

OTAGO.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 31st March, 1880.

In accordance with the provisions of section 102 of "The Education Act, 1877," the Board of the Education District of Otago has the honour to submit the following report for the year 1879.

At the beginning of the year the Board consisted of the following members:—Messrs. Donald Reid, James Green, Horace Bastings, John Shand, James Fulton, Henry Clark, Michael Fraer, William Elder, and Alexander Campbell Begg. As intimated in the Board's report for last year, Messrs. Reid, Green, and Fraer, were ballotted as the retiring members for the year 1879, and on the 31st day of March they ceased to be members of the Board. The election by the school committees of the district of three members in the room of those who retired, resulted in the appointment of Messrs. Michael Fraer, Keith Ramsay, and James Green. At the first meeting of the Board, as newly constituted, Mr. James Fulton was appointed chairman. During Mr. Fulton's period of attendance at the General Assembly, Mr. Green acted as chairman. There were held during the year 14 meetings of the Board, and 12 meetings of the Finance Committee. At the regular meeting held on the 18th December it was determined by ballot that Messrs. Clark, Fulton, and Bastings should be the retiring members for the year 1880.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.—At the close of the year 1878 there were 134 schools in operation under the Board, employing, on the 31st December, 334 teachers, viz.:—161 schoolmasters, 72 schoolmistresses, 8 teachers of sewing, 32 male pupil teachers, and 61 female pupil teachers. During the year new schools were established and opened at Dunroon, Bendigo, Bald Hill Flat, Eweburn, Goodwood, Circle Hill, Glenledi, Swift Creek, Waipahi, Tuapeka West, Balclutha North, and the Benevolent Institution (Caversham). At the close of the year 1879 there were in operation 145 schools, employing 375 teachers, viz.:—174 schoolmasters, 82 schoolmistresses, 16 teachers of sewing, 36 male pupil teachers, and 67 female pupil teachers. This shows an increase for the year of 11 schools and 41 teachers. In addition to the schools opened during the year, the Board has sanctioned the establishment of schools at Waihemo, Moonlight Flat, and Strath-Taieri. The new buildings at Waikoikoi and George Street, Dunedin, (sanctioned last year) are now almost completed, and will be available at an early date. A number of applications for the establishment of new schools are still under consideration.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—Tables showing the attendance at the different schools, the amount expended upon each school, and the name, status and emoluments, of each of the teachers are hereunto appended. The numbers for the year show an increase in the average attendance of 1,260 on that of last year. The increase in the number of children who attended at all was 2,370. As usual, the average attendance declined very considerably during the June and September quarters, but for the December quarter it rose to 14,637, a number greatly in excess of that for any previous quarter. The marked difference in the average attendance for the various quarters was due to the prevailing inclemency of the weather during the winter and spring seasons. The rural and village schools were most conspicuously affected by it. The schools situated in Dunedin and the other large centres of population showed great regularity in the attendance throughout all the quarters. In their case the difference between the average attendances for the last quarter and the preceding ones has been mainly due to increase in the number of children in attendance.

AGES OF PUPILS.—The following is an abstract of the ages of the pupils who attended during the last quarter of 1879:—

Ages.	Boys.	Girls.	Totals.
Under 5 years	213	222	435
5 and under 7	1,942	1,774	3,716
7 and under 10	3,200	3,049	6,249
10 and under 13	2,831	2,547	5,378
13 and under 15	870	849	1,719
Above 15 years	138	149	287
Totals	9,194	8,590	17,784

These figures show that of the pupils in attendance for the last quarter, 2½ per cent. were under 5 years of age; 21 per cent. between 5 and 7; 35 per cent. between 7 and 10; 30 per cent. between 10 and 13; 9¾ per cent. between 13 and 15; and 1¼ per cent. over 15.

FINANCE.—An abstract of the income and expenditure of the Board for the year 1879, certified by the auditor appointed by the Governor, is appended hereto. A statement of the amounts contributed by the Board to each school for teachers' salaries including bonuses, for allowances to committees in aid of the school fund, and for the erection and improvement of school buildings is also given. The sum paid for teachers' salaries, including the practising department of the Normal School, was £44,220 15s. 1d., inclusive of bonuses to the amount of £2,109 14s. 4d. During the year some important changes were made in the Board's fixed financial arrangements. The minimum average attendance of schools wholly provided for by the Board was reduced from 25 to 20. A slight increase was made in the fixed salary paid to the head masters and mistresses of all schools below 200 in average attendance. The average attendance entitling a school to the services of a sewing mistress was reduced from 50 to 40. The Board's provisional scheme for the payment of bonuses on classification had to be reconsidered, and adapted to the classification made under Regulations in Council. In dealing with this subject, the Board had to consider its financial position, present and prospective, with a view to making the remuneration of its teachers as liberal as circumstances would allow. It was found that under the arrangements of last year, the teachers were, on the whole, paid less liberally than in other colonies, and even than in several districts of New Zealand. To do away with this grievance, which was likely to lead to the gradual removal to other districts of some of the Board's best teachers, and in order to encourage the more general attainment of a high classification, a more liberal scheme of bonuses on classification was finally adopted. As now fixed, the remuneration of teachers is nearly equal to that paid in any part of New Zealand or Australia. All the changes made during the year in the Board's permanent