

them. There were measles and other epidemics in Auckland; measles in Wanganui; measles, diphtheria, scarlatina, and whooping-cough in most of the Hawke's Bay school districts; and a large amount of sickness in Dunedin and other centres of population.

The collection of full and reliable information of a uniform character respecting school attendance is secured by means of the attendance registers and summaries, which are supplied by the department to all the schools, the method of calculating the attendance prescribed by the regulations, and the quarterly returns required under them for each school. Almost all the grants made to Boards from the education vote are paid according to the average attendances in the several education districts, and it is therefore of extreme importance that the school registers and the returns should be perfectly trustworthy. In this matter the department is wholly dependent upon the accuracy and good faith of the teachers, except in so far as the Boards' Inspectors carefully scrutinize the attendance registers, and the Chairmen of School Committees follow the practice of comparing the returns with the registers before they are forwarded to the Board. It is exceedingly desirable therefore that the Boards should instruct their Inspectors in regard to the scrutiny of the registers, and that they should insist upon all school returns being approved and signed by the Chairmen of the Committees, as enjoined by the regulations.

As prescribed by regulations under the Education Act the average daily attendance is ascertained by dividing the total number of morning and afternoon attendances taken together by the total number of times (morning and afternoon taken separately) that the school has been at work during the period for which the computation is made. In order, however, that the capitation allowance to Boards may not be unduly affected by bad weather, epidemics, or any unusual occurrence, a second computation is made, throwing out of account the mornings and afternoons on which the attendance has been less than one-half of the children then belonging to the school. The result of this second computation is named the "working average," and upon it the payments to Boards are based. Both the "strict average" and the "working average" must be shown in the quarterly returns to the Boards and to the department, and both are given for each education district in the foregoing summary (Table A), and for each school in Table No. 10 of the Appendix, pages 43-56, the difference between them for all the schools being 2,436 for the entire year and 1,862 for the last quarter. The differences in former years were as follows: In 1881, entire year 1,913, last quarter 1,735; in 1880, entire year 1,609, last quarter 1,461; in 1879, entire year 1,657, last quarter 1,437; in 1878, entire year 2,475, last quarter 1,204. The percentage of difference between the "strict average" and the "working average" attendance in each year has been as follows: 3·82 in 1882, 3·09 in 1881, 2·58 in 1880, 3·13 in 1879, and 5·43 in 1878. Where the average daily attendance is mentioned in other parts of this report it is the "working average" which is meant.

Some Boards have expressed a desire for a change in the mode of computing the "working average," on the ground that the extensive prevalence of epidemics from time to time in a number of the school districts reduces the attendance, and consequently the capitation grants, to such a degree as seriously to affect the finances of the Board, and to necessitate reductions in the incomes of the teachers whose school attendances have been thus unexpectedly diminished by causes over which they have had no control. The Board of the Auckland District "feels bound to repeat its conviction that the regulation [for computing the working average] fails to reach the object for which it was framed, and that further provision ought to be made to meet such contingencies" as those referred to.* Similar representations are made by the Board of Hawke's Bay in its report.† But it is difficult to see how any plan could be devised by which exceptional cases, such as those referred to, could be met in the way suggested without stretching to an undue extent the power to frame regulations by an Order in Council for the payment of the capitation grants to Boards according to the number of children "in average

* Appendix, page 58.

† Appendix, page 66.