

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 31st January, 1890.

The Board of this education district has the honour to present, in accordance with section 102 of the Education Act, a summary of its proceedings for the year ending the 31st December, 1889.

MEMBERS.—At the date of the last annual report the members constituting the Board were—Mr. J. D. Ormond, M.H.R. (Chairman), Captain Russell, M.H.R., Mr. Horace Baker, Mr. J. W. Carlile, Mr. Rechab Harding, Mr. R. D. D. McLean, Rev. D. Sidey, Mr. Fred. Sutton, and Mr. G. H. Swan. The retiring members under section 15 of the Act were Mr. J. D. Ormond, Captain Russell, and Mr. Horace Baker, and they were each re-elected by the Committees in February for a further term of three years. In the month of April Mr. R. D. D. McLean, being about to visit England, resigned his seat on the Board, and Mr. Thomas Tanner, M.H.R., who had previously sat as a member of the Board, was elected in his place. The Board continues to be represented on the governing body of the Napier High Schools by Messrs. Ormond and Carlile. The Board held twelve ordinary meetings during the year for the transaction of business, the average number of members at each meeting being six.

DISTRICTS.—The number of school districts remains the same as at the date of the last report. Several small subsidised schools have applied to be constituted into school districts, but the Board decided against the application in each case until the school attendance should warrant the establishment of a duly-constituted authority. Two new schools were opened during the year, one at Blackburn and one at Te Aute; and the school at Tarawera, which was partly Native and partly European, was temporarily closed in consequence of some misunderstanding between the handful of residents in the district.

SCHOOLS.—There are now forty-seven schools, containing forty-nine departments, in operation under the Board. Classed according to average attendance, there are nine schools containing an average of fewer than twenty-five children, ten with an average varying from twenty-five to fifty children, thirteen from fifty to one hundred children, seven from one hundred to one hundred and fifty children, six from one hundred and fifty to three hundred children, none from three hundred to five hundred children, two schools contain an average of over five hundred children. The average number of pupils attending at each school during the year was 102 nearly. This is a slight increase compared with last year's average, which was 100·6.

TEACHERS.—The number of teachers in the service of the Board on the 31st December was 152. These were classed into sixty-six principal and assistant teachers holding certificates of competency, and eighty-six uncertificated and pupil-teachers. There are still nine schools where uncertificated teachers are in charge—viz., Te Karaka, Waerenga-o-kuri, Makauri, Maraetaha, Wallingford, Porangahau, Te Aute, Te Onga Onga, and Wainui. The number of pupil-teachers engaged at the close of the year was sixty-four. The annual examination took place on the 10th December and three following days. Of those now employed fourteen are in their first year, seven in their second, fifteen in their third, and nine in the fourth. In the examination four failures were recorded. The regulation permitting pupil-teachers who have completed the full term of their engagement to continue as ex-pupil-teachers for another year, has been further modified with a view to provide temporary employment for those who desire to continue for a still longer period as ex-pupil-teachers. It has been found that some of those who have remained an additional year have been unable to find employment, and, not being allowed to continue at their own school after the fifth year, they have been compelled to cease teaching altogether. The new regulation provides that ex-pupil-teachers, if recommended by their respective Committees, may continue to fill temporarily the place of ordinary pupil-teachers, the payment being the average salary which is given to pupil-teachers during the period of their engagement. Already three ex-pupil-teachers have agreed to continue under the new arrangement, and it is expected that much good will result from the adoption of the regulation.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—The number of pupils returned as attending the schools for the December quarter was 5,991. The average attendance for the same period was 4,850, which allows 31·5 pupils to each teacher employed by the Board. The average number of pupils to each teacher in the colony for the year 1888 was 32. The average number of pupils enrolled for the year was 5,987·5, and the average attendance 4,792·5, or an increase of 2 per cent. and 2·4 per cent. respectively on the returns for the corresponding period of 1888. Very little alteration has taken place in the number of pupils attending the Board schools since March, 1888, when the returns showed 5,902 names as the average weekly roll for the quarter, whilst the average weekly roll for the December quarter of last year was 5,991, or a difference of only 89 in two years. Although the number attending the schools shows but little increase, there is again a marked improvement noticeable in the regularity of the children at school. It was urged by many teachers and Committees that the abolition of the "working average" would prove a hardship to certain schools; but the contrary has been the case. In 1887 the returns gave 78·3 out of each 100 pupils as the average attendance or regularity for that year; in 1888 the average attendance was 79·7; and last year the average had risen to a little over 80. This improvement is the more satisfactory as no attendance officers are employed by the Board, and in only a single instance, as far as the Board is aware, has any attempt been made to enforce attendance under section 92 of "The Education Act, 1877."

INSPECTION.—The inspection and examination of the schools have been duly carried out by the Board's Inspector according to regulation requirements. The number returned on the examination schedules as attending school was 5,691; and 3,739 were presented in standards, or only six more than were presented the previous year. The apparent increase in the number of pupils in the preparatory classes as compared with those in 1888—there being 1,844 in 1888, and 1,952 last year—may be accounted for by the fact that much greater thoroughness is demanded for a pass in