

The above returns show a decrease in the school attendance all round. There was a decrease of 416 in the number of pupils who attended at all during the year. The decrease in the average attendance was 824, and the decrease in the number of pupils on the rolls when the year closed was 603. In Dunedin there was a decrease of ninety-five in the average attendance, while the number in attendance at the close of the year was eighty-one less than at the corresponding period of 1897. The average attendance at the Dunedin schools has been steadily decreasing since the year 1887, when it reached the highest point, until at present the attendance is lower by 526 pupils than it was in that year. The attendance at the city schools was lower last year than it has been at any time since 1880. It should be stated, however, that but few parts of the district escaped the epidemic of measles, while the ordinary infantile disorders seem to have been more severe than usual.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Twenty-two scholarships (eleven junior and eleven senior) were awarded at the December examination. In all, 171 candidates competed, forty for the senior and 131 for the junior scholarships. In addition to the scholarships awarded, twenty-six of the junior competitors and seven of the senior competitors gained sufficient marks to qualify them for free education at the Otago Boys' and Girls' High Schools for two years and three years respectively. There are at present forty-three pupils receiving free education at the High Schools in Dunedin in connection with the scholarship scheme. In October last the Board of Governors of the Boys' and Girls' High Schools intimated that it had been decided to restrict the free education privileges at its schools, so far as junior scholarship competitors are concerned, to the ten competitors next following those who gain scholarships, provided that they obtain at least 60 per cent. of the attainable marks. This change will come into operation at the examination in December, 1899. The conditions governing the senior scholarship free education privilege at the High Schools in Dunedin remain unaltered.

TRUANCY.—From the following statement an estimate may be gained of the work undertaken during the year for the suppression of truancy: Cases investigated, 499; notices served on parents or guardians under section 5 of "School Attendance Act, 1894," 312; penalty summonses issued under section 7 of "School Attendance Act, 1894" (dealing with parents or guardians of children who had not attended school the number of times required by the Act), 95. Under the above ninety-five penalty summonses there were fifty-six convictions, thirty-four cases were withdrawn on account of the production by the defendants of exemption certificates, and five cases were dismissed. The total of fines for the year was £5 12s. In accordance with section 7 of the Act, the fine inflicted in each case of conviction was 2s.

SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN.—The total number of students who attended the school during the past session was 402. This total includes ninety-four teachers and pupil-teachers, forty-one Training College students, 105 students who attended the day classes, and 162 who attended the evening classes. The Board desires to direct your special attention to the good work done at the School of Art and Design. The number of students is now larger than it has ever been, and the proportion of certificates gained at the examinations in connection with the South Kensington Science and Art Department is noteworthy. The cost of the school for the year was—Salaries, £708 6s. 8d.; incidental expenses, £59 18s. 7d.; total, £768 5s. 3d. Less fees (three quarters only), £258 15s. 9d.; Government grant under Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act, £198 13s. 7d.—£457 9s. 4d. Net cost, £310 15s. 11d.

The following is a summary of the passes of Dunedin candidates at the examination of the City and Guilds of London Institute, held in 1898: Plumber's work (ordinary)—First class, 3; plumber's work (honours)—First class, 1; carpentry and joinery (ordinary)—First class, 1; carpentry and joinery (honours)—First class, 1; photography (ordinary)—Second class, 1; Metal-plate work (ordinary)—First class, 1; bookbinding (ordinary)—First class, 2; mechanical engineering (ordinary)—First class, 1, marked as deserving of a prize; second class, 1. In this connection the Board thinks it desirable to lay stress on the good work done by the Dunedin Technical School, the rent of which is partly paid by the Board. Last year 731 students attended the classes of the Technical School, and 402 attended the School of Art. Deducting those who attended both institutions—viz., twenty-nine—we have the large number of 1,104 attending technical classes in the City of Dunedin, a state of affairs which speaks well for the primary system of education, for those who are teaching in the continuation schools, and specially well for the young men and women who are devoting their leisure hours to self improvement.

TRAINING COLLEGE.—The report of the Principal of the Training College is appended. The Board would again direct your attention to the inadequacy of the grant for the training of teachers. To maintain the Training College in an efficient condition at least £2,000 per annum is required, and a grant of only £300 is made. The Otago Training College is not, and never has been, of mere provincial importance. Reference to the report of the Principal will show that during that officer's four years' tenure of office he has successfully pursued the policy initiated and followed by Mr. Fitzgerald, a policy which, by the aid of the Otago University, has given to the colony Inspectors of Schools, successful heads of high schools, and a great number of highly qualified teachers of public schools. The majority of teachers in the Otago schools were students at the Training College, and in almost every other education district its students occupy important positions, and are doing good work for the colony. A more liberal grant should be made to the Boards that provide efficiently for the training of teachers for the colony.

The cost of the institution for the year was—Salaries, £490; allowances to students, £629 9s. 8d.; incidentals, £21 6s. 10d.; total, £1,140 16s. 6d. Less Government grant for training of teachers, £300. Net cost, £840 16s. 6d.

INSPECTION.—The Inspectors report that all the schools were examined, many under very unfavourable circumstances. Their report for 1898 shows that the schools are in a satisfactory