

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Hokitika, 11th February, 1897.

I have the honour to submit the report of the Westland Education Board for the year ending 31st December, 1896.

THE BOARD.—The membership of the Board has suffered no change during the year, as the retiring members, Messrs. McWhirter, Michel, and Stennard, were re-elected in March. In April the following reappointments were made: Mr. McWhirter, Chairman; Mr. Chesney, Treasurer; Mr. Grimmond, School Commissioner; Mr. Michel, representative on the High School Board. During the year the Board has held twelve meetings, and the attendance of members was as follows: Mr. McWhirter, 12; Mr. Stennard, 12; Mr. Chesney, 11; Mr. Cumming, 11; Mr. Smith, 11; Mr. Staines, 10; Mr. Grimmond, 8; Mr. Hudson, 8; and Mr. Michel, 8.

SCHOOLS.—During the year thirty-four schools have been open. Of the twenty aided schools (having an average attendance below twenty) four are half time, and eight household schools. A satisfactory increase in the demand for secondary education has been experienced during the year. The extra class at the Hokitika District High School reached a roll number of twenty-five, and a similar class has been established in connection with the Kumara School, opening with ten pupils. In both a further increase is expected during the year 1897.

ATTENDANCE.—The total roll number for the district on the 31st December was 1,541, a slight decrease on that of the previous year. The average attendance for the year was 86·5 of the average roll number. In one or two districts considerable benefit has accrued from the enforcement of the School Attendance Act, but in others, including some of our largest schools, the neglect of parents has been allowed to seriously affect the efficiency of the schools.

TEACHERS.—The teachers under the Board number sixty-two. They include eleven head-teachers, twenty-one sole teachers, fourteen assistants, fourteen pupil-teachers, and two monitors. The certificated teachers include all the head-teachers, eleven assistants, and ten sole teachers; and the uncertificated teachers are, almost without exception, confined to schools with an average attendance below fifteen.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—As the result of the examination held in December, four scholarships were awarded, ranging in value from £23 to £8, tenable for two years. During 1896 seven scholarships were in force. This number will be increased to eight in 1897.

FINANCE.—At the close of the year the Building Fund showed a debit balance of £100 11s. 9d., and £820 18s. 1d. had been expended. Allowing for the grant received in January, 1897, there remains £649 8s. 3d. for the expenditure of the current year.

For the first time since the year 1890 the Board's General Account shows a credit balance (£14 10s. 11d.) In the year 1893 the debit balance had reached £287. Various economies, and also, unfortunately, reduction of teachers' salaries, have removed the debt, but the decrease in the number of pupils in some of the larger schools has discounted the result of the Board's efforts. It is hoped, however, that the expected improvements in the general prospects of the district will assist in making possible the provision of a more liberal scale of salaries.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education.

JOHN MCWHIRTER, Chairman.

GENERAL STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE for the Year ending 31st December, 1896.

<i>Receipts.</i>			<i>Expenditure.</i>		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
To Balance, on Building Account ..	743	4 6	By Balance, on General Account ..	79	12 8
Government statutory capitation ..	5,085	0 0	Office staff—Salaries ..	340	0 0
Scholarship grant	75	17 5	Departmental contingencies ..	71	0 0
Inspection subsidy	175	0 0	Inspector's travelling-expenses ..	83	15 6
District High School fees ..	169	16 6	Examination of pupil-teachers ..	11	13 0
High School Board subsidy ..	72	10 0	Teachers' salaries and allowances ..	4,685	4 6
Other receipts	22	16 6	Incidental expenses of schools ..	170	7 0
Balance—Building Account ..	100	11 9	Scholarship payments ..	93	10 0
			Scholarship examination expenses ..	10	10 0
			School buildings (improvements, sites, &c.)	820	18 1
			Members' travelling-expenses ..	48	15 0
			Other expenses	15	0 0
			Balance—General Account ..	14	10 11
	<u>£6,444</u>	<u>16 8</u>		<u>£6,444</u>	<u>16 8</u>

JOHN MCWHIRTER, Chairman.

A. J. MORTON, Secretary.

Examined and found correct—J. K. WARBURTON, Controller and Auditor-General.

REPORTS ON DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.

HOKITIKA.

Of the twenty-one pupils in the class, fourteen are in the first year, four in the second, and three in the third. Excepting one of the latter, who was in attendance at the matriculation examination, all were present. Seven pupils are holders of scholarships under the Board, and three attend at a reduced fee in recognition of the attainment of a good position in a scholarship examination. Four pupils of the first year, under a special arrangement made on entering, received instruction in a limited course. The remaining sixteen were examined in the full curriculum, including Euclid, Latin, English, algebra, arithmetic, and geography, besides chemistry, an optional subject.