

Attendance.—The number of children attending public schools in the district continues to increase. The number on the roll at the end of the year was 13,001, an increase of 244 during the year. The number and virulence of epidemic sicknesses that prevailed last year constitute an unfortunate record. During the first and second quarters of the year infantile paralysis and measles were rampant, and during the second, third, and fourth diphtheria, influenza, and scarlet fever were prevalent.

Teachers and Committees, having been advised that during such epidemics the children are safer at school working under proper control and under healthy conditions, made every effort to induce parents to send their children. Schools were not closed unless under special circumstances, and then only on the advice of the Health authorities. As a result the average attendance is less than that of the previous year, the decrease being 151, while the percentage of attendance fell to 88·2 per cent., the lowest for eight years.

The average roll and attendance for the years 1915 and 1916 were as follows: 1916—Average roll, 12,743; average attendance, 11,240; percentage of attendance, 88·18: 1915—average roll, 12,616; average attendance, 11,393; percentage of attendance, 90·3.

Teachers.—On the 31st December, 1916, there were in the Board's service 428 teachers, classed as follows :—

				Certificated.		Licensed.		Uncertificated.		Total.	
				M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Head teachers	..	..	..	53	10	..	..	2	0	55	10
Sole teachers	..	..	..	7	20	1	1	7	57	15	78
Assistants	..	..	..	27	128	0	4	2	39	29	171
Totals of adult teachers				87	157	1	5	11	96	99	259
Pupil-teachers	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8	36
Probationers	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0	26
Totals for 1915				..	..	..	..	..	..	107	321

In addition to the above, the following instructors in special subjects were employed :—

	M.	F.
Agriculture and dairying	2	..
Domestic science	..	2
Woodwork	2	..
Totals	4	2

The Board is proud to record the excellent response of its staff to the call for men to fight the battles of the Empire. During 1914 seven teachers and two of its office and shop staff enlisted in the Expeditionary Forces, in 1915 one teacher and one clerk, and in 1916 a further fifteen teachers and two clerks enlisted.

Instruction of Teachers.—Owing to the departmental request to economize where possible, the Board reduced its original proposals in the matter of teachers' classes. Saturday training classes in art and elementary hygiene were held at Gisborne, Napier, and Dannevirke, at all of which centres satisfactory work was done. The Board's course of instruction by correspondence was continued, the number of pupils enrolling in these classes being thirty-two. Of these, twenty-one took Group 1, eighteen Group 2, five Group 3, and six Group 4. About 50 per cent. of these students did earnest and conscientious work, and sixteen obtained a pass in one or more groups in the recent examination for Class D. In connection with the correspondence course, a summer school was held at Hastings from the 4th to the 23rd December. Eighteen students attended, and the subjects treated were elementary hygiene, elementary agriculture, dairy-science, and methods of teaching.

District High Schools.—[See E.—6, Report on Secondary Education.]

Manual and Technical Instruction.—In practically all the schools in the district some form of handwork was taken by the pupils. In 121 schools classes were formally "recognized." Of these the following table shows the subjects of instruction, number of schools at which instruction was given, and the average attendance of the classes receiving such instruction :—

	Number of Schools.	Average Attendance.
Handwork	121	10,705
Elementary agriculture	58	883
Agriculture and dairy science	41	961
Elementary experimental science	7	575
Woodwork	15	669
Cookery	15	621
Dressmaking	15	593
Swimming and life-saving	1	..