

for the distribution of 2,800 additional ornamental shrubs from this source. The number of recognized primary classes in agriculture totalled 202, and in all the district high schools the rural science course was followed.

School Buildings.—The staff in the Board's building department grows year by year, and a further increase has recently been made by taking over the plumbing-work. The effort being made to get abreast of the work which fell behind during the war period is now showing result, and conditions are improving steadily. The work is being carried out almost entirely on the day-labour system, and the result is proving quite satisfactory.

Training College.—The enrolment for the year was 200 females and 88 males; total, 288—an increase of 11 over last year: 194 belonged to Otago, 73 came from Southland, 8 from Canterbury, 9 from Hawke's Bay, 2 from Auckland, and 1 each from Wellington and Nelson.

School-books.—Free grants of books were made during the year to the children of parents in necessitous circumstances, and to pupils coming to Otago from other educational districts where different books were in use. Supplies of suitable continuous readers were forwarded to all schools. Another distribution of these readers up to the limit of the departmental grant will be made towards the end of this year. For the purchase of books and pictures, subsidies amounting to £146 12s. 5d. were paid by the Board out of its General Fund, sixty-one schools participating in these grants.

Truancy and Irregular Attendance.—The Attendance Officer reports that ninety-eight notices were served on parents or guardians for infringements of the Education Act; 117 cases of irregular attendance were investigated; seven penalty summonses were issued under section 62 of the Education Act; five convictions were obtained, two cases being withdrawn by the production of exemption certificates. The fines amounted to 19s. The figures given above indicate that the necessity for prosecuting parents for the irregular attendance of their children is gradually becoming less year by year. For example, in the year 1903 587 penalty summonses were issued, as against seven for 1923.

One hundred and thirty-two pupils in classes below Standard VI left the city and suburban schools at the end of the December quarter, 1923. Of this number, eighty-two had passed only Standard V, thirty-seven had passed only Standard IV, eleven had passed only Standard III, and two had passed only Standard II. All the above pupils had reached the exemption age—viz., fourteen years. The general attendance during the year 1923 was considerably affected by floods in the month of April, followed by epidemics of sickness.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

J. WALLACE, Chairman.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Invercargill, 27th March, 1924.

In accordance with the requirements of the Education Act, 1914, the Education Board of the District of Southland has the honour to submit the following report of its proceedings for the year 1923:—

The Board.—The personnel of the Board at the end of the year was as follows: Invercargill Urban Area—Messrs. A. Bain and F. W. Preddy; West Ward—Messrs. G. Johnston and J. C. Thomson, M.P.; East Ward—Messrs. H. E. Niven (Chairman) and H. Smith; Central Ward—Messrs. P. A. de la Perrelle, M.P., and J. D. Trotter. The Board's representatives on other educational bodies were as follows: Southland Boys' and Girls' High Schools Board—Messrs. P. A. de la Perrelle, M.P., and J. C. Thomson, M.P.; Gore High School Board—Messrs. H. E. Niven, H. Smith, and T. Taylor; Southland Technical College Board—Messrs. H. E. Niven and J. D. Trotter; Otago University Council—Mr. J. C. Thomson, M.P.; Dunedin Training College Committee of Advice—Mr. J. C. Thomson, M.P. The Board held twelve ordinary meetings and one special meeting during the year, and the Executive Committee of the whole Board met twenty-two times.

Schools.—The number of schools in operation at the end of 1923 was 190, a decrease of one compared with 1922.

District High School.—During the year the Department approved of the establishment of a district high school at Riverton. The experiment has been eminently successful. At the end of the year there were thirty-nine pupils on the rolls.

Attendance of Pupils.—The number on the roll at the end of 1923 was 12,353, compared with 12,469 at the end of 1922, a decrease of 116. The average attendance for 1923 was 10,790, compared with 11,063 for 1922, a decrease of 273. It is to be noted that the average attendance for December quarter, 1923, 11,301, constitutes a record for this district. The reduced roll number and average attendance as compared with the previous year (a record for this district) is not a matter of surprise when the abnormal amount of sickness prevalent throughout the Dominion during the second and third quarters of the year is taken into account. The Board appreciates the action of the Department in grading the schools for 1924 on the average attendance for the first and fourth quarters, thus helping to maintain the grades of the schools.

The Attendance Officer sent out during the year 1,888 notices to defaulters, issued nineteen summonses, and secured fifteen convictions, the amount of fines, &c., being £4 18s.