Easier poems are now studied and these are easily and well understood, but their expression indicates that they have not touched the heart of the child.

With regard to arithmetic two requirements have consistently been stressed, the need for making the work as practical as possible and the necessity for a high standard of memorization in mechanical number. In these respects progress is pleasing, but the setting-out and neat figuring of the written work cannot be favourably reported upon.

The new requirements in history are receiving satisfactory attention, the Maori child evincing a keen interest in the stories told him and retold and played by him. An effort is being made to arouse racial pride by the inclusion of a large number of Maori stories in the prescription for the year.