

in the Board's income must produce a most disastrous effect upon the educational work of the district. But it is upon Committees that the reductions have pressed most heavily. The amount (10s. per head) formerly granted to them was quite inadequate to the requirements of the various districts, and, when this was reduced by one-third in August last, the consequences were somewhat serious. But most Committees made loyal efforts to facilitate the work of the Board by raising money locally, and thus materially lessening the evil effects of the sudden reduction by so large a proportion as one-third of the incidental grant payable to them. As the cost of maintaining several schools was found to be greatly in excess of the revenue produced by their attendance, the Board has been compelled to order that every school in which the average attendance falls below 25 shall be classed as an "aided school." Under the "Aided Schools Regulations" the Board pays over to Committees the statutory grant of £3 15s. per head on the average attendance, out of which the Committees pay all expenses, salaries included, connected with the schools.

ATTENDANCE.—At the close of the year 29 schools were in operation, the same as in December of the previous year, but five others were practically ready to commence work during the first quarter of the current year—namely, St. Andrew's, Timaru Side School, Gapes Valley, Geraldine Flat, and Orari Bridge. Owing to serious agricultural depression the population has fallen off in one or two districts, and Committees have in several cases enforced the compulsory clauses of the Act in order that their schools may not be disrated. The average attendance for the quarter ending December, 1879, was 2,324, and for the corresponding quarter of 1880 was 2,616, showing that without any additional schools there has been the very satisfactory general increase of 272, or 10 per cent. in the average attendance. The following table shows the attendance for the three years during which the Board has existed :—

Quarter ending	No. of Schools.	No. of Teachers.	No. on Rolls.	Average Attendance.		
				Male.	Female.	Total.
March 31st, 1878	16	56	2,467	930	814	1,744
June 30th, 1878	16	59	2,458	897	754	1,651
September 30th, 1878	17	60	2,510	931	811	1,742
December 31st, 1878	17	56	2,666	1,005	872	1,877
March 31st, 1879	18	58	2,710	981	864	1,845
June 30th, 1879	21	63	2,833	1,068	911	1,979
September 30th, 1879	24	70	3,029	1,123	954	2,077
December 31st, 1879	29	77	3,203	1,241	1,083	2,324
March 31st, 1880	29	79	3,346	1,217	1,121	2,338
June 30th, 1880	29	79	3,365	1,292	1,167	2,459
September 30th, 1880	29	78	3,470	1,361	1,181	2,542
December 31st, 1880	29	80	3,506	1,381	1,235	2,616

TEACHING STAFF.—At the close of the year the teaching staff consisted of 81 teachers and 6 sewing mistresses, as under: Male adult teachers, 37; female adult teachers, 15; male pupil-teachers, 7; female pupil-teachers, 22; sewing mistresses, 6: total, 87.

INSPECTION AND EXAMINATIONS.—The schools have been regularly inspected and examined during the year by the Inspector. His report gives statistics and other valuable information on the year's work, and shows that the general condition of the schools continues very satisfactory. The annual pupil-teachers' and scholarship examinations were held in January and March respectively of the current year, but as the reports on these examinations bear on the work of 1880 they are appended to this report.

SCHEDULES, REGULATIONS, AND REPORTS.—The schedules appended to this report give full details of the names, status, and emoluments of teachers; school accommodation provided; attendance of pupils; and the income and expenditure of the Board. There are also appended the Board's Regulations for the Employment of Teachers, Pupil-Teachers' Regulations, Scholarship Regulations, School Fund Regulations, and Aided Schools Regulations, the report of the Inspector of Schools, and the reports on the pupil-teachers' and scholarship examinations.

TRAINING OF TEACHERS.—In accordance with a special resolution, passed July 7th, 1880, the Board invited the teachers and pupil-teachers in its service to attend a three-months' course of Saturday lectures by the Inspector, and undertook to defray all travelling expenses connected with their attendance. The results were most gratifying. All the teachers in the district availed themselves of the privilege, and were thus not only enabled to more fully prepare for examination themselves, but also to disseminate the special knowledge thus acquired in the rural districts from which most of them came. Of the £135 9s. 6d. paid by the Board for travelling expenses in this connection, £85 was made good by the Department of Education.

AUDIT.—The Board is now endeavouring, in conjunction with other Boards, to obtain from the Minister of Education authority to directly audit the accounts of School Committees—a prerogative which the unsatisfactory state of many of these accounts renders it absolutely necessary that the Board should have and exercise.

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The Hon. the Minister of Education.

HERBERT BELFIELD, Chairman.