

schools at the Neck, Ruapuke, and Titipua were closed during the year owing to reduced attendance. As settlement in this education district continues to expand, the necessity for the extension of educational facilities will also in a corresponding degree have to be provided for. Petitions for the establishment of new schools at West Gore, Wainatua, Maori Hill, Woodend, East Limehills, and Happy Valley were dealt with during the year. The Board, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1914, has in view the establishment of model schools for the observation of and practice in methods of teaching and school-management. Application has been made for the establishment in Southland of two such schools, but, so far, the Department has not decided what schools can be recognized.

School Attendance.—The following table shows the number of schools, the number of children on the rolls, the number in average attendance, and the percentage of attendance for each five-yearly period since 1890 :—

| Year. | Number of Schools. | Mean Average for Year. | | Percentage. |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | On Roll. | Attendance. | |
| 1890 | 111 | 8,426 | 6,587 | 78·2 |
| 1900 | 146 | 9,562 | 7,807 | 81·6 |
| 1910 | 173 | 10,228 | 8,902 | 87·0 |
| 1915 | 185 | 11,478 | 10,223 | 89·1 |

During the year epidemics of whooping-cough and measles were prevalent. In spite of these adverse conditions, in regularity of attendance this district is now amongst the best in the Dominion. At the end of the year there were in attendance at nineteen schools in the district eighty-four Maori or half-caste children—forty-six boys and thirty-eight girls. These pupils are, of course, included in the number recorded above. This gratifying increase in the average attendance is due to a large extent to the efforts of the Truant Officer, who is entitled to credit for his endeavours to improve the attendance in this district. The Truant Officer in his report to the Board on his year's work states that he has sent out 398 notices to defaulters, has issued ninety-seven summonses, and has secured sixty-five convictions. The amount of fines inflicted was £22 17s. Each head teacher or sole teacher is required by the Board's regulations to furnish at the end of each month, on the form supplied by the Board, the names of all defaulters, and the Truant Officer is thus enabled to enforce compliance with the law in all cases where no valid reason can be given for irregular attendance.

Teachers.—At the end of the year there were 400 teachers in the service of the Board, occupying positions as under.

| | | | | | Males. | Females. | Total. |
|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|--------|----------|--------|
| Head teachers | .. | .. | .. | .. | 55 | 21 | 76 |
| Sole teachers | .. | .. | .. | .. | 43 | 65 | 108 |
| Assistant teachers | .. | .. | .. | .. | 18 | 137 | 155 |
| Total of adult teachers | .. | .. | .. | .. | 116 | 223 | 339 |
| Pupil-teachers | .. | .. | .. | .. | 11 | 22 | 33 |
| Probationers | .. | .. | .. | .. | 3 | 25 | 28 |
| Totals .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 130 | 270 | 400 |

Of the 339 adult teachers in the service of the Board, 208 held teachers' certificates, ten held licenses to teach, while the number of uncertificated teachers was 121. At the end of 1914 there were 326 adult teachers in the service of the Board, of whom 210 held certificates, ten licenses to teach, and 106 were uncertificated. The proportion of uncertificated teachers has increased slightly during the year, a fact that is to be regretted.

In common with most Education Boards in the Dominion, this Board has experienced great difficulty in obtaining the services even of those who have had little or no previous teaching experience. During the year the Board selected, to fill positions in the lower-grade schools, applicants whose only qualification was the proficiency certificate. The Inspectors report that some of the adults selected for our small schools give promise of their becoming useful members of the teaching profession. During the year the Board appointed two returned soldiers to the charge of small country schools. No less than seventeen of the Board's teachers, all certificated, have left for the front, and to this cause must be attributed the main reason for the increase in the number of uncertificated teachers. With the advent of a much-improved scale of salaries as provided for in the Education Act, 1914, the Board is of the opinion that the service will become more attractive. For the year 1915 (new Act) the expenditure on teachers' salaries amounted to £56,269, an increase of £5,754 as compared with the previous year.

Instruction of Teachers.—The usual Saturday classes for the training of teachers were carried on at Invercargill, instruction being given for two terms each of thirteen weeks. The classes conducted were as follows: Drawing (free, instrumental, and blackboard), needlework, agriculture, hygiene, zoology, mathematics, English, school method, elocution, and cardboard-work. In the case of zoology and cardboard-work the instruction was limited to one term. On the whole all the classes were well attended, but needlework and hygiene attracted so many students that it was necessary to appoint assistant instructors for these subjects. Uncertificated teachers who were so situated that attendance at Saturday classes was impossible were notified that financial assistance would be granted to enable