

This decrease of teaching-power is accounted for by the fact that the Board found it necessary in the interests of justice and economy to limit the teaching staff in each school strictly in accordance with the terms of its regulations. The engagements of several pupil-teachers and sewing mistresses were terminated in consequence of this resolve.

The Board finds considerable difficulty, owing to the low rate of salary which it can afford to pay, in securing the services of certificated teachers for the numerous small schools which necessity has compelled it to establish within its borders. An earnest desire to extend the benefits of the education system wherever it is practicable to do so has actuated the Board in the past in dealing with applications from remote country districts for the establishment of schools, and has thus necessitated the support of a larger number of aid-requiring schools in proportion to the population than is probably the case in any other education district in the colony. This weakness is, at any rate, not fully counteracted by the number of aid-giving schools under its control; for, with perhaps twenty exceptions, all the schools in the district may be classed as barely self-supporting, while not a few are actually kept in existence by the surplus funds obtained from the few large schools in populous centres.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—As compared with the previous year, the attendance shows an increase. The following table exhibits in a concise form the attendance for 1887, and institutes a comparison with the previous year:—

	Roll Number.	Strict Average.	Working Average.
Quarter ending 31st March, 1887 ...	7,630	5,760	5,923
" 30th June, 1887 ...	7,643	5,675	5,874
" 30th September, 1887 ...	7,625	5,342	5,661
" 31st December, 1887 ...	7,787	6,010	6,119
Aggregate attendance for 1887 ...	30,685	22,787	23,577
Average of four quarters of 1887 ...	7,671·5	5,696·7	5,894·2
Average of four quarters of 1886 ...	7,183·5	5,339·7	5,578·5
Increase ...	488·0	357·0	315·7

The above figures indicate an increase of 488 pupils on the roll, with an increased average of 357 (strict) and 315·7 (working). The percentage of "working average" attendance to the number of pupils on the roll has during this year slightly decreased (being 74·2), as compared with last year. Approximately, only three out of every four pupils on the school roll can be relied on as being in attendance every day, and it is extremely doubtful if this undesirable state of affairs can be remedied, at least so far as this district is concerned. Taking into consideration the scattered nature of the population, the long distances which many of the pupils have to travel, and, during winter at least, the state of the country roads over which such journeys have to be made, it is not surprising to learn that the best efforts of conscientious teachers to attain for the schools under their care a high state of efficiency are often nullified by the baneful effects of irregular attendance. The foregoing remarks apply with special force to this district, where the proportion of town to country schools is so small; indeed, it may be said to apply in a greater or less degree to every school in the education district outside the town of Invercargill.

The institution of the "working" average as a basis on which to calculate payments to Boards by the Government, and to teachers by the Boards, was a measure peculiarly adapted to at least partially remove any injustice which might arise to Boards or teachers through the inclemency of the weather or the occurrence of an epidemic, over neither of which circumstances, it is needless to remark, the Board has any control. An Order in Council issued on the 5th July, 1887, relating to the method of calculating average attendance, provides that a school shall be deemed to be open should *one* child be present before the first half-hour of the ordinary school-time has passed, and, as this contingency in a modified degree is liable to arise in the case of not one but many schools, and not once but many times during a quarter, it is difficult indeed to see why such pecuniary hardship should be inflicted on teachers by the operation of a circumstance which they are powerless to prevent. This Board is further of opinion that such a direct incentive to dishonesty on the part of teachers in registering their school attendance should not exist. This Board therefore regrets exceedingly the proposal to abolish the "working" average, as having a greater tendency to impair the efficiency of the education system, especially as regards country districts, than any other of the proposed changes; and considers that so great an injury should not be inflicted to effect so small a saving. In many sparsely populated localities it would have been quite impossible in the past to secure an attendance large enough to warrant the establishment or continuance of schools, unless by the operation of a "working" average; and in view of the proposed change the Board is of opinion that only by a special effort on the part of the districts concerned will it be possible to carry on many of its existing weak schools.

The compulsory clause of the Act, so far as this district is concerned, is practically inoperative. It is only in thickly populated localities that the clause could be enforced, but, even under such circumstances, the extremely objectionable method by which its operation can be insisted on prevents those in power for the time being incurring the odium of compelling compliance with its provisions.

EXAMINATION OF PUPIL-TEACHERS, AND OF CANDIDATES FOR SCHOLARSHIPS.—The annual examination of pupil-teachers in the active service of the Board, and of young persons anxious to qualify themselves in a literary sense for employment as such, was held on the 28th June and following days. On this occasion 64 examinees were present. Of this number, 32 were at the time employed in the various schools under the Board's control, the remaining 32 being open for appointment to any vacancy that might occur. Of the numbers who thus presented themselves, 27 pupil-