

BOARD.—At the beginning of the year the Board consisted of Messrs. G. S. Bridge (Chairman), J. W. Baker, E. Dixon, F. M. Spurdle, R. A. Adams, W. T. Wood, F. Pirani, F. Y. Lethbridge, and the Rev. John Ross. The three retiring members were Messrs. G. S. Bridge, R. A. Adams, and W. T. Wood, all of whom offered themselves for re-election. Of the seven candidates nominated, Messrs. Bridge and Adams were re-elected, and Mr. F. H. Haselden took the place of Mr. Wood. The Board met twelve times during the year, and the average attendance of members was eight. Mr. F. Y. Lethbridge continues to represent the Board as a member of the Wellington Board of School Commissioners. At the meeting in August, Mr. G. S. Bridge was re-elected Chairman.

SCHOOLS.—At the end of the year 1902 154 schools were in operation. During the year the Porewa School was closed. New schools were opened at Glen Oroua, Himatangi, Mangamingi, Kawabata, Tapuae, Rata-iti, Aberfeldie, Umutoi, Table Flat, Pukeroa, Porewa, and Tokorangi. There were, therefore, at the end of 1903 165 schools in operation.

TEACHERS.—On the 31st December there were in the Board's employ 325 teachers—143 males and 182 females. There were also nine special assistants employed in the seven District High Schools. The 325 teachers are classified as follows: H.M., 60; H.F., 8; M., 51; F., 46; A.M., 19; A.F., 89; M.P., 13; and F.P., 39.

The results of the annual examination of pupil-teachers held in June were as follows: First year, no examination; second year, 12 examined, 8 passed; third year, 15 examined, 11 passed; fourth year, 13 examined, 12 passed. The examination of candidates for pupil-teacherships took place in December. Of fifty-seven candidates examined, only twenty-seven qualified for appointment, several of whom had, prior to the examination, been conditionally appointed.

SCHOOL-ATTENDANCE.—At the beginning of the school year the number of pupils in attendance was 11,385, and at the end, 11,802, an increase of 417. The average weekly-roll number and the average attendance for each quarter of the year were: First quarter, roll 11,764, average attendance, 9,786; second quarter, roll 11,858, average attendance 9,808; third quarter, roll 11,875, average attendance 9,870; fourth quarter, roll 12,001, average attendance 10,004. Although the average attendance for the year was larger by 282 than that for 1902—the numbers being, 1902, 9,585; 1903, 9,867—yet, expressed as a percentage of the mean of the average weekly roll number, it was smaller than in 1902, owing, no doubt, to the poor attendance at many schools which was caused by epidemics of scarlet fever, mumps, &c. It will be noticed that the average attendance for the December quarter exceeded 10,000. The average attendance for the last eight years expressed as a percentage of the roll-number has been as follows: 1896, 80.4; 1897, 81.4; 1898, 81.9; 1899, 80.8; 1900, 82.1; 1901, 82.1; 1902, 84.4; 1903, 83.

TRUANCY.—During the year the Truant Officer has visited all the schools except the aided schools and those in the outlying parts of the district. The other schools were visited once every two months. The Roman Catholic schools are visited regularly. In the Truant Officer's report for the year the following appears: "During the year I have travelled about 4,500 miles—by rail, coach, and bicycle; visiting 498 schools, or an average of 43.3 in each month; and attending 66 sittings of the Magistrate's Court. I have issued 808 summonses for irregular attendance during the year, resulting in fines being imposed in 650 cases, 65 were convicted only, 41 dismissed, and 52 withdrawn. This shows, when compared with the year 1902, a decrease of 104 in the number of cases in Court, with an increase of 22 in the number fined, a decrease of 46 in convictions only, a decrease of 11 in those dismissed, and a decrease of 69 in those withdrawn, &c. Eleven children not previously attending any school have been placed on the rolls, and 244 have been traced from school to school."

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Ten scholarships, 5 of which were senior and 5 junior, were awarded on the results of the annual examination held in December. There were in all 67 competitors—20 senior and 47 junior. Only 7 of the former and 11 of the latter qualified. Those who qualified but did not obtain scholarships are entitled to free tuition, girls at the Girls' College, and boys at the Collegiate School. The amount expended on scholarships, including examination expenses, was £732 14s. 11d.

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—One of the points worthy of notice in connection with the District High Schools is the large attendance at the College Street School, Palmerston North. Of the other schools, Patea and Eltham did not earn enough to provide the salary of the special assistant teachers; and at Marton the attendance showed a decline. At Feilding, Hawera, and the Wanganui Boys', the number of pupils in the secondary department was satisfactory, and their attendance good. The number of qualified pupils receiving instruction in secondary subjects at the end of the year 1903 was 397—216 boys and 181 girls. In addition to these, a number who had not passed Standard VI. were receiving instruction. The amount paid in salaries and allowances to head teachers and special assistants during the year was £1,950 6s. 7d.

In April the building erected in Palmerston North for the secondary department of the College Street District High School was opened. The building provides accommodation for the Technical School classes in drawing, painting, &c. Excluding furniture, the cost of the building exceeded £2,300. £800 was contributed by the Government for the District High School, and also £760 for the Technical School and fittings and furniture. A sum of £200 contributed by residents of Palmerston North several years ago for a technical school was invested until required, and earned in interest the sum of £25 4s. 8d. On the £200 there was a subsidy of £200, and the balance of the sum required was provided by the Board.

At the Wanganui Boys' District High School a science room and a woodwork room were erected during the year, and thoroughly equipped for practical work.