

school students. As an alternative suggestion, it seems worthy of consideration whether raising the standard of certificate examinations and at the same time limiting the number of pupil-teachers to be employed in a district would not act beneficially; more especially if, in the latter case, a period of probation could be insisted on with the view of finally selecting only those candidates who display a natural aptitude for the work. In any case it is quite manifest that many now present themselves for, and succeed in passing, the teachers' examination who have but the faintest hope of obtaining fairly remunerative employment as a reward of their industry, and some who, for the lack of ability to acquire in a practical manner the art of teaching, secure but doubtful success, or prove, it may be, absolute failures. In the cases last mentioned there is nothing but loss and vexation of spirit to all concerned—Board, Committee, and teacher alike.

ATTENDANCE OF PUPILS.—In this connection but little out of the ordinary routine calls for special attention. So much has been written, and in many cases written to so little purpose, on this important subject that to reiterate seems almost futile. To the initiated the reasons and arguments set forth to induce a more regular attendance of pupils at the public schools seem conclusive enough; but to those who, from lack of interest in the educational welfare of their children, are satisfied to accept the public school as a place where they may be sent when there is absolutely nothing particular to do at home, there is no cogency in any argument whatever. It is indeed very hard to persuade some parents that "regular attendance" and "progress in study" are, for the majority of pupils, almost convertible terms.

Though during the past year only one new school has been established, still the Board has to report that the attendance has steadily increased. The following comparison with the two preceding years shows the increase in roll-number and average attendance respectively:—

Year.							Average Weekly Roll.	Strict Average.
1893	...	...	...	...	...	...	9,280	7,117
1894	...	...	...	...	...	...	9,460	7,465
1895	...	...	...	...	...	...	9,681	7,644

The working average for 1895 was 7,799. The percentage of average attendance to roll-number is 79 per cent. (nearly), approximately the same as for 1894. These figures represent the highest attendance ever attained in this education district. Apart from an unusually protracted period of inclement weather, no circumstance materially affecting the attendance has arisen.

In the great majority of our school districts the Act to promote regular attendance at the public schools is practically inoperative, and will certainly remain so while the onus of instituting proceedings against transgressors is left to the discretion of School Committees.

The continuance of payments of capitation grants on the basis of working-average attendance is a source of sincere gratification to the Board, and, now that the equity of such a method of payment has been established beyond a doubt, it is hoped that any proposal to revert to the old order of things will be strenuously opposed.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—In the service of the Board at the close of the year there were sixty pupil-teachers—eight boys and fifty-two girls—the proportion of sexes being thus as 1 to 6·5, approximately the same as for the preceding year. Of forty candidates who presented themselves at the annual examination, held in June last, thirty-eight passed, while two only (one each in Classes I. and III.) failed to secure promotion. It affords satisfaction to note that the average quality of the work presented at the examination is characterized as satisfactory, and that some of the defects pointed out by the Inspectors in previous years have, to a large extent, been remedied. The style of the papers with respect to neatness and arrangement is also approvingly referred to.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The examination for scholarships under the Board was held on the 17th December last and following days. In all, forty-one candidates presented themselves at the various centres of examination. The coveted honours fell to the following competitors: Scholarships of the value of £35 each, tenable for three years, to John A. McRae (Knapdale), Cyril Wild (Oraki), and George Taylor (Waikaia); scholarships of equal value, but tenable for one year only, to Edith White and James Beattie. To candidates resident in the Town of Invercargill and suburbs, scholarships of the value of £20 each, tenable for three years, were awarded to Cyril P. Brown (Gladstone), and Albert Wheeler (Invercargill Park); while prizes of similar value, but tenable for one year only, were secured by William Brownlie, Bessie Fairbairn, J. C. Woodward, and Albert Service. The percentages of attainable marks in the case of successful candidates ranged from 60 to 87·3, the latter being the record of Cyril P. Brown, of Gladstone. The Inspectors report that "the quality of the work and the general style of the written papers are uniformly good, there being this year, we are pleased to say, but comparatively little work of an inferior kind." While it is true that a large majority of the unsuccessful candidates obtained a very creditable percentage of marks, it has to be noted that a number at the bottom of the list were credited with very poor results, a fact which seems to indicate a lack of discrimination in presenting for examination candidates whose abilities are only of the most ordinary description, or who are totally unprepared for such a test of scholarship. Teachers are not necessarily to be held responsible for this circumstance, as parents do sometimes fail in a proper discernment of the capabilities of their children, and urge teachers to present pupils who, in their better judgment, would be withheld.

From the usual term reports supplied by the Rector of the Southland High Schools, at which institution scholarship-holders are required to attend, it appears that almost without exception the conduct, diligence, and progress of scholars have been entirely satisfactory; further, the records of the high schools show that for years past scholarship students have acquitted themselves creditably at the annual examinations, and the premier positions in the schools have almost uniformly rewarded their diligence.

The disbursements on account of scholarships during the past year were as follows: Amount paid to scholars, £490; examination expenses, £22 1s. 6d.: total, £512 1s. 6d.