

Two hundred and six teachers are engaged in the Board schools, classed as principal or head teachers, assistants, and pupil-teachers. With one or two unimportant exceptions, all the principal teachers hold certificates of competency from the central department, and the new regulations of the Board dealing with the instruction and training of pupil-teachers will make it impossible in the course of a few years for any one to act as principal or assistant who has not been through a special course of technical training in the art and management of schools.

Last year's report directed attention to the state of the school-buildings and residences, and a few words will suffice now. With suitable out-offices, good drainage, water-supply, fencing, and well-ordered buildings there is little to desire in the way of school wants for country districts, and it must be said that in the majority of cases all the requirements are fully met. It would be well, however, if Committees in some of the school districts realised their responsibility to the same extent that their wants have been supplied by the Board. The highest state of neatness should characterize everything connected with the school-buildings and the grounds in which they are situated. Internal and external arrangements should be of the highest and best, and these can only be carried out and maintained by the united efforts of teachers and Committees.

In seven districts buildings are used for school purposes that are not the property of the Board, and in thirty-nine districts no house provision is yet made for teachers. I have many times drawn attention to the desirability of housing in a proper manner the teachers who have charge of schools, especially in country and outlying districts. Men who are well housed work with good heart in carrying out their duties, and to me it is always pitiful to find a man with a large family living under conditions which belie every lesson he gives to his pupils in hygiene and sanitary science. The needs of the district just now are not so pressing in the matter of school supply, and the expenditure of money in the erection of residences in places like Patutahi, Ormond, Makauri, Manga-atua, Weber, Te Ongaonga, and a number of other places would do much to insure a succession of good and capable men in those districts. In proof of this I would point to Takapau, where a residence has lately been provided, to the great advantage of the district. The buildings used for school purposes supply accommodation for over eight thousand pupils, but in the case of the smaller schools the accommodation is usually in excess of the attendance. Thus, the Waimata aided school of ten pupils is carried on in a public hall capable of holding a hundred to a hundred and fifty people; and other places might be cited where there is an apparent excess of accommodation, but such is not provided by the Board.

The school at Waipiro was overfull at the time of my visit, and efforts were being made by the few settlers to erect a building on the sea-beach, there being no public land available for building purposes. In this connection, I would direct attention to the desirability of the Board issuing a circular letter to all schools containing information with respect to drainage, water-supply, and office conveniences for the children and teachers. Hygiene should be insisted on in a public school if anywhere, and settlers merely require to be educated in elementary sanitary science in its application to the schools to inductively apply the same requirements to their own homes.

The school returns as sent in to the Board by the teachers at the close of each quarter of the school-year give an average weekly roll for the whole year of 7,763·75, with a working average attendance of 6,550·25, and a strict average of 6,663·25, which is 85·8 and 84·3 per cent. respectively of the roll-number. These percentages represent the regularity of the children at school for the whole year. Taking the time of my visits to the schools as a criterion of attendance, the rolls contained the names of 7,582 pupils, and of these 97·3 per cent. were present at examination; in other words, out of every hundred children belonging to the Board schools, there were eleven and a half more present at the time of my examination than at any other period during the year.

As usual, all the schools have been duly visited and examined by me except Portland Island, which I could not reach, for the same reasons as stated last year. Unfortunately, the school is now closed; but I have lately heard that the Union Steamship Company will land me on the island from a steamer when proceeding north. This arrangement will suit me well, and I hope to be able to visit the school soon after its reopening in February.

Besides the seventy schools now under the Board's control, I have been able to inspect and examine five Catholic schools, containing 442 pupils on the rolls, and, in addition, there are two others at Hastings which were inspected and will be examined by me in the first half of the coming year. These schools, I am informed by the Board, may or may not be examined at my own option. The increase in the number of pupils attending the Board schools, and the opening of schools in the more remote portions of so extensive an educational district, naturally take up a great deal more of my time than formerly. Indeed, when away from home I examine schools on Saturdays just as on ordinary school-days; and, much as I should like to do so, I am doubtful whether any of my time can in future be devoted to inspection visits at the Catholic schools, although to me this work is of much more importance than examination. Naturally, the district schools are paramount so far as my own duties are concerned; but I am bound to say that my visits to the Catholic schools have been pleasurable ones, for the Brothers in Napier and the Sisters in Gisborne, Hastings, Napier, Meanee, and Waipawa make the most strenuous efforts to carry out the syllabus requirements, and, considering their slender means, it is creditable to find a steady and growing advance in the work they are doing.

The Board schools continue to advance, not merely in numbers, but in the standard of efficiency as well. In no previous year have the passes been so numerous and so encouraging in anticipation of future progress. There are still, however, far too many pupils over the age of eight years in the preparatory classes, and it seems to me an extra effort might be made in certain schools to lower the high proportion of children over eight years of age who still occupy the preparatory classes. It is curious to find that backward pupils are much more numerous in town than in country schools.

Of the 7,582 pupils who are returned as belonging to the schools at the time of my examination, 4,949 were in standards and 2,633 in the preparatory classes. The passes for the year,