

the scholars is far from creditable to the parents. Every teacher complains that pupils are detained from school on the most frivolous pretexts. It may be necessary for the Board to consider the advisability of closing any school where the attendance, through these causes, has fallen so low as materially to affect the revenue.

INSPECTION.—Mr. W. M. Crompton's term of office having expired on the 31st December, 1883, his position was filled by Mr. W. Murray, who entered on his duties on the 1st January. From his first memorandum on the condition of the schools the Board was made aware of the unsatisfactory state of the instruction, and urged to take the necessary steps to provide a remedy. One great cause of the state of the schools was that the teachers generally neglected the standard requirements, and taught their pupils advanced subjects before they were thoroughly grounded in the elementary ones. To some extent this was pointed out by the former Inspector, as will be seen from the following quotation from his report for 1882: "I have had occasion to advise some of your teachers not to hurry their pupils on beyond the requirements of the standards. It has been the cause of disappointment to the pupils and myself." He, however, did not take any steps to provide a remedy, neither was it brought prominently before the Board. The Board, feeling that they were not altogether blameless in the matter, took decided action on Mr. Murray's representations, and issued the circular already referred to. When his reports on the schools were presented they were referred to a committee of the Board, who went carefully through them, together with the examination papers; and the action taken on their report will, it is to be hoped, tend materially to improve the character of the instruction imparted in the schools. With the bad classification of the scholars only indifferent results could be expected. This is seen in the low percentage of passes made in the subjects of examination. Grammar and geography were weakest, each with 40 per cent. only. Arithmetic, 57·2 per cent.; spelling, 59·2 per cent.; writing, 78·1 per cent.; and reading, with a more satisfactory result, 92 per cent. The greatest number of passes were made in the First Standard. In the higher standards the failures were chiefly the result of the indifferent teaching of grammar and geography. The percentage of passes in each standard is: In the First, 79·3; Second, 37·8; Third, 34·2; Fourth, 38·1; Fifth, 28·1; Sixth, 30. The percentage in all subjects is 53·4.

ACCOUNTS.—The accounts of income and expenditure have been duly audited, and are appended to this report. The necessity of finding funds to provide sufficient accommodation, caused by the extension of the district, has seriously hampered the Board in its desire to give effect to the suggestion of its Inspector to increase the remuneration of its teachers. It is feared that this yearly drain upon the General Fund to assist the inadequate allowance to the Building Fund will, to a considerable extent, tell against the character of the instruction given in our schools. As will be seen from the detailed statement of accounts, the amount actually expended on new buildings during the year has been £3,221 1s.; while the amount received from the Government as the district's share of the vote for building purposes was only £1,542. The difference of £1,680 1s. not only absorbed the balance brought from 1883, but also the sum of £758 2s. previously referred to. Indeed, it was found necessary to withhold, for a short time, the usual payments to Committees, in order that the Board might meet its monetary engagements.

NEW BUILDINGS.—During the year five new schools were completed and finished—namely, a large central school and an infant school at New Plymouth, and district schools at Waitara East, Lepperton, and Rahotu. The success of the New Plymouth Central School has encouraged the Board to amalgamate the smaller schools in the more populous districts as occasion offers. Many of the school buildings are in a sad condition, owing to the Board's inability to undertake the necessary repairs. These, however, must be undertaken during the current year, and the expense borne by the General Fund. Thirteen teachers' residences are urgently wanted, as in the bush districts suitable accommodation is difficult to obtain. A large number of the school sites are not fenced.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—In the course of the year the Board resolved to institute scholarships. Regulations were framed and approved by the department. Five scholarships were offered by the Board, and two by the Hon. H. Scotland. The examination was held early in December, when twenty candidates competed. The following are the names of the successful competitors in order of merit: J. W. Downes, J. Hirst, W. Noble, J. Noble, W. Rennell, C. Lever, and G. Watkins.

SEWING.—No examination of sewing having hitherto been held in the district, the Inspector suggested that one should be held, and that the Board appoint a committee of ladies to judge the work. The following ladies consented to act on the committee: Mesdames Humphries, Bauchope, and Murray. The examination was held in October; and it is satisfactory to note that the result showed that the work, on the whole, was of a creditable nature, many of the failures to pass being attributable not so much to inferior work as to the requirements of the standards not being met.

SCHOOL COMMITTEES.—Owing to the extension of settlement, it was found advisable to increase the number of the school districts: five new districts have been formed, and, instead of being distinguished by numbers, as formerly, they are now known by the names of the districts in which the schools are situated. The Board is gratified to acknowledge increasing interest being taken by the Committees in performing the duties required of them by the Education Act. Several have shown this by the improvements about the school buildings, planting the sites with trees, fencing, and the erection of gymnastic apparatus. In many districts visiting committees have been formed, and visit the schools at regular intervals. The Board hopes that this example will be followed by all the Committees in the district. To prevent friction between the Board and Committees in the appointment of teachers, regulations have been framed defining the duties of each, which have been found to work satisfactorily, considering that the respective duties are not clearly defined by the Act. The increased interest taken in educational matters has not been confined to the Committees, but has extended to the public. The meetings for the election of members to the