

Mr Froggatt, 14, Dr Hodgkinson, 14, Mr Lumsden, 14, Mr Bain, 12, Mr Matheson, 12, Mr Mackintosh, 9, Mr McNab, 8. The Executive Committee—Mr Froggatt, 26, Mr Lumsden, 25; Mr McLeod, 25, Mr Matheson, 22, Mr Baldey 21, Dr Hodgkinson, 19, Mr McNab, 19, Mr Bain, 14 and Mr. Mackintosh, 12. It is but fair to note that the attendances made by Messrs. Mackintosh and McNab represent only nine months in each case, the former being absent on leave during the last session of Parliament, and the latter only taking his seat for the first time in the beginning of April. Several meetings of special committees were also held during the year, and were well attended. Messrs. D L. Matheson (re-elected) and James W Bain were appointed as the Board's representatives on the Board of Governors of the Southland Boys' and Girls' High Schools for the year

SCHOOLS AND ATTENDANCE.—The last report of the Board showed that at the close of the year 1890 there were in existence 111 schools. This number was increased during the year 1891 by the opening of new schools in the districts of Tisbury Seaward Downs, Skipper's Reefs, and the reopening of the school at South Wyndham, which had been closed during the preceding year. There were consequently 115 schools in operation at the close of the year to which this report refers. Included in the above are eight half-time schools and ten subsidised schools, whose average attendance in each case does not reach twenty. These half-time and aided schools are scattered over the remotest and most inaccessible parts of our educational district, and were it not for such provision the settlers there would be deprived of all the benefits of our education system. In many instances residents in these sparsely-populated districts exhibit a praiseworthy willingness to assist the Board in its efforts to confer on them at least a modicum of the advantages of our educational expenditure, by providing temporary accommodation suitable for school purposes, or by contributing in cash or labour towards the erection of the necessary school-buildings. Hence, in seven school districts the buildings utilised for school-buildings do not belong to the Board. Departmental Return No. 3 gives the classification of schools according to attendance as on 31st December last. Referring now to the matter of attendance, the Board has to report that the roll-number and average attendance has increased considerably during the year. At the end of 1890 the number of pupils on the various school-rolls was 8,332, and the average attendance 6,749, while at the close of 1891 these numbers had increased to 8,587 and 7,041 respectively. The average for the whole of the year 1890 was 6,587, and for 1891 6,810, being an increase of 223. The ratio of average attendance to the weekly roll-number for the year was 78·7. The average attendance would probably have been still better but for the very general prevalence of the influenza epidemic, which visited with greater or less severity many of our school districts. As a consequence of this, not a few schools were closed altogether for longer or shorter periods. Had the past system of double computation by "strict" and "working" average still been in operation the closing of these schools would not have been necessary. It is neither just nor reasonable to expect that teachers and Committees will so act as to reduce to a minimum their respective incomes, computed as they are on average attendance, when by the simple expedient of closing the school for a few days or weeks, as the necessities of the case may require, the normal average at the school can be maintained. To close a school when, say one-half of the pupils could easily be in attendance is a manifest injustice which, under existing conditions, it is the interest neither of the Board nor the Committee to prevent. It is of interest to notice here that the number of children attending the public schools in this district since the constitution of the Board in 1878 has risen from 2,897 to 8,587, and the strict average attendance from 2,267 to 7,041, an increase in average of 210 per cent. The increase of pupils noted in the preceding paragraph is due solely to the progress of settlement throughout the district, and has been steadily maintained during the period of the Board's existence. Present appearances decidedly indicate that the future will disclose an even more rapid rate of progress. Almost equally satisfactory has been the rate of increase in the number of schools, there being in operation at the beginning of the year 1878 forty-four, and at the close of 1891 one hundred and fifteen schools. The following tabular statement is instructive as showing the regular increase in the numbers of schools and pupils during the past seven years:—

Year.	Schools open, December Quarter.	Strict Average Attendance.	Increase over Previous Year.	
			Schools.	Average.
1885	85	5,002	4	666
1886	92	5,340	7	338
1887	97	5,697	5	357
1888	103	6,083	6	386
1889	106	6 502	3	419
1890	111	6,587	5	85
1891	115	6,810	4	223
	..		34	2,474.

From these figures it will be seen that an average of five (nearly) new schools have been opened, and 353 pupils added to the average attendance, in each year during that period. Towards the end of the year Mr Donald Boyd was appointed drill instructor and truant officer to the Board. This step was resolved on in the joint interests of schools where the attendance was irregular and of children whose parents or guardians were negligent of their educational welfare. This officer entered on his duties in October and as yet sufficient time has not elapsed to enable a reliable estimate to be formed as to the practical results of this new departure. BOARD'S TEACHING STAFF.—In the service of the Board there were at the close of the year 196 teachers of all grades, an increase of six on the previous year. These were classified according to the positions occupied, as follows:—