

teaching results. In the face of the great difficulties that are to be overcome in this district in producing good results in developing the intellectual powers of the children, the Board is glad to be able to state that many schools have shown a marked advance on former years, due to the capacity and care of the teachers in charge. The Midhurst, Egmont Village, Waipuku, Waiongona, and Lepperton Schools are especially noted as having achieved marked success, and in the case of the Midhurst and Waipuku Schools this success has been obtained in the face of a low average attendance of 54 and 56 per cent. respectively on the school-roll. In some schools where the teaching is good, so marked an improvement not being shown may have been the result of causes which cannot be gauged by the usual examination tests. In many schools there is, the Board regret to find, a falling-off compared with the results of former years; and a few are very unsatisfactory, arising from teachers being in charge who have no faculty for teaching, and who are, apparently, unable to improve their teaching power. These cases present a difficulty to the Board, as these schools have generally a small attendance, and it is often impossible to obtain teachers qualified for the work, owing to the small remuneration offered. In connection with this subject, it is a matter for consideration whether, without making a radical change in the present system of administering education, the salaries of teachers could not be more equalised on a basis of teaching ability and experience in school management. This proposal, if given effect to, would to a certain extent centralise the organization, but it would not unduly interfere with the local duties and responsibility. If such a change could be made, small educational districts like Taranaki would obtain greater teaching advantages than they at present possess, without injuring the larger districts of the colony.

TEACHERS.—The number of teachers on the staff at the end of the year was eighty-five, classified as follows:—

				Male.		Female.		Total.
Head teachers	...	...	...	22	...	13	...	35
Assistant teachers	...	...	...	1	...	8	...	9
Pupil-teachers	...	...	...	4	...	22	...	26
Sewing teachers...	...	...	...	0	...	15	...	15
				—		—		—
Total	...	...	...	27	...	58	...	85

The teaching staff of the Board is undoubtedly becoming more efficient; but, if the policy of the Board to build schools where an average attendance of twenty-five children can be obtained is continued, the proportion of women teachers must increase, as it is found in practice that it is only by employing women teachers that efficient teaching can be obtained in small schools, as the small salaries will not command the services of competent masters. The Board is glad to find that good results are being derived from the establishment of a teaching class, initiated by the Inspector, with the co-operation of the senior teachers. The object of this class is, by mutual aid and example, to instruct the junior teachers and pupil-teachers in the best methods of teaching and school management. As this good work is being performed by the teachers gratuitously, and at some personal sacrifice, it clearly shows that they take a real interest in raising the standard of education in the district.

ATTENDANCE.—The attendance for the year shows an increase on the average of 130, which would have been larger but for the unusual desertion of the schools during the December quarter, owing to sickness among the children. Last year the attendance was 73 per cent.; this year it is 77 per cent., showing that the general interest in school work is steadily increasing as the benefits of education are being realised by the community generally. Considering the many difficulties the population of this district—being mainly a forest one—have to contend with in the way of bad roads, which are unfit for young children to travel on for many months in the year, and owing to the interruptions caused in attendance by the necessities of the parents compelling them to utilise the work of their children for milking, planting, and harvest-work, the results of the year's work are as good as can be fairly expected, though lower than other districts where the difficulties to contend with are not so insurmountable. To produce better results in the training of schoolchildren who, as a rule, leave school at thirteen, it would be a wise policy to restrict the teacher as much as possible in most small schools to the more essential subjects, such as intelligent reading, good writing, useful arithmetic, and ordinary composition. It is to be feared that much time is wasted on other subjects which it is impossible to teach well, and which cannot be dropped because the syllabus and the standard examinations require it.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Seven scholarships were competed for during the year. Four were not taken up, and the Board has given instructions for a fresh examination. From an examination of the papers it is evident that limiting the age of competitors to below thirteen years is not producing satisfactory results, and the sooner the limit is fixed at fourteen the better it will be for the interests of education and for the possible competitors.

SEWING.—The teaching of sewing now forms part of the work of all the Board's schools. It is gratifying to find that this important part of female technical education is receiving due attention from School Committees and parents of children, and is already producing good results, as shown by the large number of specimens sent in as examples of school work, and by the competition for prizes offered by the Ladies' Sewing Committee and the Board. A marked improvement has been made in this branch during the year.

BUILDINGS.—New residences for teachers have been erected at Bell Block, Huirangi, and Lepperton. The Midhurst, Fitzroy, Tataraimaka, Mangorei, and Okato Schools have been enlarged, and a new school, with attached residence, is in course of erection in a newly-settled bush district on the Ratapiko Road, in the Midhurst School District. New schools are required at the Kina Road and Eltham Road. The Waipuku School urgently requires enlarging, and the long-standing want of more accommodation at the Central School is also a very pressing need. In addition to