

From the foregoing it will be noted that no change in the *personnel* of this Board has been made during the year. At a meeting of the Board held on the 2nd of April Mr. George Lumsden was elected Chairman of the Board for the ensuing twelve months.

The Board held one special and twelve ordinary meetings during the year, while the Executive Committee met twenty-three times. The average attendance of members has been very good, though, for special reasons, not so favourable as in some previous years, the numbers being—for meetings of the Board 7·3, and for the Executive 6. The individual attendances were as follows: Board—Mr. Lumsden, 13; Mr. Froggatt, 13; Mr. Baldey, 13; Mr. McLeod, 12; Mr. Matheson, 11; Mr. Bain, 11; Mr. Mackintosh, 9; Dr. Hodgkinson, 8; Mr. Morison, 5. Executive Committee—Mr. Lumsden, 23; Mr. Froggatt, 21; Mr. Baldey, 20; Mr. McLeod, 17; Mr. Matheson, 15; Mr. Bain, 12; Mr. Mackintosh, 16; Dr. Hodgkinson, 11; Mr. Morison, 1. It should be noted that Dr. Hodgkinson was absent on leave during the parliamentary session; while Mr. Morison was able to register comparatively few attendances owing to a severe and protracted illness. The absence of the latter from the Board's deliberations, in view of the cause from which it arose, was a matter of sincere regret to his fellow-members.

SCHOOLS.—During the year the Board has established new schools in the following districts: viz., Wendon, Wendon (Block III.), Wendon Valley, Mataura Island, Caroline, and Flint's Bush; while the small school at South Wyndham has been closed in consequence of a decrease in the average attendance, which rendered its existence for this year no longer necessary.

At the close of 1889 the number of schools in operation was 106. By the changes noted in the preceding paragraph this number was increased at the end of 1890 to 111.

The opening of new schools in the Wendon district was found to be an absolute necessity, owing to the progress of settlement in that locality. Applications have been received from a number of other places for the constitution of new school districts and the erection of new school buildings. These have for the present been held over for consideration, and will occupy the Board's attention early in the current year. In a district such as Southland, where there are still extensive areas awaiting settlement, the demand for new schools will, the Board anticipates, continue, and very probably increase.

The proportion of small (non-paying) country schools in this district is, owing to the sparseness of population, very great. Of 111 schools there are no less a number than seventy-four with an average attendance of fifty or less, very few of which are self-supporting. In view of this fact it requires the utmost care in administering the Board's funds so that the strong may contribute to the necessities of the weak, and render the existence of so many separate schools (each a necessity in its particular locality) possible. The half-time principle is adopted so far as is practicable, the results being attended with moderate success.

When revising the Board's regulations a year ago it was found to be absolutely necessary to limit the Board's contributions in aid of schools whose average attendance fell below twenty. To schools of this class (aided schools) a capitation-allowance of £3 10s. per pupil in average attendance is paid towards the teacher's salary, the Committee receiving no "School Fund" allowance. In several such districts the teacher's salary is supplemented by a contribution from the Committee. The services of even a fairly efficient teacher could not otherwise be secured. It is not possible to supply every want, but the Board cannot willingly withhold all the benefits of our educational system from the pioneers who have made their homes in parts far removed from populous centres.

ATTENDANCE OF PUPILS.—The average attendance for the year shows a slight increase over that of the preceding one, the numbers being respectively 6,502 and 6,587. When the opening of five additional schools is reckoned, this increase is not so great as might have been expected. This may, however, be accounted for, in part at least, by the exodus of population which has prevailed here in common with other parts of the colony.

The Board has still to regret that nothing practical has been done in the matter of restoring the "working" in lieu of the "strict" average as the basis of payments to Boards by the Government, and, as a necessary consequence, of payments to teachers and Committees by the Boards.

No circumstances other than those of the ordinary description have occurred during the year to affect seriously the attendance of pupils at our schools. The issue of "good-attendance certificates" of an ornamental character has been continued by and at the expense of the Board. This encouragement to regular attendance is being more appreciated each year, as is evidenced by the greater number of certificates applied for. The percentage of average attendance to roll-number was 77·7, a slight decrease on that of the previous year.

TEACHERS.—The staff of teachers in the service of the Board at the end of the year numbered 190—viz., 102 males and 88 females. These were classified as follows:—

					Male.		Female.		Total.
Principal ...	...	...	...	...	13	...	0	...	13
Head of department	...	...	...	...	0	...	13	...	13
Head of school	...	...	...	...	24	...	0	...	24
Sole teacher	...	...	...	...	48	...	22	...	70
Assistant ...	...	...	...	...	8	...	16	...	24
Pupil-teacher	...	...	...	...	9	...	37	...	46
Total ...					102	...	88	...	190

These numbers show an increase of three over those of the previous year.

The proportion of female to male teachers in the schools of this district is year by year increasing. A glance at the numbers respectively of male and female pupil-teachers employed by the Board, and from which the ranks of the teaching staff are and will continue to be recruited, shows that this state of affairs must still continue to operate in the future so far as this education district is concerned.