

As some of the Boards have failed to distinguish the sexes in their returns, it has been found impossible to give the attendance of boys and girls separately for the colony.

The returns give the total number on the school rolls for the year at 71,951, and the average daily attendance at 40,837; the corresponding numbers for the last quarter of the year being 55,688 and 41,773. The percentage of average attendance to the total number of enrolments is about 56·8 for the entire year, and about 75 for the last quarter. In all probability the two winter quarters would show a less percentage than the December quarter; for school attendance, especially in country districts, is, for obvious reasons, greatly affected by the state of the weather. But the comparison of the number of enrolments and the average attendance as shown in the summary, without further explanation, is calculated to mislead. The number of scholars who have been enrolled and who have attended at all during any quarter is found to be, in ordinary circumstances, higher than the number belonging to the school at any one time, and this is much more the case as regards so long a period as a year. It is with the lower number that the average attendance should rather be compared, for it would be manifestly unfair, in judging of any school, to compare the average attendance with the number on a roll which retains to the end of a quarter, or of an entire year, all the names once entered during the quarter or the year, however short the period of attendance may have been. There can be no doubt that many children, especially in towns, change from one school to another in the course of the year, and unless great care is taken they are likely to be returned as scholars of two or perhaps more schools. It is therefore of importance to secure as far as possible that the same child is not entered more than once as a scholar within the period for which the returns are made up.

There seems to be an impression that the importance of a school is enhanced by statements of high numbers on the roll. This is an erroneous idea, for the effect of an exaggerated representation of the gross number of attendants is to make the average attendance disproportionately low, and to conceal the real state of a district or locality as to the proportion of the children in it who are actually under instruction. It is of importance to keep in mind that it is not the number of scholars nominally upon the school roll, but the actual average attendance, which regulates the allowances to a school in respect of class-room accommodation, strength of staff, salaries of teachers, and other requirements. It is, therefore, extremely desirable that Education Boards should encourage, and even require, careful revision of each school roll at least once a quarter, with a view to the removal from it of all useless names. The average daily attendance, however, does not, in itself, show the full number of children who may have derived advantage from the public schools, for the attendance of many children, owing to circumstances beyond their control, is necessarily irregular, and yet such children may have received much benefit from their attendance, broken though it may have been.

Uniform attendance registers and summaries are about to be supplied to all the schools. The method of calculating the average attendance laid down by the regulations recently issued, and the quarterly returns required thereunder, will greatly facilitate the collection of complete and reliable information of a uniform character respecting the school attendance throughout the whole of the colony.

It has not been found possible this year to furnish returns respecting the ages of the scholars, and the proportion which the numbers attending school bear to the whole of the children of school age, within the several school districts.

RECEIPTS OF EDUCATION BOARDS.

“The Education Boards Act, 1876,” made temporary provision for the administration of educational affairs in the several provincial districts after “The Abolition of Provinces Act, 1875,” should come into operation. By the former of these Acts all taxes and rates previously authorized by the several Provincial Legislatures to be levied for the support of the public schools were abolished, excepting school fees and capitation rates on account of children; and a vote of