

The increase in the average attendance was 567, or 3·1 per cent. For the past five years the average attendance has steadily increased, and at the present rate of progress should, in about two years' time, reach the record of 19,607 attained in 1895. The average attendance for Dunedin and suburbs for the past year was 8,195, an increase of 378, or 4·8 per cent. Attention is directed to the high standard of regularity of attendance reached during the year, the percentage of average to weekly roll being 91·7 for the whole district (increase, 1·2), and 93·1 for Dunedin and suburbs (increase, 0·6). These percentages are the highest ever recorded in this district.

Ages of the Pupils: The average ages of the pupils in the various classes were: Preparatory, 6 years 10 months; Standard I, 9 years; Standard II, 10 years 2 months; Standard III, 11 years 3 months; Standard IV, 12 years 3 months; Standard V, 13 years 2 months; Standard VI, 13 years 11½ months; Standard VII, 15 years 1 month. These figures show a slight decrease in the ages for the preparatory, Standard I, and Standard VII classes, an increase of a month in the age for Standard V, and no variation in the other classes.

In view of the discussion that has taken place in recent years regarding an alleged tendency to keep pupils too long in the preparatory classes, it may be noted that for last year the number of pupils between the ages of five and eight showed the same percentage of the total as in the previous year—viz., 31·8 per cent.; while the number of pupils in the preparatory classes decreased from 36·8 per cent. to 36·3. The figures are given below in comparison with those for the years 1910 and 1906. With all due respect to the opinion of the Inspector-General, expressed in his recent reports, that secondary instruction is not entered upon by our pupils at a sufficiently early age, the Board fails to see any necessity for the adoption of measures for the curtailment of the time pupils stay in the preparatory classes, as it believes the general educational attainments of the children of this district are as high as those of children of equal age in Britain or America.

	1906.	1910.	1911.
Pupils between five and eight ...	5,661	6,473	6,566
Percentage of roll-number ...	29·8	31·8	31·8
Pupils in preparatory classes ...	4,996	7,449	7,494
Percentage of roll-number ...	26·4	36·8	36·3

Sex of the Pupils: At the 31st December last there were on the school rolls 10,752 boys (52 per cent.) and 9,865 girls (48 per cent.). The ratio of boys to girls was the same as in the previous year—viz., 100 boys to 93 girls. There were fifty male and forty female Maori or half-caste children on the rolls at the end of the year.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—For the five Junior National Board Scholarships provided under the Act and the ten Junior Scholarships offered by the Board there were 167 competitors. Of these, 117, or 70 per cent., passed the examination, and fifty, or 30 per cent., failed. For the ten Senior Board Scholarships there were fifty-five competitors, of whom forty-seven, or 84 per cent., passed the examination, and eight, or 16 per cent., failed. The number of competitors shows a slight decrease as compared with the previous year. The five Junior National Scholarships were awarded as follows: For schools with an average attendance not exceeding thirty-five, Annie M. White, Merton School; for schools with an average attendance between thirty-six and 200, Elliot M. Christie, Bluespur School: all schools—Arthur J. Philipps, Normal School; Henry C. McQueen, Albany Street School; Irene E. Searle, Albany Street School.

With the funds available, the Board was able to award twenty Junior and seventeen Senior Board Scholarships as follows: Junior—Division A (for pupils from schools with an average attendance below thirty-six), three scholarships; Division B (for pupils from schools with an average attendance between thirty-six and 160), three scholarships; Division C (for pupils who have made the highest aggregate of marks), fourteen scholarships.

The Board's Junior Scholarship regulations were lately amended, and last year's competition was the first under the altered conditions. It is unusual, but at the same time very gratifying, to see the smaller schools so well represented in the junior list, six scholarships having been awarded to pupils of schools with an average attendance below sixty-three.

Senior: Seven scholarships [details omitted].

Two of the Senior Scholarship winners had previously held Junior National Scholarships, and four had held Junior Board Scholarships.

The amount expended on scholarships for the year was—Board Scholarships (Junior and Senior), £1,218 3s. 6d.; Junior National Scholarships, £352 10s.: total, £1,570 13s. 6d.

In future a number of Senior Scholarships will be allotted to pupils who take practical work in science. The scholarships current at the end of the year were:—

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Junior National ...	8	7	15
Board's Senior ...	25	10	35
Board's Junior ...	24	7	31
Totals ...	57	24	81

The names of those who held scholarships in December, 1911, and particulars as to the marks obtained by those who passed the examination at the end of that year are given in Appendix K, which also contains a complete list of all those who have held Junior National Scholarships.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—In December last there were 659 boys receiving instruction in woodwork, 658 girls in cookery, 6,797 girls in needlework, while 1,857 pupils of both sexes were attending classes in agriculture, 1,045 in physical measurements, and 13,110 in other branches of handwork. These figures show a very considerable increase over previous years. Forty-five schools participated in cookery and woodwork instruction, the total number of pupils being 42 per cent. in excess of that of the previous year. School-gardens were in operation in connection with eighty-four schools. The principle of central school instruction, which has been in operation in Dunedin for some years, has been extended to Oamaru, Balclutha, and Tokomairiro, and the pupils of several schools on the railway-line have been taken there for instruction in cookery and woodwork.