

REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

(It has not been considered necessary, as a rule, to print those portions of the Inspectors' detailed reports which relate to particular schools.)

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Board of Education Office, Auckland, September, 1877.

In accordance with the provisions of section 12 of "The Auckland Education Act, 1872," I have the honor to submit my report on elementary education in this provincial district for the year ended 30th June, 1877.

In the quarter ended 30th September, 1876, the number of common schools in the district was 159; and in the December quarter, 162. In the March quarter of 1877, the number was 168; and in the quarter ended 30th June, 175. The number of half-time schools in each quarter respectively was—30th September, 1876, 30; 31st December, 1876, 32; 31st March, 1877, 32; and 30th June, 1877, 32.

The number of teachers in June, 1876, was 139 head teachers and 109 assistants; in June, 1877, 157 head teachers and 119 assistants. In addition there were several probationers, to whom I will refer further on.

The following is a summary of the attendance in each of the quarters of the year:—

		On Roll.			Average.			
		Boys.	Girls.	Both.	Boys.	Girls.	Both.	
September quarter, 1876	...	5,515	4,392	9,907	...	3,660	2,729	6,389
December	„ 1876	5,510	4,488	9,998	...	3,787	2,954	6,741
March	„ 1877	5,787	4,848	10,635	...	3,987	3,131	7,118
June	„ 1877	5,950	4,885	10,835	...	4,040	3,100	7,140

In the appendix will be found particulars of the attendance at the schools, and reports of my visits to the various schools.

In each of my yearly reports, for several years back, I have had to call attention to the very unsuitable nature of the buildings the Board were obliged to use as schools in many parts of the province. I am happy to be able to say that this state of things has been to some extent set right. The funds placed at the disposal of the Board have enabled them to build, during the past year, several plain but convenient schools in the country districts, the suburbs of Auckland, and at the gold fields; others are in process of erection, and several more are projected. A list of these buildings is appended.

The schools are fairly supplied with furniture and the absolutely indispensable appliances for teaching. The Board have hitherto been unable to do more than this. It is very desirable that most of the articles specified under the head of "additional apparatus" in the regulations should be provided for many of the schools. In many of the country schools the want of a clock is a serious hindrance to the enforcing of that punctuality on which so much stress is laid in the regulations of the Board.

In my report of September, 1874, I stated as follows: "I have found that the system of making grants to School Committees for furniture to be provided by them is unsatisfactory. Though explicit printed instructions are forwarded to the Committees for their guidance, the construction of the furniture is frequently very faulty. The cost, too, in many country districts is now much greater than in town. I would recommend that for the future the Board should have school furniture made in Auckland, and supplied as the schools require it. There are now in the office drawings and dimensions of wooden desks and seats of the most improved modern construction, which can be made at a very moderate cost." The plan then suggested is now that for the most part adopted. The American desks, each of which seats two pupils, are those usually supplied. These desks have certain drawbacks, but they are, I consider, more than atoned for by their advantages. Among these are: they provide a rest for the pupils' backs, they economize floor space, they are easily packed for transmission, and their cost is moderate. It has been found absolutely necessary to substitute, in many schools, these desks for the desks in use, which were clumsy, unwieldy, and defaced. In some schools the old furniture occupies so much space that the pupils attending cannot be properly accommodated, though the buildings are sufficiently large. The cost of enlarging these buildings will be escaped—at least for some time—by substituting the new desks for the old.

Examinations of candidates for certificates of competency as teachers, and for classification as junior assistants and pupil-teachers, were held during the year in Auckland and at the Thames. Several persons have been admitted as probationary teachers, the Board making an allowance to them for three months, at a rate not exceeding £5 a month. The period of attendance has in most cases been extended more than once. It was at first intended that only those who had passed an examination should be admitted as probationers; but this intention has not been in all cases adhered to. The practice of admitting probationers has been attended with advantage. Many of them have been appointed teachers of country schools. Without this arrangement those schools would have had to be content with teachers without experience of any kind. I think the system should be continued, but I am of opinion that the original intention should be reverted to, so far as it may be found possible.

The difficulty of procuring competent teachers still continues, and I would again urge the desirableness of inducing teachers to come here from the United Kingdom. Notwithstanding the exercise of all possible vigilance, there are persons employed as teachers who are anything but