

slight increase on the percentage for 1882, which was 76·4. There has been scarcely any change in the proportions between the average attendance and the roll-numbers for the last five years, which were as follows 76·7 per cent. in 1883, 76·4 per cent. in 1882 and in 1881, 76·6 per cent. in 1880, and 76·1 per cent. in 1879. The last column of Table A1 gives the corresponding proportions in each of the Board districts. These vary from 73 per cent. in Nelson and North Canterbury to 81·3 in Otago. The following are the percentages for the principal town in each of the Board districts Auckland, 82·05, New Plymouth, 70·67, Wanganui, 77·13, Wellington, 78·62, Napier, 78·66, Blenheim, 74·15; Nelson, 75·95, Christchurch, 73·45, Timaru, 77·74, Hokitika, 77·30, Greymouth, 75·25, Dunedin, 86·77, and Invercargill, 77·70 average for the whole of these towns, 78·94.

The uniform attendance registers and summaries which the department supplies to all the schools, the method of calculating the attendance prescribed by the regulations, and the quarterly returns required under them for each school, greatly facilitate the collection of information of a uniform character respecting school attendance throughout the colony. As the grants made to Boards out of the annual appropriation by the General Assembly are paid almost wholly upon the average daily attendance in the several Board districts, it is of the utmost consequence that the school registers and the returns should be thoroughly trustworthy. In regard to this matter the department is entirely dependent on the carefulness and good faith of the teachers, except in so far as the Boards direct the Inspectors to scrutinize the attendance registers, and the Chairmen of School Committees follow the practice of comparing the returns with the registers before attaching their signatures as enjoined by the regulations.

The average daily attendance is ascertained by dividing the total number of morning and afternoon attendances by the total number of times (morning and afternoon reckoned separately) that the school has been at work during the period for which the computation is made. In order, however, that the capitation allowance may not be unduly affected by bad weather, epidemics, 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 calculated. Both the "strict average" and the "working average" must be shown in the quarterly returns to the Boards and to the department, and both are given in the foregoing summaries (Tables A1 and A2) and in Table No. 10 of the Appendix, the difference between them being 2,470 for the entire year, and 2,137 for the fourth quarter. It is the working average that is meant in other parts of this report where the average daily attendance is mentioned.

The payments to Boards are necessarily regulated by the average daily attendance, but, 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, that may be fairly claimed as representing the number of children deriving benefit from the schools. The attendance of scholars may be somewhat irregular from a variety of causes often beyond their control, and yet they no doubt profit to a greater or less degree by their attendance, broken though it may be. The aggregate number of scholars returned as belonging to the public schools for the year 1883 (*i.e.*, the mean of the roll-numbers for the four quarters) was 91,011, and this number may fairly be claimed as representing the children actually deriving benefit in the course of the year from attendance at the public schools. This number has been made use of in calculating the last line of Table F3.

The following table shows the number of children of pure Maori and of mixed races returned by the Boards as attending the public schools at the close of 1883. These attendances are of course included in the column in Table A1 headed "Number belonging at End of Year." It is to be regretted that a larger number of pure Maori children do not take advantage of the public schools in the vicinity of their dwellings. The returns show, however, an increase from 149 to 213 in the number of pure Maoris attending the ordinary public schools, and an increase in the number of children of mixed race from 404 to 548, making an increase of 208 in the number of both classes of children:—