or any unusual occurrence, a second computation is made, throwing out of account the mornings and afternoons on which the attendance has been less than one-half of the children then belonging to the school. The result of this second computation is named the "working average," and upon it the payments to Boards are based. Both the "strict average" and the "working average" must be shown in the quarterly returns to the department, and both are given in the foregoing summary, the difference between them being 1,657 for the entire year, and 1,437 for the last quarter. It is the working average which is meant in other parts of this report where the average daily attendance is mentioned.

The total number of scholars entered on the school rolls during the year 1879 was 109,496, being an increase of 21,525 on the previous year. The number belonging to the schools at the close of 1879 was 75,566, as compared with 65,040 twelve months previously, being an increase during the year of 10,526. The corresponding increase in 1878 was 9,351. The returns show an increase of 6,728 on the average daily attendance for the whole of the past year, and of 8,099 for the fourth quarter, as compared with the corresponding periods of 1878. The percentage of the average attendances to the total number of enrolments for the year is about 50. The percentage for the previous year was about 54·6. But no reliance can be placed on the number of recorded enrolments of scholars for an entire year as indicating the number of different children who were actually in attendance at school during the same period, because it is well known that many children, especially in towns, change from school to school at short intervals, and consequently their names may have been entered on two or more school registers within the space of a single year. The form of attendance-return now in use under the regulations renders necessary on the part of the teacher the frequent and very careful revision of his school roll, and the removal from it of all useless names. The roll-number at the end of each quarter may, therefore, be depended upon as fairly representing the number really belonging to the school. The aggregate average attendance for the last quarter of 1879 represents 77·7 per cent. of the number belonging to the schools at the end of the quarter. The corresponding percentages for the last quarters of 1878 and 1877 were respectively 77·9 and 75. The aggregate numbers belonging to the schools on the last day of each of the four quarters of the year respectively were 68,793, 70,465, 72,813, and 75,566; average for the four quarters, 71,909. The aggregate average attendance for the whole of the year represents about 76·1 per cent. of the aggregate average quarterly enrolments. Owing to the bad condition of the roads in the winter season or the want of them altogether, the average attendances in a number of the country schools are necessarily lower than the average for the colony; for example, the Auckland Board reports that, " In some country schools the average is less than 60 per cent.; in some town schools it is as high as 90 per cent."

Although the payments to Boards and schools are necessarily regulated by the average attendances, yet, under the system of registration now in force, it is the number recorded as really belonging to the school at any time, and not the bare number in average daily attendance for the same period, which may be fairly taken as representing the number of children deriving benefit from the school. As already noticed, the attendance of a number of children, owing to causes beyond their control, may be somewhat irregular, especially in country districts, and yet they no doubt profit largely by their attendance at school, broken though it may sometimes be. The aggregate number of children returned as belonging to the public schools of the colony at the end of the last quarter of 1879 was 75,566, and this number may be fairly claimed as representing the children actually deriving benefit from attendance at the public schools at the close of the year.

AGES OF SCHOLARS.

Table No. 5, on page 5 of the Appendix, shows the ages of the scholars of both sexes who belonged to the schools of the different education districts during the quarter ending 31st December, 1879. The following is a summary of the ages for the whole of the colony :—