

a comparison with former years of the progress which the district is making educationally, and to note any changes of importance which have taken place in its administration of the interests committed to its charge.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—In this connection there is little worthy of comment. The average attendance in several districts has been seriously affected by the prevalence of an epidemic of diphtheria in the latter part of the year. Numbers of pupils have been attacked, in some instances with fatal results. The scare induced thereby has caused a serious loss to the Board and also to the school districts and teachers more immediately concerned. It appears to the Board an unfortunate circumstance that the prevalence of an epidemic such as diphtheria should so prejudicially affect the income of any of its teachers.

Since the constitution of the Board, nearly twelve years ago, the progress of the district, both with respect to the number of its schools and the average attendance thereat, has been most satisfactory. In 1878 (first quarter) there were forty-four schools in operation, with an average attendance that reached only 2,310. At the close of 1889 there were 106 schools open, with an average of 6,502; being an increase during this period of 181 per cent. in the numbers in actual attendance. A comparison of the past five years is instructive as showing that the regular increase of the earlier years of the Board's existence is still being maintained:—

Year.						Average.	Increase over Previous Year.	
1885	...	...	...	...	...	5,191·5	...	589·3
1886	...	...	...	...	...	5,578·5	...	387·0
1887	...	...	...	...	...	5,894·2	...	315·7
1888	...	...	...	...	...	6,083·0	...	188·8
1889	...	...	...	...	...	6,502·0	...	419·0

These figures indicate an average annual rate of increase for this period of 380 pupils in average attendance. The percentage of average to roll number in 1888 was 76·8, while for 1889 it has risen to 78·6, a most satisfactory increase, indicating as it does a more regular attendance of pupils.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.—During the year new schools have been established in the districts of Oteramika Gorge, Waikana (opened as a half-time school in conjunction with that already established at Wairekiki), and Greenhills. The number of schools, therefore, in active operation at the end of the year was 106, eight of which are worked on the half-time principle. The additional responsibility incurred in opening new schools is not undertaken by this Board without due and careful consideration; yet in a district such as Southland, where settlement in remote places is still progressing, it is scarcely possible to resist the claims of settlers anxious for the educational welfare of their families. In many instances the establishment of schools has been sanctioned on the distinct understanding that the petitioners should provide at their own cost a temporary building in which for a time the work of teaching might be carried on. The adoption of this plan in cases where there is any reasonable doubt about the matter enables the Board to prove the permanency or otherwise of the settlement ere undertaking the expense of erecting a suitable school building. In the past such temporary expedients have always resulted in the establishment of permanent schools. The prospective difficulty of providing the funds necessary to satisfy claims of this nature, in addition to the ordinary current expenditure for extensions, renewals, and repairs to existing buildings, is a very serious one. It is to be hoped, however, that a much-required increase in the annual vote for school buildings will in the future enable the Board to meet all due demands. Departmental Return No. 3, which it is not thought necessary to reprint here, gives the classification of the various schools throughout the district according to the attendance at each.

TEACHING STAFF.—There were in the service of the Board at the end of the year 187 teachers of all grades—viz., 103 males and 84 females. These are classified, according to the positions held, as follows:—

	Male.		Female.		Total.
Principal ...	13	...	0	...	13
Head of department ...	0	...	13	...	13
Head of school ...	25	...	0	...	25
Sole teacher ...	48	...	16	...	64
Assistant ...	8	...	13	...	21
Pupil-teacher ...	9	...	40	...	49
Sewing teacher ...	0	...	2	...	2
Totals ...	103	...	84	...	187

It will be seen from these figures that boys do not exhibit the same anxiety to enter the profession in the capacity of pupil-teachers as is displayed by girls, the relative numbers of those at present in the service of this Board being as 1 to 4½.

The proportion of certificated to uncertificated teachers, as was noted in last year's report, is still increasing, and ere long the Board hopes that it will not be necessary to employ any but those who have passed the requisite examination, and are, so far as this test alone is concerned, fully qualified to undertake the responsible duties of teacher. This satisfactory feature is attributable, in part at least, to the Board's action early in the year in intimating to all uncertificated teachers in its service that they must make an effort to secure classification, otherwise they would be liable to lose their appointments. Under the exercise of this mild form of compulsion, members presented themselves at last teachers' examination who had not hitherto deemed it their duty or found it convenient to do so.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—At the examination for scholarships held in June last thirty-two candidates presented themselves. The percentage of marks obtained by a majority of these gives evidence of careful and systematic training on the part of the teachers concerned, as well as of unusual ability on the part of the candidates themselves. So far as this district is concerned, the expenditure in-