

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Education Board Office, Wellington, 31st March, 1908.

In accordance with the requirements of "The Education Act, 1904," I beg to submit the following report of the Education Board of the District of Wellington for the year 1907:—

The ballot held in compliance with the requirements of "The Education Act Amendment Act, 1905," resulted in the retirement of Messrs. Lee (City), Field, M.P. (Manawatu-Hutt), and Hogg, M.P. (Wairarapa), who were re-elected, the last two unopposed. A vacancy caused by the resignation of the Rev. W. A. Evans was filled by the election of Mr. J. G. W. Aitken, M.P. The membership of the Board at the end of the year was thus: Wellington City Ward—Messrs. J. G. W. Aitken, M.P., W. Allan, R. Lee; Manawatu-Hutt Ward—Messrs. W. H. Field, M.P., J. Kebbell, Captain McDonald; Wairarapa Ward—Messrs. W. C. Buchanan, A. W. Hogg, M.P., A. H. Vile. At the August meeting Mr. R. Lee was unanimously re-elected Chairman. The Board's representative Managers of Technical Schools were: Wellington—Messrs. Aitken, Allan, and Captain McDonald; Petone—Captain McDonald and Mr. Vile; Pahiatua—Messrs. Buchanan and Vile. Mr. J. R. Blair continued to represent the Board on the Wellington School Commissioners.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.—At the beginning of 1907 155 schools were in operation. During the year there were opened Homeburn, Kauhiku, Kaikuri, Pakowai, and Pakaraka—all household schools; and there were closed Tikaramonga and Homeburn: leaving 158 in operation at the end of the year.

ATTENDANCE.—The average roll and attendance for the respective quarters and the year were: March 16,526, 14,403; June 16,528, 13,887; September 16,532, 13,636; December 16,669, 14,103; year 16,564, 14,007. The percentage of attendance was 84·6, the lowest since 1903. The corresponding figures for the year 1906 were—roll, 16,416; attendance, 14,356; percentage, 87·5. While the roll increased by 148 as compared with 1906, the average attendance decreased by 349, or nearly 3 per cent. of the average number enrolled. This serious decrease is almost wholly due to epidemics, chiefly whooping-cough and influenza, which prevailed over nearly the whole district, and in many instances affected the attendance of three quarters. The following are the statistics of the Truant Officer for the year: Number of schools visited, 462; cases reported by head teachers, and dealt with, 3,835; proceedings instituted, 141; convictions recorded, 120; cases withdrawn owing to improved attendance, 9; cases withdrawn in order that police might take other action, 6; fines inflicted, £16 17s., costs £37 2s.—total, £53 19s.; cases dismissed—1 for sickness, 1 owing to father not being responsible; and summonses unserved, 4.

There were enrolled twenty-three children of school age whose education was being neglected. A large number of neglected children came under notice, and were reported to the police. The Board desires again to urge the desirability of amendment of section 141 of "The Education Act, 1904," which permits the absence of a child one day in each week of the school year. The Board has reason to believe that a considerable number of parents, week by week, purposely send their children to school only the bare minimum number of times required by law, and it desires to record again its opinion that, as the State provides free education, every child should, in the absence of valid excuse, be required to attend daily.

TEACHING STAFF.—At the close of the year there were in the service of the Board 139 male and 218 female teachers, 14 male and 70 female pupil-teachers—total, 153 males, 288 females, or 441 in all, an increase of 4 during the year. The corresponding numbers for 1906 were 157 males, 280 females, or 437 in all. Included in the above numbers are 68 uncertificated teachers, to 23 of whom had been granted a license to teach. The Board has by circular intimated to these teachers its desire that they should endeavour to obtain a full certificate. Of the pupil-teachers who were required to sit for examination only two failed to pass. The Board's experience during the past year confirms the opinion expressed in its report for 1906, that in some grades the staffing is inadequate, and it trusts that, as the result of the consideration which it understands the matter is now receiving, relief may be afforded by some increase in the staffing of those grades wherein the strain on the teacher is too great.

INSTRUCTION OF TEACHERS.—The courses of instruction arranged for teachers on Saturdays embraced the following: Subjects—Drawing and handwork, agriculture, cookery, woodwork, singing and deep breathing; centres—Wellington, Masterton, Greytown, and Levin; instructors—Technical School staff, Mr. Davies, Miss Ivey, Miss Talbot, Mr. Howe, Mr. Parker. Mrs. Neely conducted a students' class of twenty-three in cookery, and Mr. Howe one of sixteen in woodwork. It is very gratifying to the Board that so large a number of teachers are prepared, for the sake of improvement in their profession, to forfeit a part at least of their Saturday leisure.

TRAINING COLLEGE.—The report of the Principal of the Training College shows that during the past year—the second year of its existence—the College had its full complement of eighty students, and that nearly all the education districts in the Middle University Area were represented. Forty-six students completed their two-years course, and left at the end of the year. Nearly all of these have since received positions. The efforts of the Principal and the Committee of Advice to keep the work of the College in touch with the needs of schools, and especially of small country schools, meet with the approval of the Board. The special winter course instituted for the benefit of teachers in small country schools, including, as it did, teachers from all parts of the Middle University District, was a movement in the right direction, and one which, as the Principal suggests, should be followed up by others on the same or similar lines. The section of the Principal's report dealing with the lack of fully qualified teachers in our own and other education districts demands earnest attention.