

NATIVE SCHOOLS.

Seven Native schools have been closed during the year, and only three new ones opened. The most promising of the new schools is at Otorohaŋga, near the southern terminus of the Auckland railway system. In December there were 58 pupils on the roll of this school, of whom 32 were Maori and 17 half-caste; the average attendance for the quarter being 39. At Matihetihe, in the Hokianga district, a small school, dependent on the older school at Waitapu, has been established; and at Kenana, in the Mangonui district, a school has been opened near the homes of some of the children that formerly attended at Peria. The Peria School has been abandoned on account of the decline of the Native population in its neighbourhood, and for a similar reason the school at Mangamaunu, near Kaikoura, has been given up. The schools at Te Oreore, in the Wairarapa, and at D'Urville Island were always small, and lately the people have not manifested sufficient interest in them to render it worth while to foster them any longer. The schools at Te Ngaere, near Whangaroa, and at Hawaii, near Torere, in the Bay of Plenty, owe their failure to tribal misunderstandings and jealousies more than to any other cause. The school at Te Awahou, near Rotorua, has never been a vigorous one, and it has been deemed advisable to suspend operations there, for a time at least: if, after a while, the people of the place give evidence of an earnest desire for the education of their children, work may, perhaps, be resumed. It was announced in the report for 1889 that the pupils of Maungatapu, near Tauranga, had migrated to Ngapeke, and were being instructed there; the tide has since turned, and the old school at Maungatapu has 35 children on the roll, while Ngapeke, where the school work was carried on temporarily in a Maori building, is deserted. By the changes that have been described the number of Native schools was reduced during the year from 72 to 68: two years ago the number was 75.

Reference was made in last year's report to a proposal for transferring to the Auckland Education Board the Kirikiri Native school, at the Thames. It was stated then that the Native people of the place objected to the change, and that, as the land was acquired under "The Native Schools Sites Act, 1880," it was advisable to respect their sentiments. After a time the people offered to sell the school property to the Board, though it was not theirs to sell. In the last session of Parliament an Act was passed to enable Education Boards to acquire properties held under the Native Schools Sites Act, by paying to the Natives, if they consent to the arrangement, the value of the site alone, as ascertained by a Commissioner appointed by His Excellency the Governor. A satisfactory arrangement has not, however, been yet arrived at in the case of Kirikiri, although a large abatement has been made from the price originally demanded. A vacancy having occurred in the mastership of the Native school near Wai-kouaiti, it was suggested to the Maori people there that, as, owing to their progress in European civilisation, there was no very good reason for making any distinction between them and the rest of the community, they should consent to the transfer of their school to the Otago Education Board; but they have hitherto declined to entertain this proposal, and a new master has lately been appointed. The old-established school at Little River, near Lake Ellesmere, has been closed ever since the death of its late teacher, early in 1890. It was thought that, as the children were living in the midst of Europeans, they would make use of the public school, which is close at hand; but they have not done so, and apparently will not do so. Urgent representations have been made to Government by Maori members to revive the school, and it will shortly be reopened. The Maori residents at Arowhenua, within a mile or so of the public school at Temuka, make persistent application for the establishment of a Native school, and assign reasons which, to them, seem adequate for not sending their children to a European school. Their request has been several times refused; but since the Temuka School Committee and the South Canterbury Education Board, to whom the question has been referred, recommend the Government to make separate provision for these Natives it seems necessary to consider the case very thoroughly before coming to a final decision.