

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 31st January, 1888.

I have pleasure in submitting for your information this, the tenth annual report which I have had the honour to write on the condition and general progress of the schools in the Hawke's Bay Education District.

To those unacquainted with the extent of the district which is subject under the Education Act of 1877 to the control of the Board for education purposes, it may be well, perhaps, to explain that the Education District of Hawke's Bay embraces an area of more than 8,500 square miles, or about one-twelfth of the entire area of the colony. The district extends from Cape Runaway, north of Cook County, to the Waimate River, south of Cape Turnagain, in Patangata County, the distance between these extreme points being about four hundred miles. The distance between the most northern and southern schools is 275 miles. Throughout this widely extended district, which geographically is divided into a number of small isolated districts, forty-five schools, containing sixty-nine departments, were in operation at the close of the year. For the December quarter these schools had an average weekly roll number of 5,549 pupils, and an average attendance of 4,453; the attendance in each case representing an increase of 10·5 per cent. over the corresponding returns for 1886. The teaching staff provided for the instruction of the pupils consisted of forty-five head masters and mistresses, thirty-six assistant masters and mistresses, and sixty-four pupil-teachers. Thirty-four of the principal teachers and twenty-eight of the assistant teachers hold certificates of competency from the Education Department; and of the total number, eleven have been trained as teachers in Great Britain and Ireland. The following table gives the number of teachers and pupils according to the several counties. The average attendance for the December quarter of 1878 is also given. [Not reprinted.]

ACCOMMODATION.—In most of the districts sufficient school accommodation is provided for present wants, and the only demands now to be met in the way of accommodation are those that have arisen during the year by the growth of old districts or by the establishment of new ones. The only old districts where accommodation is called for are Port Ahuriri, Makatoku, Danevirke, Woodville, and Ormondville, where the attendance exceeds the present school provision. In the new district known as Makauri the erection of a suitable school building is sadly wanted. During my visit to that district forty-two children were being taught in a room 26ft. by 12ft., the height of the wall-plates being only 8ft. I need hardly say how unsuitable such a room is for the instruction of so many children, and how poisonous the air in the room becomes in a short time after the children have been at work. I shall not soon forget my own experience at this school on a hot day in November. At Blackburn, also, where a schoolhouse has so long been promised, the number of children of school-age makes it very necessary that a schoolhouse should be provided as soon as possible. The Blackburn district is situated on the eastern flanks of the Ruahine mountain chain, miles away from the nearest public school, and the children in the settlement are growing up ignorant of the simplest rudiments in learning. Settlers in an outlying district like this deserve, it seems to me, special consideration in a matter so near to them as the instruction and education of their children. At Te Karaka, in the Cook County, and Matamau, in the Seventy-mile Bush, where schools have been opened during the year, the attendance is not sufficient to warrant the erection of a building at present in either district.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS WELL ARRANGED.—All the school buildings and additions which have been completed under the direction of the Board's architect are in my opinion admirably suited to meet the special requirements of the different districts. Careful attention has been paid to the arrangement of the school grounds, and the out-offices are so ordered as to meet all the requirements of mixed schools such as are established throughout the district. With few exceptions, the schools are also supplied with apparatus and appliances of the most modern description, and such as might be expected to be found in the best schools at Home. If, therefore, the school results in any district excluding those named above are not satisfactory, it cannot be in consequence of bad buildings or bad appliances, for, as remarked above, these are in every respect satisfactory.

SCHOOL APPLIANCES NOT USED BY TEACHERS.—I could wish, however, that the appliances in the several schools were more frequently used by teachers than they too often appear to be. I have listened to a lesson in one of our large schools on the "movements of the earth." The school is provided with a "tellurium," which illustrates in the simplest way I know the earth's axial and orbital motions, and children, simply by observation, can see for themselves these movements. Still, the teacher in question, without diagram or any illustration whatever, preferred to tell all he knew instead of letting the tellurium tell its silent but effective story to the children. This is only one of the many illustrations I might give of the non-employment of valuable appliances which are specially provided for the benefit of the schools. The results cannot be satisfactory under such conditions.

MODES OF CONVEYING KNOWLEDGE.—It would indeed be well if all teachers realised the fact that there are three modes of presenting knowledge to children, the first being by means of objects or concretes, the second by pictures or illustrations of the objects, and the third by word descriptions. A bird, a picture of a bird, and a word description of a bird represent the three forms of conveying knowledge as explained here. The object is necessarily better than an illustration of it, and the illustration is better than the word description: hence it follows that, whenever possible, knowledge should be conveyed to children by the exercise of the perceptive faculties.

INCREASE OF DISTRICT.—During the year my work has been extended by the opening of six new schools and by the great increase which has taken place in the school attendance. The schools are so situated that in visiting them I have mostly to travel on horseback, and a good deal of extra time is taken up in this way. The great increase in the work of the past nine years will be better understood when it is stated that there were only 1,985 children in the district schools at the close of the year 1878, and among these there was a large percentage of children under five years of age,