

A comparison of Table A1 with the corresponding table for 1883 shows that there was an increase last year in the attendance in all the education districts, the largest proportional increase being in the Hawke's Bay District, and the smallest in Westland. The increase per cent. on the previous year's attendances in the several districts was as follows: Hawke's Bay, 16.77; Nelson, 10.81; Auckland, 10.45; North Canterbury, 9.22; Wellington, 8.59; Wanganui, 7.44; Marlborough, 7.27; Taranaki, 6.22; South Canterbury, 5.65; Otago, 5.35; Southland, 4.61, and Westland, 0.9. The exceptional circumstances of the Westland schools last year may account for the very low rate of increase in that district. The largest numerical increase (1,367) was in the Auckland district, the smallest (21) was in Westland.

There is reason to believe that the number of pupils on the roll at the end of a quarter fairly represents the number belonging to the school for the quarter, although its accuracy depends very much upon the care with which useless names are removed as soon as possible from the roll. The numbers returned as belonging to all the schools at the end of each of the four quarters of 1884 were 96,729, 96,539, 96,854, and 97,238 respectively, giving an average for the four quarters of 96,840, which may be taken as representing the roll number for the year. The average attendance (75,391) at all the schools in 1884 was thus at the rate of 77.9 per cent. of the roll number—96,840. This shows a higher rate of average attendance than in any previous year. In former years there was scarcely any change in the proportions between the average attendance and the roll numbers, 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 proportions for each of the education districts in 1884 and 1883 respectively. The proportions for 1884 vary from 73 per cent. in Taranaki to 82.2 in Otago. The percentages were higher in 1884 than in 1883 in all the education districts except those of Southland, Westland, and Wellington. The falling-off in the Southland proportion may be attributed to the unfavourable weather, and to epidemics among the children, which have prevailed in that district to an unusual extent last year. The exceptional circumstances already referred to may account for the slight falling-off in the Westland District's proportion; the percentages in the Wellington District are almost the same in both years. The following are the percentages for the principal towns of the several education districts in 1884 and 1883 respectively, the figures for 1884 being placed first after the name of the town: Auckland, 81.18 and 82.05; New Plymouth, 75.02 and 70.67; Wanganui, 81.46 and 77.13; Wellington, 78.18 and 78.62; Napier, 80.7 and 78.66; Blenheim, 73.66 and 74.15; Nelson, 77.47 and 75.95; Christchurch, 76.49 and 73.45; Timaru, 80.61 and 77.74; Hokitika, 77.84 and 77.30; Greymouth, 73.29 and 75.25; Dunedin, 86.3 and 86.77; Invercargill, 75.78 and 77.70: average of the whole of these towns, 79.79 and 78.94.

The collection of full and reliable information of a uniform character respecting school attendance is secured by means of the attendance registers and summaries which are supplied by the Department to all schools, the method of calculating the attendance prescribed by the regulations, and the quarterly returns required under them for each school. Almost all the grants made to Boards from the education votes are paid according to the average daily attendance in their respective districts, and it is therefore of extreme importance that the school registers and the returns should be perfectly trustworthy. In this matter there is reason to believe that, on the whole, the accuracy and good faith of the teachers may be depended upon, and that the Inspectors of Schools and the Chairmen of School Committees carefully perform the duty incumbent upon them in connection with the scrutiny of the registers and the examination of the returns forwarded to the Boards.*

* The following extract is taken from the report of Mr. Vereker-Bindon, M.A., Inspector to the Wanganui Board: "I had to report one flagrant case of deliberate falsification of registers. The delinquent was, I am glad to say, only a few weeks in the service of this Board, and he immediately resigned. In all other cases, so far as I know, the daily attendances were marked accurately, but in some few instances not at the proper time—in one school not until two days after the time; while frequently I found the daily registers very untidy, with the columns not added, and dates, roll numbers, and such like not filled in to the day of my visit. The summary of attendance register, also, was often not posted." The person referred to had been only a short time in the colony, and holds no certificate of any kind from the Department.