

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Timaru, March, 1880.

As required by Clause 102 of the Education Act, I have the honor to submit the general report of the Education Board of South Canterbury for the year ending 1879.

At the commencement of the year the Board consisted of Messrs. H. Belfield (Chairman), S. W. Goldsmith, J. Granger, W. B. Howell, D. L. Inwood, W. Postlethwaite, E. H. Tate, Rev. G. Barclay, and Rev. W. Gillies. By the balloting in December, 1878, it was decided that the three members to retire in the following March were Messrs. Belfield and Tate, and Rev. G. Barclay. At the election in March, Messrs. H. Belfield, C. W. Tancred, and Rev. G. Barclay were returned. During the year Rev. W. Gillies and Messrs. Granger, Inwood, and Tancred, resigned their seats on the Board, and Messrs. E. Wakefield, G. F. Lovegrove, M. Gray, and R. A. Barker have been elected. At the end of the year the Board consisted of—Herbert Belfield, Esq. (Chairman), Rev. George Barclay, Richard A. Barker, Esq., Samuel W. Goldsmith, Esq., Melville Gray, Esq., William B. Howell, Esq., George F. Lovegrove, Esq., William Postlethwaite, Esq., and Edward Wakefield, Esq., M.H.R. During the year, 18 (12 ordinary and 6 special) meetings of the Board were held, with an average attendance of 6.27 members present.

NEW SCHOOL DISTRICTS.—The only new districts proclaimed are Gapes Valley and St. Andrew's. New districts will shortly be proclaimed at Makikihi Township, Albury, and Orari Bridge; but in the absence of any present possibility of erecting buildings, the proclamation of these districts has not been made.

NEW BUILDINGS.—During the past year new school buildings, consisting of school and master's house, in the new districts of Hunter, Makikihi (now Hook), Upper Otaio, Totara (now Mount Gay), Opihi, Waihao, Waituna Creek, Burke's Pass, Fairlie Creek, North Orari, South Orari, and Wai-iti, have been completed, and the schools are now in operation. New buildings—school and master's house—on a more central site have been built at Waihi Bush, and are now occupied with a considerably increased attendance. The schools at Pleasant Point, Geraldine, Temuka, and Pareora have been enlarged and otherwise improved. The Pleasant Valley school buildings, which were in considerable danger from encroachment of the river, have been shifted to a new site, and have been enlarged and improved. The master's house at Kakahu has been enlarged, and a new janitor's cottage has been built for the Waimate school. Minor improvements and repairs have been made to every school in the district. The total amount expended on buildings, sites, furniture, apparatus, &c., during the year is £16,132 1s. 6d. This amount is, however, made up of almost the entire Government grant for two years, and unexpended votes made by the old Canterbury Board of Education. The Board have exercised their best discretion in the allocation and expenditure of this money, and believe that the results justify every expenditure. With a full view to economy, care has been taken to make the new buildings so suitable and complete that very few calls on the funds of the Board, for repairs and improvements, should be made for a considerable time. Large sums have been expended in improving the existing buildings at Timaru, Geraldine, Temuka, and Waimate. These buildings are now fairly complete, though the Board has not been able to make such expenditure as their size and sanitary requirements would justify.

MAINTENANCE.—The statutory grant for maintenance has proved sufficient for the requirements of the district, and this account shows a credit balance of £457 18s 9d. It is, however, anticipated that the maintenance balance will be considerably less at the end of the current year, as the Board have suspended the regulation hitherto in force of requiring schools of less than forty in attendance to contribute a small sum annually towards the teacher's salary. The Board will now pay a uniform minimum salary of £140 per annum to every certificated master in charge of a school, and provide a residence. The Board's expenditure will also be considerably increased by the larger number of small schools now brought into operation, and by the employment of additional assistance in the Education Office, rendered necessary by the great extension of the work of the Board. The Board's scale of payments to teachers has been in operation since May, and has worked very well. There has been no difficulty in obtaining the services of efficient teachers, and the competition for some of the recent vacancies has been quite beyond what might reasonably have been expected. The ten shillings grant to committees for incidental expenditure has been distributed in accordance with the scale adopted by the Board, but is still found quite inadequate for the requirements of committees, and the Board have from time to time been compelled to supplement the Government grant. The Board again desires to express a hope that the Government may be able to increase the grant to fifteen shillings per head on the average attendance. The amount granted is barely sufficient to meet the cost of fuel and cleaning, and committees are powerless to expend small sums on other necessities or petty repairs without a special vote from the Board.

ATTENDANCE.—I am able to record a marked increase in the general attendance. The greater number of schools in operation would naturally lead to this result; but a considerable increase is shown in the attendance at schools that have been for some years in operation.

EXAMINATIONS.—The results of the scholarship and pupil teachers' examinations of March, 1879, were given in last year's report, and as the results of the same examinations held in March, 1880, are ready, they have been appended to this report. The scholarships are tenable for one year only.

SCHEDULES, REGULATIONS, AND REPORTS.—The schedules appended give full details of the names, status, and emoluments of the teachers, the accommodation provided in the various schools, the attendance of pupils, with their ages and particulars of the instruction given, and of the Board's income and expenditure for the year. The regulations adopted by the Board for the employment of teachers, for the employment and instruction of pupil teachers, for the distribution of the incidental grant to committees, and for the examinations for scholarships, are also appended. The Inspector's report also given shows that the schools generally are well officered and in a satisfactory state of efficiency, and that the results of the year's work shows steady improvement.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE.—Committees have in many cases assented to the necessity of bringing the compulsory clauses of the Act into force, and the action generally taken of issuing circulars and bringing