

PUPILS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The capitation grants depend (for the time being) on the “working average,” which is found for each school by omitting from the calculation all the attendances on those half-days on which less than half the pupils on the roll are present. The working average for the year 1898 was estimated at 113,800; but the returns show that it actually was 111,636—less by 692 than the corresponding number for 1897.

The “strict average” is based upon the attendances on all the half-days at which any pupils are present. The “strict average” for 1898 was 110,256, showing a decrease for the year as compared with the previous year of 737.

The average of the weekly roll-numbers taken throughout the year 1898 was 133,782, or 179 less than for 1897. As the strict average attendance was 110,256, we have 82·4 per cent. as the figure representing the regularity of attendance for 1898; in the previous year the average attendance was 82·9 per cent. of the average weekly roll.

TABLE A.—SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND YEARLY INCREASE FROM 1877 TO 1898.

Year.	School Attendance.					Yearly Increase on			
	Number belonging at Beginning of Year.	Number belonging at End of Year.	Average Attendance.		Average Attendance expressed as Percentage of Roll-number.	Number belonging at Beginning of Year.	Number belonging at End of Year.	Average Attendance.	
			Fourth Quarter.	Whole Year.				Fourth Quarter.	Whole Year.
1877	..	55,688	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1878	50,849	65,040	49,435	45,521	..	..	9,352	..	..
1879	59,707	75,566	57,301	53,067	73·8	8,858	10,526	7,866	7,546
1880	68,124	82,401	62,946	60,625	74·6	8,417	6,835	5,645	7,558
1881	74,359	83,560	63,009	61,822	74·2	6,235	1,159	63	1,197
1882	76,309	87,179	66,426	63,709	73·6	1,950	3,619	3,417	1,887
1883	79,416	92,476	70,077	67,373	74·0	3,107	5,297	3,651	3,664
1884	84,883	97,238	74,650	72,657	75·1	5,467	4,762	4,573	5,284
1885	90,670	102,407	80,183	78,327	76·6	5,787	5,169	5,533	5,670
1886	95,377	106,328	83,361	80,737	76·1	4,707	3,921	3,178	2,410
1887	99,206	110,919	87,386	85,637	77·0	3,829	4,591	4,025	4,900
1888	103,534	112,685	90,849	90,108	79·3	4,323	1,766	3,463	4,471
1889	104,919	115,456	94,308	93,374	80·3	1,385	2,771	3,459	3,266
1890	108,158	117,912	96,670	94,632	79·9	3,239	2,456	2,362	1,258
1891	110,665	119,523	96,264	97,058	80·3	2,507	1,611	[-406]	2,426
1892	112,279	122,620	100,917	99,070	80·6	1,614	3,097	4,653	2,012
1893	114,305	124,686	99,872	98,615	78·5	2,026	2,066	[-1,045]	[-455]
1894	116,819	127,300	106,151	103,490	80·6	2,514	2,614	6,279	4,875
1895	119,900	129,856	107,222	106,622	81·4	3,081	2,556	1,071	3,132
1896	122,425	131,037	109,253	108,976	82·1	2,525	1,181	2,031	2,354
1897	123,533	132,197	110,523	110,993	82·9	1,108	1,160	1,270	2,017
1898	123,892	131,621	107,904	110,256	82·4	359	[-576]	[-2,619]	[-737]

Reference to Table A shows that there has been only one other year—viz., 1893—in which the total average attendance has fallen below that of the previous year. It is significant that in both years the colony was visited by an epidemic of measles. In 1893 the attendance fell from 80·6 to 78·5 of the average roll—that is, apparently about 2,640 children were absent each day throughout the year; but the epidemic lasted for only part of the year, and each child would be away from school, say, five or six weeks. We might say, roughly, therefore, that about 20,000 school-children were affected. In 1898 the percentage of attendance fell from 82·9 to 82·4, or there was an apparent falling-off in the average attendance of about 670; the epidemic was much slighter, and the absences from school were, as a matter of fact, shorter in duration, although on medical grounds apparently no difference in the length of absence from school should be made whether the outbreak assumes, in any particular case, a mild or a malignant form. We are probably not far from the truth if we estimate that in 1898 about 7,000 school-children were affected. Quite apart from considerations of health, it appears not improbable, therefore, that, by the enforcement of stricter concerted measures of quarantine, Boards and Committees might considerably lessen the interruptions to school work, and thus increase the efficiency of the work; while they might, at the same time, guard themselves against the serious loss of revenue consequent upon the prolonged prevalence of an epidemic