regularity in attendance and progress in learning go hand-in-hand, and, even where menta ability may not be of a high order, steady advance may be looked for when the teacher is not burdened by this serious handicap. Four years of regular attendance will do more educationally for the average pupil than six years of the desultory attendance so frequently countenanced by parents in some of our school districts.

Teaching Staff.—At the close of the year there were in the service of the Board 241 teachers of all grades. Of these, 124 were males and 117 females. These figures show an increase of nine as compared with those of the previous year. As in past years, the supply of fully-qualified teachers is now quite equal to, if not in excess of, the demand, so that, for even the most unremunerative appointment, there is no lack of suitable applicants.

During the year the whole question of the employment of uncertificated teachers has received careful consideration at the hands of the Board, with the result that all uncertificated teachers (of whom, happily, there are now very few) and licensed teachers in the Board's service have been notified that unless they succeed in qualifying themselves by securing at least a full certificate of Class E at the teachers' examination in January, 1898, their engagements under the Board will then be terminated at one month's notice. This resolution has been adopted in fairness to those applicants for employment who have secured, by examination, the necessary literary qualification for their work. In dealing thus with a matter which has been pressing itself on the Board's attention for several years past, the Board cannot be said to have treated the teachers referred to with undue harshness. In the opinion of this Board, the time has now arrived for the discontinuance of the issue of licenses to teach. The time was when the issue of such passports to the profession was a great convenience to teachers and Boards alike; now, when the supply of fully-accredited teachers is adequate to meet all probable demands, the necessity for such interim certificates appears to be no longer existent. It is manifestly unfair that the holder of a license, to gain which it is only necessary to partially pass the prescribed examination for a certificate of the lowest class, and to have the necessary two years' experience, should by its possession be enabled to compete on equal terms (as sometimes happens) with those who, it may be, are the possessors of a high-grade certificate of efficiency. The district licenses to enable pupil-teachers to bridge over the gap between the termination of their apprenticeship and the period when by examination and age qualification they may rise to the rank and status of fully-certificated teachers should be amply sufficient to meet the exigencies of the service. In this case it should not be necessary to provide for an extension or renewal of the period (two years) for which such a permit is issued. The necessity for a renewal certainly indicates either mental ability of a low order, want of application, or a combination of adverse circumstances which in ordinary experience do not usually occur.

Board's Scholarships.—Under this heading there is but little to report. The administration of the Board's scholarship scheme has been, on the whole, attended with very satisfactory results. It is but simple truth to say that but for this valuable aid many promising pupils of our public schools would have been unable to avail themselves of the advantages of a secondary education, and that our local High School would have been deprived of many of its brightest and most distinguished students. On the books of the Board at the close of the year there were the names of eighteen scholarship-holders, who during that period received amongst them a sum of £480, in addition to which £20 1s. 6d. was spent in expenses connected with the conduct of the annual examination which was held in the month of December at Invercargill, Gore, and Riverton simultaneously. The principal honours for the year fell to James McMenamin and Fred Ball (South School), to each of whom was awarded a scholarship of the value of £20, tenable for three years; to James Robertson (Waikaia), Albert J. Acheson and George Walker (Riverton), who each secured non-resident scholarships of the value of £35, also tenable for three years. Five additional scholarships of the value of £20 each, and one of the value of £35, but tenable for one year only, were also awarded. After making provision for scholarships current, this apportionment of the funds available absorbed, as closely as could be, the total sum to which the Board was entitled under the regulations controlling such expenditure.

The question of reducing the age at which boys and girls throughout the education district, whether attending public schools or not, shall be entitled to compete has been under the consideration of the Board. Under present regulations the age of candidates must not exceed fifteen years, as on the last day of the month in which the examination shall commence. So far, the Board has not seen its way to make any alteration in the present limit.

It is worthy of note that one of the successful candidates for the Board's scholarships in 1892 has this year succeeded in carrying off one of the Junior University Scholarships. The Board congratulates Miss Edith Brown on her success, and wishes her every prosperity in her future career as a student of the University, at which she will now prosecute her studies.

School Committees' Accounts.—For many years past it has been the practice of this Board to appoint the teacher of the school district to audit the accounts of his School Committee. This year, however, it was thought desirable to make a change, which was done by the appointment of Mr. F. Stevenson, clerk in the Board's office, to undertake this extra duty. The reasons for this alteration in the method of auditing these accounts are obvious. It was found that some teachers were averse to a too critical examination of the financial transactions of their Committees, and the Board recognised that there was perhaps good and sufficient reasons why teachers should not be placed in this invidious position. For the first time under the new system some little difficulty arose with several of the School Committees, owing to irregularities, which were not very serious in any case, but which were rather of the nature of omission to perform certain duties or produce receipts for items of expenditure shown in the accounts.

The following extract from the report on this subject furnished by the treasurer to the Board will indicate the nature of the shortcomings referred to, as well as the advantages to be gained by the