

BOARD.—The members who retired in December, 1882, were Mr G. M. Snelson, Mr. John Notman, and the Rev J Ross. Mr Snelson and the Rev Mr Ross were re-elected, and Mr G. Carson was returned a member of the Board in place of Mr Notman, who did not seek re-election. An extraordinary vacancy was occasioned in the month of January by the resignation of Mr. Donald Coutts, of Patea, and this was filled by the election of Mr Samuel Taplin, of the same place.

SCHOOLS.—The number of schools in operation at the close of the year was sixty-seven. Of these, four are aided schools in outlying districts, where the attendance is too small to justify any further outlay. The Board makes an allowance to these aided schools of £4 5s. per scholar on the average attendance, being 5s. per head more than it receives from Government on their account. The Board felt justified in extending this benefit to persons not within a reasonable distance of an existing school, because it is necessary to avoid a multiplication of non-paying small schools which might cripple its resources. Of the total number of schools, twenty-seven have only an average of twenty-five or under fifty pupils.

TEACHERS.—At the close of the year the Board had in its employ 126 teachers, including pupil-teachers. Of these, 53 are male head-teachers, 14 are female head-teachers, 6 are male assistant teachers, 18 are female assistant teachers, 9 are male pupil-teachers, and 26 female pupil-teachers. The following are uncertificated: 20 male head-teachers, 3 male assistant teachers, 10 female teachers, and 12 female assistant teachers; but the majority presented themselves at the teachers' examination last month. The Board also permits the employment of young persons who have passed the Fifth Standard, as cadets. They are under the same regulations as the pupil-teachers, except that they are only allowed to teach half the time, and do not receive any salary. During the year the Board made a rule that teachers' wives cannot in future be appointed assistants in schools in charge of their husbands. It also passed a resolution requiring all uncertificated teachers in the Board's employ to present themselves at the annual examination, and the effect was apparent from the large number who competed for certificates last month. In last year's report the Board referred to what it thought should be the moral status of a teacher. Following up the subject, it has this year passed the following resolution: "That, before any person shall be appointed teacher in any school under this Board, he or she shall be required to obtain satisfactory testimonials as to his or her sobriety; and that, when any applicant shall previously have been in the employment of any other Board in New Zealand, the Secretary shall in writing or by telegraph inquire from such other Board what were the circumstances which led to the discontinuance of such employment, and that no appointment be made until such information shall be laid before the Board." It having been ascertained that some teachers had not been as punctual in their attendance as is desirable, the Board issued a circular to the Committees, directing that "teachers must be in their places during the whole of school hours," and the Board trusts it may not again have occasion to refer to this matter. The Board has also placed a minute on the book to the effect that it is undesirable that more than one son or daughter of a teacher should be employed in the school under his or her charge.

ATTENDANCES.—The attendance of scholars shows a steady increase. In 1882 the roll-number for the whole year, taken from line 7 of the quarterly returns, which represents the actual number belonging to the schools, was 4,844·75, and the working average of the four quarters was 3,672·75. In 1883 the roll-number for the year was 5,273·75, whilst the working average for the four quarters was 4,045·16. From these figures it is ascertained that in 1882 the proportion of average attendance to the roll-numbers was 75·8 per cent., whilst in 1883 it rose to 76·73 per cent. The increase in the working average is 372·41, or 10·14 per cent. When it is considered that there has been a large exodus of population from some of the principal centres in this education district, such as Patea and Halcombe, the above results must be looked upon as very satisfactory.

NEW DISTRICTS AND SCHOOL BUILDINGS.—During the year new school districts have been formed at Stanway (North Halcombe), at Upper Taonui, Kimbolton Road, and Otakeho. New schools have been built at Beaconsfield, Warrengate, Manchester, Okaiawa, and Stanway. A new residence has been erected at Makino Road, and a custodian's residence in the Town of Wanganui. The latter is for the use of the custodian, who has charge of all the town schools and grounds, and who is in the employ of the Wanganui Committee. It is built on a site adjoining the Boys' District High School. A considerable addition has been made to the Patea District High School, and a new room added to the Girls' District High School, Wanganui, whilst repairs and additions of various kinds have been effected throughout the district as far as funds would admit. The Board also accepted contracts for painting the whole of the school buildings in the district, a work which was very much needed, and one which will tend to their preservation. This fact will in a measure account for the outlay on maintenance appearing so disproportionate to that for new buildings. Much remains yet to be done. There is urgent need of improvements and more space at Waverley, Feilding, Hawera, &c., and the Board has received applications for other pressing works too numerous to detail. It is also called upon to build new schools in the districts just formed. It must not, however, be supposed that the Board will undertake the erection of these buildings without making very careful inquiry into the merits of the several cases. The want of school ground accommodation is still felt at Palmerston North and Bull's. As regards the former place, the Board has applied to the Wellington School Commissioners for a reserve to be set aside for the purpose.

In connection with the preservation and care of the school buildings, grounds and fences, &c., it will be seen that the Board has used every means in its power to attain this very desirable end, by expending a large sum in painting and other works. It also issued a copy of the circular received from the department bearing upon this subject, with a memorandum attached inviting the co-operation of Committees in the matter. The contrast, however, presented in the appearance of the various school grounds and surroundings is so great that the Board can only arrive at the conclusion that, whilst some teachers take a pride in their schools, both inside and out, others consider that