

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Education Board, Wellington, 31st March, 1897.

In accordance with the provisions of "The Education Act, 1877," I have the honour to submit the following report of the Wellington Education Board for the year ending the 31st December last.

BOARD.—Six candidates contested the annual election to fill the three vacancies caused by the retirement of Messrs. W. C. Buchanan, F. H. Fraser, and W. W. McCardle. The voting resulted in the return of Messrs. W. C. Buchanan and W. W. McCardle, and the election of Mr. James Robertson in place of Mr. Fraser. The Board placed on record its appreciation of the services rendered by Mr. Fraser since he became a member of the Board in 1887. In accordance with the recent practice of the Board, the Chairman was elected at the April meeting, that honour being again unanimously conferred on Mr. J. R. Blair, who has held the position from 31st March, 1882. Mr. Blair was also appointed treasurer, that office having always been held by the Chairman. The Board has held twelve ordinary and two adjourned meetings, the attendance of the members being—J. R. Blair, 13; F. Brady, 14; W. C. Buchanan, 11; W. A. Fitzherbert, 11; W. W. McCardle, 12; Dr. Newman, 12; the Rev. James Paterson, 11; J. Young, 14; F. H. Fraser, 4 (retired at the end of March). The Finance Committee met every month, and carefully examined all accounts before they were submitted to the Board. The Technical School Committee also held monthly meetings to deal with all matters connected with the Technical School.

SCHOOLS.—At the end of the year there were 118 schools under the control of the Board, thirteen of these being carried on as aided schools subsidised by grants of £3 15s. per head from the Board funds. The classification of these schools on the basis of average attendance is as follows: Under 15 pupils, thirteen schools; 15 and under 20 pupils, fourteen schools; 20 and under 25 pupils, twelve schools; 25 and under 50 pupils, thirty-one schools; 50 and under 75 pupils, fifteen schools; 75 and under 100 pupils, eight schools; 100 and under 150 pupils, seven schools; 150 and under 300 pupils, seven schools; 300 and under 500 pupils, five schools; 500 pupils and upwards, six schools.

New schools have been completed at Blairlogie, Rakanui, Newman, Dreyer's Rock, Ponatahi, Tiraumea, Waikanae, and Rintoul Street; and schools have been opened at Akatarawa, Gollan's Valley, Pahaua, Tiraumea, Te Aupapa, Mangahao, Rakanui, Coonoor, Ponatahi, Waikanae, Sherwood, Ngapopotu, Makomako, and Rintoul Street. Considerable improvements have been made to the school buildings at Pahiatua, Whakataki, Masterton, Gladstone, Carterton, Dalefield, Kaitara, Tauherenikau, Taita, Hutt, Petone, Porirua, Te Aro, Mount Cook Boys', and Mitchelltown. Contracts have been let for Makuri and Mikimiki Schools, and for the removal of the Opaki School nearer the centre of population.

The Board appreciates the special grants for buildings made by the Minister of Education, but the continual demands for new schools in connection with special settlements, and the ever-recurring necessity for the overhaul of wooden buildings, severely taxes the Board's finances, and a species of false economy is forced on the Board to enable it to find accommodation in these localities. To erect suitable buildings, worthy of the name of schools, has been quite out of the question; mere shells, without paint or lining, have been as much in several instances as the Board could manage with its hampered finances and bank overdraft. A portion of the current year's expenditure will have to be allocated to complete these schools, and the two expenses will naturally add to the cost of completion. While fully aware of the rapid and steadily increasing growth at the Newtown end of the city, the Board could do no more than provide for existing wants, and even now application has been made for more accommodation at Rintoul Street, which must as yet be met by renting some temporary room, or providing more accommodation in the existing school. The needs of Roseneath, Oriental Bay, cannot be postponed much longer, as the near schools are all full and have had to refuse admission, and the question of putting another story on Clyde Quay and Te Aro Schools will have to be faced. The new infant school at Petone has relieved the pressure at the main school, but the question of a more adequate and suitable school for the Hutt is one calling for an early settlement. The present school was formerly a concert hall, and is now too old to justify any alteration, even if the character of the building would admit of it, which is very doubtful. The rapid settlement at Brooklyn necessitated some steps being taken to provide school accommodation there. The Board has purchased a suitable site, and hopes during the current year to arrange for the removal of the school buildings from Vogeltown, the situation of that school at the extreme end of Vogeltown furthest from Brooklyn, and the exceptionally exposed position of the situation, render it almost impossible for the younger children to reach school except in fine weather.

BUILDINGS.—The Board's credit on building account at the beginning of the year was £66 2s. 1d., and the receipts amounted to £220 18s., made up from Government grant for rebuilding Kaituna school £70, and sales of the old school sites at Petone, and land not required at Otaki. The sum of £6,332 5s. 7d. has been expended on this account, thus leaving an overdraft of £6,037 5s. 6d. at the end of December. The £5,860 grant from Government for buildings was not paid over till January. The expenditure is made up as follows: new buildings, £3,520 11s. 8d.; improvements, £1,573 13s. 4d.; furniture and appliances, £573 19s. 7d.; sites, £510 6s. 6d.; plans, specifications, and inspection, £153 14s. 11d.

TEACHERS.—Of the 118 teachers in charge of schools sixty-five are male and fifty-three female. There are twenty-nine male and fifty-seven female assistants, twenty-two male and 114 female pupil-teachers, and ten sewing-teachers. The Board, being desirous of assisting small country schools, passed amended regulations under which teachers of schools with an average attendance of fifteen pupils are paid salaries of £70 per annum from the Board's funds, increasing to £80 when the average exceeds twenty, and to £100 when the average exceeds twenty-five.