

study with the view of rendering themselves competent to sit at the next ensuing examination of teachers, and obtaining a certificate of competency. No change has been made during the year in the scale of payments made to teachers. In Return No. 7 will be found a complete list of the teachers in the service of the Board, with their individual classification and position, and the emoluments received by each during the year.

TEACHERS' QUARTERLY RETURNS.—There is still some room for improvement in the method of compiling and forwarding the returns of attendance. The most trivial excuse is too often thought sufficient to justify culpable negligence in not posting returns so as to reach the office of the Board in proper time. These remarks, however, apply to but few of the teachers under the Board, nearly all of whom recognise the importance of a careful attention to this duty, and act accordingly.

ATTENDANCE.—The attendance at the schools in this district has not been affected by any unusual circumstances—no widespread epidemic has occurred tending to reduce the average. By the opening of the seven new schools previously referred to, and the natural increase in the already existing schools, the average attendance is now 452 higher than at the close of 1885. The percentage of working average to roll number has been approximately the same as last year—about 77·5. With the view of securing a more regular attendance amongst pupils attending school, the Board has, during the past few years, presented all pupils entitled according to the Act to first or second class attendance certificates, with handsome illuminated certificates in lieu of those issued by the department. The Board is of opinion that the cost of this experiment has been a judicious one, and has materially assisted in maintaining, if not increasing, the general average attendance.

AGES OF SCHOLARS.—The ages of scholars attending the Board's schools as on the 31st December, 1886, is shown in the following table, and a comparison instituted with the corresponding quarter of 1885 :—

Ages.				1885.	1886.	Increase.	Decrease.
Five years and under seven	...	...	...	1,306	1,392	86	...
Seven years and under ten	...	...	...	2,533	2,694	161	...
Ten years and under thirteen	...	...	...	2,082	2,211	129	...
Thirteen and under fifteen	...	...	...	794	768	...	26
Above fifteen years	...	...	...	169	166	...	3
Totals	...	...	...	6,884	7,231	376	29

STANDARDS AND SUBJECTS.—The subjoined tabular statement will afford all necessary information as to the number of scholars preparing for the various standards, and likewise the numbers receiving instruction in the syllabus requirements: [Not reprinted.]

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The only three scholarship holders on the books of the Board at the end of 1885 resigned their scholarships on the 31st December of that year. The Board found it expedient to revise its scholarship regulations during the year. Some desirable alterations were made, and the regulations as altered, after having received the approval of the Minister of Education, were brought into force in June last; on the 29th of which month an examination for scholarships was commenced, at which twenty-seven candidates presented themselves. Three scholarships of the value of £35 each, and two of the value of £20 each, tenable for three years, were awarded to the candidates who obtained the highest number of marks—the former to successful candidates who are not able to reside at their own homes, and the latter to those who are able to reside at their own homes, whilst attending the Southland High School. The successful candidates were as follows: [Not reprinted.] It is worthy of note that the subjects of examination for scholarships are identical with those prescribed for Standard V. in the public school course. Thus, pupils pursuing their ordinary school curriculum may prepare for a scholarship examination without diverting their attention to other than the usual routine of school work. All scholarship holders are required to attend the Southland High School during the currency thereof.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—In the Board's employ there are ten male and thirty-two female pupil-teachers. An examination, as provided for by the Board's regulations, was held in June last, when sixty-three persons presented themselves—viz., thirty-eight pupil-teachers actually in the service of the Board, and twenty-five candidates who have been preparing themselves for, and are desirous of obtaining, appointments under the Board. Three pupil-teachers employed by the Board have completed their course, and one was excused from attending the examination on account of ill health. Of the thirty-eight pupil-teachers who presented themselves, twenty-nine succeeded in passing from a lower to a higher class, nine having failed to obtain promotion. Of the twenty-five candidates fifteen were successful in qualifying themselves to act as fourth-class pupil-teachers. The list of examinees shows an undue preponderance of females over males engaged in the work, or anxious to be so employed, and this though a higher salary is paid to boys than to girls of the same grade. Of the thirty-eight pupil-teachers already referred to, eleven are boys and twenty-seven are girls; while of the twenty-five candidates, nine are boys and sixteen are girls. This is a serious defect, and experience has shown that it is no easy task to apply an effectual remedy. It is usual for young men, on completion of their pupil-teacher course, to evince a laudable desire for employment in a more extended sphere, and several small schools in this district are now in charge of such, and being efficiently carried on. For young women, certainly, there are not so many openings, but the experience of the past has proved that less anxiety has been exhibited by