

REPORTS OF EDUCATION BOARDS.

AUCKLAND.

Auckland, March, 1897.

In accordance with section 102 of "The Education Act, 1877," the Board presents the following report of its proceedings during the year 1896:—

BOARD.—At the beginning of 1896 the Board consisted of the following members: The Rev. Canon Bates, Messrs. T. Cooper, A. R. Harris, W. Lambe, S. Luke, J. Muir, R. Udy, W. Woodward, and J. H. Wright. Messrs. Cooper, Udy, and Wright retired in March, 1896, and were re-elected. Mr. Muir was elected to succeed Mr. Udy as Chairman. Twenty-seven meetings of the Board were held during the year, with an average attendance of seven members. Forty meetings of Committees of the Board were held during the year in relation to accounts, selection and appointment of teachers, and other matters. The members to retire in March, 1897, are Canon Bates, Mr. Lambe, and Mr. Muir. Canon Bates, who was absent during the greater part of the year owing to ill-health, is obliged to give up the work, in which he took a warm interest, and in which his counsel was of great value to the Board.

SCHOOLS.—The number of schools has increased from 332 to 348, of which number forty-two are half-time schools. New schools were opened at the following places: Hunua (No. 2), Waiotahi (Opotiki), Te Puna, Te Puke (No. 2), Makarau, Orua Bay, Walton, Rawhia and Umawera (half-time), Hohoura and Waihopo (half-time), Waikoukou, Gum Town, (Mercury Bay), Motuihi Island, Harotonga and Mangate (Great Barrier Island) and at Oruaiti (Mangonui). Schools were re-opened at Ruapuke, Ruth's Island, and Fern Flat (Mangonui). The schools at Hunua (No. 2), and at Motuihi Island were closed after a few months' trial; and the aided school at Woodside (Kaeo) was also closed, but has since been re-opened. The proportion of small schools is larger than ever. There are seventy-one full-time schools, having an average attendance of less than twenty, and sixty-three schools with an average attendance of from twenty to twenty-four. The Board is careful to ascertain the merits of each case in dealing with applications for the establishment of new schools; and no such application is granted if there is already a school within reasonable distance. The question of providing for the maintenance of these small schools has been referred to a Committee of the Board, with a view of lessening (if possible) the present demand upon the teaching staff. A minimum salary is always guaranteed to each certificated teacher in sole charge; and a further allowance is granted for incidental expenses.

TEACHERS.—The number of teachers at the end of the year was 809, classified as follows: Head teachers—220 males, 107 females; assistant teachers—34 males, 144 females; pupil-teachers—50 males, 187 females; sewing teachers—67 females. All teachers above the rank of pupil-teachers are certificated except twenty-four, of whom all except ten have obtained partial classification towards a certificate. The annual examination of pupil-teachers and candidates was held in June. Fifty-four pupil-teachers were examined, of which number only two failed to qualify for promotion to a higher grade. Ninety-five candidates offered themselves for examination, and forty-five of them qualified for employment. New regulations for the employment and training of pupil-teachers have received the sanction of the Minister, and will come into operation after the examination to be held in June, 1897. The frequency of absences of teachers of all grades for prolonged periods has seriously interfered with the regular staffing of the schools, causing changes which cannot be other than detrimental to the progress of the scholars. A scale of payment for assistant teachers has been introduced, and a plan has been devised for the classification of schools, so as to facilitate the promotion of teachers according to merit.

ATTENDANCE.—The roll number of scholars has increased from 25,594 to 26,607, with an increase of 943 in the (strict) average attendance. There were at the end of the year 585 scholars above school age, and 567 scholars in the class above Standard VI. The number of Maori and half-caste scholars was 1,012. There is evidence of a disinclination on the part of some School Committees to carry out the mandatory provisions of the School Attendance Act. Committees have been furnished with the regulations under which the assistance of the local police may be obtained for the purpose.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Sixty-six scholarships—twenty senior and forty-six junior—were held during the year. The Board continues to receive satisfactory reports of the progress of the pupils at the secondary schools to which they are attached. The examination held in December, 1896, resulted in the disqualification of all the junior candidates except nine. With the sanction of the Minister, however, scholarships were awarded to the fullest extent of the funds at the Board's disposal for the purpose.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—Little has been done in the way of taking advantage of the provisions of "The Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act, 1895." Classes have been carried on at the Devonport and Remuera schools only. The Board has had under consideration the question of taking over the maintenance of the Auckland Technical School. But after full inquiry it appeared evident that, without a special grant of at least £500 a year, the Board could not meet the additional charge upon its funds.

FINANCE.—The receipts from all sources amounted to £93,392 1s., and the expenditure to £90,451 9s. 11d., leaving an unexpended balance of £2,940 12s. 1d. To this balance must be