

REPORTS OF EDUCATION BOARDS.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Auckland, March, 1902.

In compliance with section 102 of "The Education Act, 1877," the Board presents the following report of its proceedings for the year 1901:—

BOARD.—The members in office at the beginning of the year were Messrs. L. J. Bagnall (Chairman), J. Blades, T. Cooper, R. Farrell, W. Lambe, S. Luke, J. D. McKenzie, N. A. McLeod, and Dr. McArthur. Twenty-five meetings of the Board were held during the year, with an average attendance of seven members. The meetings of the Board are held fortnightly, a committee of four members meeting to deal with matters of finance and the selection of teachers for appointments prior to each meeting. Mr. Cooper resigned in February, and was succeeded by Mr. J. Muir. The annual election of three members resulted in the election of Mr. Bagnall, Mr. R. Hobbs, and Mr. J. G. Rutherford. Dr. McArthur resigned in July, and Mr. Luke was elected without a contest to fill the vacant seat.

SCHOOLS.—At the end of the year there were 395 schools in operation. Seventeen new schools were opened during the year, and the following three schools were closed: Tokatea (half-time), Otakeo, Te Rau-a-moa. The last-named school has since been reopened. Of the 395 schools, 58 are half-time, and the number of separate schools is reckoned by the Department as 366. Of that number, 100 schools have an average attendance not exceeding twenty scholars. In 266 schools the average attendance does not exceed fifty.

There is an unceasing demand for the establishment of small schools in outlying districts, and requests are not infrequently received for the grant of a capitation allowance towards the maintenance of a teacher in a household where there is not a sufficient number of children to justify the establishment of a separate school. Hitherto the Board has hesitated to grant aid in such cases, but the institution of a colonial scale, which provides a capitation grant for each unit of attendance, would seem to warrant the Board in granting aid where the household is beyond reach of a public school.

TEACHERS.—The number of teachers employed at the end of the year was 812, besides 73 teachers of sewing. In compliance with the ruling of the Minister, the Board has been reluctantly obliged to terminate the engagements of all sewing-teachers, inasmuch as the colonial scale makes no provision for their employment. It should be noted that, while the smaller schools are more efficiently taught by lady teachers, there are some remote and isolated districts where none other than a male teacher can be located, and it seems unfair that the children in those districts should be deprived of the only available means of instruction in needlework, which has hitherto been provided for them at a yearly cost of £5 for each school.

The effect of the colonial scale in this district has been to diminish the number of pupil-teachers by eighty and to increase the number of assistants by fifty. But the Board has exercised to the fullest extent its privilege of retaining (for two years) the services of pupil-teachers in schools between thirty-five and forty average attendance. These schools afford an excellent training ground for young pupil-teachers.

The undue preponderance of pupil-teachers in the staffing of schools is now removed, and a greater efficiency may be looked for in the future; but in order to complete the system it is necessary that a training college should be established for the training of pupil-teachers after their term of apprenticeship, and the Board trusts that the Government will make an early fulfilment of its promise in this matter. The Saturday classes for the instruction of pupil-teachers are being continued for the present, as a supplement to the instruction which head teachers are required to give them in the school.

The new colonial scale of staff makes no provision for the employment of relieving or substitute teachers. In a large district such as Auckland, with a staff of more than eight hundred teachers of all grades, there is frequent occasion for sending teachers to take places temporarily vacated through illness or other urgent cause.

Hitherto the Board has exercised a discretionary power in case of need by supplementing the staff of a school under special circumstances, such as a sudden increase in the attendance. It is feared that the new regulations fall short of requirements in this respect, and that the withdrawal of such power from the Board will result in no little inconvenience and hardship.

Changes of teachers from one position to another, often involving considerable expense, are frequent in this district, and cannot be avoided. Hitherto the Board has from its funds reimbursed the teachers (either in whole or in part) for the extra outlay. This expense must now be borne by the teachers themselves, as the colonial scale makes no provision in the matter.