

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Napier, 31st January, 1884.

The Board of the Education District of Hawke's Bay has the honour to present the following report of its proceedings for the year ended the 31st December, 1883.

During the year twelve ordinary and one special meeting were held for the transaction of business, and the following are the attendances made by each member constituting the Board: Mr J. D. Ormond (Chairman), 12; Captain Russell, 9, Rev D. Sidey, 12; Mr Duncan Guy (seven months), 6, Mr Rechab Harding, 11, Mr Samuel Locke, 7, Mr Frederick Sutton, M.H.R., 8, Mr William White, 9, Mr J. N. Williams, 10. The three members who retired in March last by effluxion of time, viz., Mr Ormond, Captain Russell, and Mr. Locke, were re-elected without opposition. In the month of April an extraordinary vacancy occurred by the retirement of Mr G. E. Lee as a member of the Board, and Mr Duncan Guy was elected in his stead.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS.—The number of school districts remains the same as last year, no new districts having been constituted, although before the close of the year several applications were received asking for the formation of new districts. The number of schools, however, shows an increase of one, as the schools of Tarawera and Waerenga-a-hika were reopened in January, and the Tamumu subsidized school was closed at the end of the June quarter.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—The number of schools in operation at the close of the school year was thirty-six, in which accommodation is provided for 3,461 children. Six of the buildings occupied for school purposes do not belong to the Board, so that the actual accommodation provided in Board schools is sufficient only for the attendance of 3,330 children. The attendance returns for the last quarter of the year give an average weekly roll-number in the schools of the district of 3,728 children, and an average attendance of 2,940. Compared with the year 1882, the one just closed shows an increase of 9 per cent. in the number attending school, and of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in the average attendance. It will thus appear that the average attendance has increased in greater proportion than the number attending school. Out of every hundred children on the school rolls during the year, seventy-seven of them were in daily attendance each time the schools were opened. In 1882 there were only seventy-four children out of every hundred in daily attendance. This shows that there has been an improvement of 3 per cent. in the regularity of children at school, but even now the regularity is far below that of the Otago schools, where last year the average attendance was 82 per cent. of the number of pupils on the roll. It is interesting to notice that, since the Board was first established in 1878, the number of children attending the schools, including the then denominational schools, has risen from 1,520 in March, 1878, to 3,728, or 145 per cent., in December, 1883; and the average attendance has increased from 1,259 to 2,940, or nearly 134 per cent.

TEACHERS.—The teaching staff employed in the Board schools consist of thirty-nine certificated and licensed teachers, sixteen uncertificated, and forty pupil-teachers. In all the larger schools certificated teachers are engaged, and as vacancies occur in the smaller schools it is anticipated that there will be very little difficulty in staffing them with certificated teachers selected from among the ex-pupil-teachers, whose term of service as pupil-teachers has expired, and who are to be found each year presenting themselves for certificates at the Government examination in January.

MAINTENANCE.—The total cost of maintenance for the year, including the bonuses to teachers on the results of the standard examination and the payments to School Committees, which latter amounted to nearly 10 per cent. of the Board's income, was £10,791 16s. 2d., or at the rate of £2 18s. 4½d. per head on the average roll-number for the year, and of £3 18s. 4d. per head reckoned on the average attendance. In nearly one-half of the schools under the Board the cost of maintenance exceeds the amount derived by the Board from the Government on account of the average attendance at the schools. The payment to teachers of "bonuses on results" is made in lieu of "certificate money," the Board preferring to pay a bonus to all teachers,—both principal and junior teachers,—whether certificated or not, who do the best work and obtain a certain percentage of passes in the annual standard examination of the schools.

INSPECTOR'S REPORT.—The Inspector's report upon the work of the schools shows that an unusual increase has taken place, not only in the number of presentations for the standard examinations, but likewise in the number of children who succeeded in passing the standard requirements. The number presented for examination exceeded those presented in 1882 by 11.4 per cent., and the number of actual passes exceeded those of 1882 by more than 12 per cent. The average age of the children who passed the standards was—Standard I., 9 years 2 months, Standard II., 10 years 3 months, Standard III., 11 years 3 months, Standard IV., 12 years 5 months, Standard V., 13 years 3 months, Standard VI., 14 years 2 months. These averages are higher in Standards I., II., III., and IV. than the mean returns of the ages of pupils in the other education districts of the colony, but in Standards V and VI. the pupils in Hawke's Bay pass the examination at as early an age as the average for New Zealand. It would thus appear that, after all, the early presentation and passing of pupils in the lower standards is of little or no permanent gain, seeing that before the Sixth Standard is reached the more precocious children in the earlier standards are thrown back, and are overtaken by their slower but better-grounded companions from the lower standards.

SEWING RESULTS.—Great progress continues to be made in sewing by the girls attending the district schools. The annual examination of the sewing specimens done during the year took place on the 8th November, in the old Provincial Council Chamber, Napier, when 681 specimens were separately marked by the nine lady examiners who voluntarily give so much valuable time and attention to the management of this examination.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES.—Last year the Board pointed out that efforts were being made by a number of teachers and Committees to establish school libraries. From a return made by the principal teacher of each school, it appears that in ten districts a school library has been established. The names of the schools and number of books in each library are as follows. Gisborne, 400,