

The average attendance for the December quarter, 5,187, and that for the whole year, 5,069, are each the highest ever recorded in this district for any single quarter or year, although in 1898 the roll-number, 6,016, was much higher than at present. Though the attendance, represented as 86·2 per cent. of the weekly roll-number, thus shows that considerable improvement has taken place in regularity, yet even in this respect the district still appears in an unfavourable light when compared with the rest of the Dominion. Last year a better return, 86·9, obtained only the ninth place on the list of the thirteen educational districts, which were headed by Otago with 90·2 per cent. and Westland 89·6 per cent. We have previously pointed out that, on account of the irregularity induced by the intermittent fruit and hop picking that prevails over so large a proportion of this district, it will always be difficult, without interference with local industries, to compete with more favoured districts. An epidemic of whooping-cough in the first half of the year had a bad effect upon the attendance, especially in the infant schools, and only twenty-six, including side schools, attain to 90 per cent. With the exception of Grade 0, or household schools, the highest returns were given by Nelson Boys', Summerlea, and Gordon, each 94 per cent.; Hampden Street, 93 per cent.; Fairdown, 92 per cent.; Progress, Rahui (side), and Land of Promise, each 91 per cent.: so that very few individual schools have attained the high rate of attendance that prevails throughout the whole of the Otago District. Summerlea and Gordon, two of the highest in the above list, have also the credit of having kept school open constantly throughout the year, their returns showing 431 and 424 times respectively.

By the Education Amendment Act of 1910 attendance is now made compulsory at every meeting of a school, so that it will no longer be legally possible to keep a child away from school simply because the required minimum number of attendances has been recorded for the week, an opportunity of which some parents in the past have taken advantage. What is needed is a general enforcement of the compulsory clauses of the Education Act, and some improvement has been effected by placing some schools notorious for irregularity under the direct control of the Secretary of the Board, acting as Truant Officer. Yet in spite of this, and that our larger schools usually set a good example, we still find seventeen that record less than 80 per cent. of attendance, the worst offenders being Fern Flat, 66 per cent.; Landing and Glenroy, each 68 per cent.; and Globe Hill, 71 per cent.

Work was not maintained quite so continuously this year, as only twenty-nine schools were open the full number of times, 420; and in such cases as Upper Takaka, 390; Uruwhenua, 392; Karamea, 396; Little Grey, 398, some explanation should be forthcoming to account for the exceptional treatment of these school districts.

The number of teachers in the employ of the Board has increased by ten, and their classification is shown in the appended table, in which licenses are ranked as certificates:—

Grade.	Head Teachers.		Assistants.		Secondary Assistants.		Sole Teachers.		Total.
	Certifi- cated.	Uncertifi- cated.	Certifi- cated.	Uncertifi- cated.	Certifi- cated.	Uncertifi- cated.	Certifi- cated.	Uncertifi- cated.	
0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	20	20
1	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	18	22
2	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	12	26
3	..	..	..	..	..	..	7	1	8
4	25	..	16	11	..	..	..	..	52
5	7	..	6	3	2	..	..	..	18
6	5	..	5	..	1	..	..	..	11
9	3	..	23	1	2	..	..	..	29
1910 ..	40	..	50	15	5	..	25	51	186
1909 ..	35	..	48	11	5	..	23	44	166

There were, in addition, employed twenty-four pupil-teachers, only two of whom are males, and ten female probationers. We are pleased to see that a large number of those who have just completed their term of engagement as pupil-teachers are now entering upon a course of instruction at the Training College.

The proportion of uncertificated teachers is still growing, a condition of affairs that has prevailed throughout the Dominion for the last five years. The increase in the number of small schools is a contributing factor, but last year we experienced an exceeding dearth of suitable teachers of any class, a difficulty which happily has been removed for the present by the retirement of a large number of pupil-teachers, and by the unusually large number of suitable applicants that have recently appeared to replace them.

We have repeatedly pointed out that legally an uncertificated teacher may be employed by the Board only till a fully qualified one is obtainable. Some, in spite of the best intentions on entrance to the service, come so far to regard their positions as permanent that they make no effort whatever to improve their status by sitting for the certificate examination. To those in Grade 2, or a higher grade, who are in this predicament, and have failed to present themselves for the last two years, notice of determination of engagement might well be given by the Board, with a view to advertising the vacancies thus produced.