

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Hokitika, 11th February, 1909.

I have the honour to present the report of the Westland Education Board for the year ending 31st December, 1908.

THE BOARD.—At the beginning of the year the Board consisted of the following members, representing the respective wards: North—Messrs. T. V. Byrne, T. W. Duff, and R. Rouse; Middle—Messrs. T. W. Beare, J. J. Clarke, and G. A. Perry; South—Messrs. A. Cumming, J. Grimmond, and H. L. Michel. In August Messrs. Byrne, Beare, and Michel retired, and the two latter were re-elected unopposed. Mr. Byrne had removed from the district, and Mr. T. T. Jones was elected for the North Ward. Mr. Perry was elected Chairman for the ensuing year, and Mr. Clarke was reappointed as Treasurer. During the year Mr. Michel has continued to act as representative of the Board on the Hokitika High School Board of Governors, and Mr. Grimmond as the School Commissioner appointed by the Board. Twelve meetings of the Board have been held during the year, and the average attendance of members has been 7.2.

SCHOOLS.—The number of schools in operation during 1908 was thirty-seven. In the course of the year one small school (Gillespie's) was closed, and two others (Mount Doughboy and Waiho) were opened. In addition, five Catholic schools were examined by the Board's Inspector.

Under the new system of grades, the thirty-six schools in operation at the end of the year will for the present year include twelve schools of Grade 0, twelve of Grade I, four of Grade II, five of Grade IV, one of Grade V, one of Grade VII B, and one side school. Of schools of eight and nine in average attendance the salaries are £48 and £90 respectively, and the reduction to Grade 0 (1-8) is a severe experience for the teachers. Two schools (Donoghue's and Rangiriri) have missed retention in Grade I by a unit of average attendance. It is a matter of congratulation that the Upper Otira and Kanieri Schools have qualified for Grade IV, and have become entitled to an assistant teacher.

The number of pupils attending the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School was forty, the number at the end of the year being thirty-seven. Five of the scholars held Board's Scholarships and four Junior National Scholarships.

The Inspector's annual reports, presented separately, will indicate the degree of efficiency maintained by the schools of the district.

ATTENDANCE.—The roll-number at the end of the year was 1,078, an increase of fifty-nine on that of the previous year. The average attendance was 87.5 of the average roll-number. It is worthy to comment that, in spite of the prevalence of sickness in a number of school districts, the attendance has been maintained at a high standard of regularity.

TEACHERS.—Fifty teachers were employed on the staffs of the public schools during the year. These included five head teachers, thirty sole teachers, ten assistants, and five pupil-teachers. Two extra teachers of needlework were under engagements during the year. With reference to the qualifications of the teachers, all the head teachers, seven assistants, and six sole teachers hold certificates. Of the remainder, one assistant, four pupil-teachers, and seven sole teachers have passed the Matriculation or Junior Civil Service examination. There are therefore nineteen who do not possess any of these qualifications, and eleven of these are in schools of Grade 0.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—The Board scholarships in force are one "town" and four "country" pupils. There are also four holders of Junior National Scholarships. At the examination held by the Education Department in December there were nine candidates for Board's Scholarships and five for Junior National Scholarships. As a result, one Junior National, one "country," and three "town" scholarships were awarded.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—The following classes have been in operation during the year: (1.) Elementary agriculture and school gardens: A teachers' class has been held at intervals during the year, under the direction of Mr. J. Bruce. Seven sessions have been held, including two outdoor excursions in nature-study. Thirty teachers have taken part in these lessons. (2.) Cookery: Two school classes and one special class have been held for two quarters each, and, in addition, a class for teachers has been in operation for fifteen weeks. The total number of students was seventy-one. Under the instruction of Miss Dillon, the success of the previous years has been continued. (3.) Dressmaking: For two quarters special classes have been conducted under the instruction of Mrs. A. M. Potts. For the first quarter three classes in Hokitika and one in Kumara were carried on, the total number of students being seventy-six. For the second quarter the classes in Hokitika were reduced to one, with twenty-one students, while the class at Kumara was continued with twelve students. The total number of students receiving instruction during the year was eighty-two. (4.) Design-drawing and brushwork: A class of twenty-seven teachers in these branches was conducted with success for sixteen weeks, under instruction by Mr. H. R. Barrett. (5.) The following classes have also been in operation during the year: Woodwork (Hokitika), practical chemistry and physics (Hokitika), elementary agriculture (Arahura Road, Humphreys, Koiterangi, Lower Kokatahi, Ross, and Stafford), handwork (eight schools), needlework, with extra teacher (two schools).

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—The cadet corps connected with the Hokitika District High School has maintained its efficiency during the year. The corps has occupied the lead in the adoption of the new drill, and has taken part in class firing and battalion drill. In this and a majority of the schools physical exercises, either free or with wands, dumb-bells, or clubs, form part of the course of instruction. A series of deep-breathing exercises has been issued by the Board, and has been adopted in nearly all the schools of the district.

FINANCE.—The Administration Account shows a small balance. This, however, should, if possible, be maintained at a higher figure, seeing that the cost of relieving teachers is a liability that cannot be estimated. The accounts relating to secondary education are, owing to special circumstances, in a worse position than in the previous year, the debit balance being in-