

SCHOOLS.—The Board had seventy-six schools in operation at the end of the year 1887. Of these, twelve are aided schools which receive the actual statutory capitation grant only, with occasionally a limited amount of school furniture. There are also two half-time schools, counted as one, in the above. At these aided schools the Committees are allowed to appoint their own teachers; but they are subject to the approval of the Board, and it is expected that the capitation grant for the teacher's salary will be supplemented by the Committee or settlers, if necessary. The total of attendances at the Board's schools for the December quarter was 6,679, as against 6,105 in 1886.

BUILDINGS.—In February, 1887, the Board was obliged to suspend the acceptance of any new building contracts owing to want of funds. The following works were however commenced and completed: New schools were built at Te Roti, Cardiff, Alton, formerly called Woodville (Kakaramaea), Hunterville, Oroua Bridge, and St. John's Infant School (Wanganui). Extensive additions and repairs have been made to the schools at Ashurst, South Makirikiri, Mount View, Taonui, Manaia, Crofton, and Kakaramaea, &c. The Board has also voted pound for pound collected by the settlers for a small school at Kapuni, in the Hawera County. Besides these works numerous repairs of a minor description have been effected, and Committees have been assisted by pound-for-pound votes to clear grounds and erect fences.

New schools are now urgently required at Kaupokonui, Fitzherbert, Linton, Kairanga, Pohangina, and Birmingham (Kiwitea); whilst additions are much needed to the schoolhouses at Terrace End, Palmerston North, Bunnythorpe, Hunterville, Eltham, Okaiawa, and Marton. At these schools the children have not floor-space. At Terrace End seventy children are taught in the passages and lavatories. At Palmerston North thirty children have not floor-space. At Linton sixty children have not any schoolhouse at all, and are not receiving education. At Birmingham some twenty-five children are in a similar position. At Marton, in the Second and Third Standards, three children are obliged to sit in each of the dual desks. The attendance at Hunterville has increased beyond all anticipation, which is the cause of a new school requiring additions so soon.

There are not any teachers' residences at Eltham, Cardiff, Otakeho, Pihama, Te Roti, Alton, Waitotara, Terrace End, Paraekaretu, Mangaone, Carnarvon, Hunterville, and Wanganui. The House allowance made to teachers at these places is a heavy charge upon the General Account, and in some cases the teachers are unable to find suitable accommodation. The Board has been informed that the Manawatu Railway Company will provide a school site at Linton, and they have therefore applied to them for a transfer of any land they may have set apart for school purposes.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS.—New school districts have been formed at Birmingham (Kiwitea), Taikorea (Oroua), Kapuni (Hawera), and Fitzherbert; and Committees have been elected in compliance with the Act.

TEACHERS.—At the close of the year the Board had 154 teachers in their employ, and one position was vacant. Of these, twenty-four were head male teachers, three were head female teachers, forty were sole male teachers and nine sole female teachers in charge of schools, seven were male assistants and nineteen female assistants, twelve were male pupil-teachers and thirty-nine female pupil-teachers, and one was a male probationer.

INSPECTION.—Early in the year the Board found that the work of inspection had grown far beyond reasonable limits for one Inspector, and they appointed a committee of their members to inquire what relief could be afforded. The committee reported that, owing to the want of funds, they were unable to advise the appointment of an Assistant Inspector, which they would otherwise have gladly recommended. As the several schools are examined in standards or inspected at surprise visits the reports are forwarded to the office, and placed before the Board at each meeting, duplicate copies being forwarded to the Committees in the case of examination. The Board then carefully investigate each report in committee, and direct the teacher's notice to any remarks requiring special attention. The suggestions made by the Inspector in these reports do not always receive that attention from the teachers which the Board think they merit; but due note is made of any shortcomings in this respect.

SCHOOL SITES.—With a view of leasing unoccupied school sites, the Board successfully applied to Government to be placed under "The Public Bodies' Leaseholds Act, 1886." The object in leasing these sites is to have them cleared, fenced, and brought into proper condition, in order that they may be available when required. In the leases, the Board has reserved the right of re-entering upon two acres within the term of the lease, should it be necessary to do so.

SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS.—The Hon. John Bryce, who had been elected School Commissioner for this district, resigned in the early part of the year, and the Hon. John Ballance was elected to the position, he having kindly consented to act.

GOOD-ATTENDANCE MEDALS AND CERTIFICATES.—With a view of increasing regular attendance at the several schools, the Board decided to issue good-attendance medals and certificates under certain conditions. The resolution having been arrived at late in the year, it took effect only for good attendances during the last four months of 1887. The result has proved very satisfactory so far, as it is found that a comparison of the average attendance with the roll number for the last quarter of 1886 gives a result of 74.65 per cent., whilst for the same period in 1887 it was 77.74.

PRINTING AND SCHOOL REQUISITES.—The contract time for the supply of school requisites and printing having expired, the Board invited fresh tenders, and have accepted one for printing and another for requisites for a further period of two years.

CHANGE OF SCHOOL NAME.—At the request of the School Committee the Board has changed the name of the Woodville School (Kakaramaea) to that of Alton; and under that designation it will be found in the returns from the 1st January, 1888.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The annual competition for the Board's scholarships took place in the month of June, under the same regulations as previously. Twelve competitors went up for the senior and ten for the junior scholarships; two qualifying for the former, and four for the latter. With