

from £311 to £54 per annum, exclusive of bonuses and other allowances. The number of children on the school-rolls for the quarter ending the 31st December, 1884, was 1,839, and for the quarter ending the 31st March 1898, or an increase of about 3 per cent. The average attendance has increased during the same period from 1,408 to 1,520, or nearly 8 per cent.

*Pupil-teachers.*—There are now nineteen pupil-teachers in the Board's service, who, in addition to their salaries—which range from £20 to £60 per annum—receive instruction at the cost of the Board, and also a bonus of £2 each if they pass the annual examination with credit. The instruction of these pupil-teachers will cost the Board about £142 per annum; and, in the event of their passing 'with credit,' the bonuses payable to them and their instructors would amount to £102 more. Thus the Board spends close upon £250 per annum in teaching and training pupil-teachers, who, under the present system, have no recognised status in any other part of the colony. The efficiency of the training and instruction of these young persons varies with the qualifications of their teachers, but that on the whole it is satisfactory, and in some cases remarkably so, may be inferred when it is stated that twelve pupil-teachers are now ably filling positions as assistants or sole teachers in this district. It is evident, however, that many of them cannot find employment in so small a district; and, having, as before noticed, no standing elsewhere, they are obliged in many instances to abandon a profession in preparing for which they have passed four or five of the best years of their lives. There is one, and only one, remedy for this condition of affairs, and that has been repeatedly suggested in reports from nearly all the districts—namely, to have pupil-teachers throughout the colony examined and classified by the department in the same manner as ordinary teachers. They would then be all placed on the same footing, and would have some prospect of obtaining employment in other districts if their services were not required in their own.

"In conclusion the Board desires to submit that the present state of educational affairs in the district is satisfactory in every way, and therefore a vast improvement upon what it was during the preceding three years. The Board trusts that the necessary parliamentary measures will be taken to insure to the people of Westland the right to manage their own educational affairs in future, by making 'The Westland Education District Subdivision Act, 1884,' permanent in its operation. The results of the Board's administration under the said Act, financially and otherwise, has been such as to completely disprove the correctness of the opinion held by some members of the Legislature that the Westland District would be found to be unable to carry on by itself. Not only is this found to be possible, but the right to do so conceded to the people of Westland is hailed as an inestimable blessing."

The six months that have elapsed since the above was written have served to confirm the opinion expressed in the last paragraph; and it is with much pleasure that the Board is able to submit to the department the balance-sheet which accompanies this report.

*BUILDINGS.*—The following new buildings have been erected or contracted for during the past year: A new wing has been added to the Stafford School; a new school has been erected on a site purchased by the Board at Upper Arahura, the building previously used being one leased from the Wesleyan Trustees; a new school is in course of erection at Gillespie's Beach, to supersede the hut which for the last five or six years has done duty as a school. Extensive repairs have also been effected at Kumara, Stafford, and Arahura Road. The teachers' houses at Hokitika, Woodstock, and Ross, to the last of which a new wing was added, and several schools, have been thoroughly painted—a work which must not be regarded as merely ornamental, but as absolutely necessary to preserve the buildings from decay. As before stated, the Board was compelled to refuse several applications from local Committees for grants from the building vote, owing to the small amount received from the Government, and the extra demand made upon the Board's resources in consequence of the bad condition into which many of the buildings had fallen during the two previous years. It is pleasing to be able to record one instance of voluntary effort on the part of a community to provide school-accommodation from their own resources. At Okuru, in the Jackson's Bay district, the inhabitants have built a schoolroom entirely without assistance from the Board, and have thus secured for their children the advantage of a school, the establishment of which, without such action on their part, must have been indefinitely postponed. This is an example worthy of imitation by other districts whose circumstances and surroundings are much more favourable than are those of these remote and struggling pioneers of civilisation. At Arawata there were at one time two schools of a fair size—one at the port, and another five miles distant, at the settlement. The latter was closed some two years ago on account of the departure of many of the settlers to Okuru and elsewhere. The school at the port remained open, but the attendance was so small that but for the accident of a suitable teacher being resident on the spot it must have been treated in the same manner. As a few families still remained in the vicinity of the school at the settlement, the Board resolved to have that building moved about two miles nearer to the port school, and to close the latter. This has accordingly been done, and an increase of attendance has resulted which will enable the Board to maintain the school, and thus prevent this part of the district from being utterly destitute of educational advantages. Whilst on the subject of buildings, the Board must reiterate its protest against the injustice of distributing the building vote on the basis of population. It would be quite as reasonable for the School Committees in towns, having large schools under their charge, to receive the whole of the funds accruing from the attendance at their schools, to be spent exclusively in their districts. It is a pervading principle of the present education system that the strong shall assist the weak; and it is only from the surplus saved at the large schools that it is possible to maintain the small ones. In the Westland District, though happily almost entirely free from the extreme poverty which has already begun to show itself in some of the older settlements, there is absolutely no wealthy population, the majority making little more than a tolerably comfortable livelihood; and it is hardly likely that such a population should be able to contribute more than their share of the general taxation towards the support of education, or that, if able, they should be willing to do so when they find in the Minister's reports that £2,300 was granted for