

subjects, the Board submitted proposals to the Department under which, if sanctioned, two Art Scholarships, two Technical Scholarships, and one Agricultural Scholarship (tenable at Lincoln College) would have been awarded in each year. It was with much regret that the Board learnt from the Department that no statutory authority existed enabling the Board to grant such scholarships. In view of the importance of the subjects mentioned, the Board trusts that the Minister will, at an early date, establish such scholarships, or authorize Education Boards to do so. During the parliamentary session of 1910 an important alteration has been made affecting the Board's Scholarship Regulations. Under the amending Act Junior Board Scholarships and Senior Board Scholarships shall be open to all children of the prescribed age, whether they have attended public or private schools. It appears to the Board to be wrong in principle that children attending private schools should be eligible to compete for Board Scholarships, unless the conditions as to their tuition are equal.

ATTENDANCE.—During the year the Board's attention has been drawn to the low average attendance obtaining in this district, that for the year 1909 having barely reached 86 per cent., the lowest throughout the Dominion. This unenviable position appeared to the Board to be extremely unsatisfactory, the more so seeing that generally speaking the roads are good, the weather and climate favourable, and the great majority of pupils within easy reach of school. The Board has brought the matter under the notice of all head teachers, who in future will be required to furnish lists of the names of absentees. Under the Education Act Amendment Act, 1910, children are now required to attend school whenever it is open. It is obvious that a strict compliance with this provision in all cases will inflict hardship. It will be necessary for the Board to use a careful discretion in this matter, so that while on the one hand careless or indifferent parents may be brought to realize their responsibilities, those who do their duty to their children by sending them to school with praiseworthy regularity shall not be unnecessarily penalized. That the low percentage of attendance for the year 1909 was due in some measure to the prevalence of epidemics finds confirmation in the fact that for 1910, a year almost free from illness, the percentage rose to 90·12,* as previously referred to in this report.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—A further advance has to be recorded in the number of manual and technical classes held during the year, also in the number of subjects of instruction. School classes in cookery, laundry-work, and woodwork have been continued at the Christchurch centres with excellent results. Compared with the previous year as a whole, a considerable increase in the number of pupils in attendance has taken place, although for the later period of 1910 an undue falling-off is noticed, especially marked in the case of certain schools. The Board has already agreed that its Inspectors shall give due weight to manual training when awarding certificates of proficiency. With the completion of the centre at Sydenham it will be possible to make more satisfactory arrangements for the several schools, when the Board will expect all head teachers to take the fullest advantage of the opportunity their pupils have of receiving a training in subjects so useful to them in after-life. Classes in one or other of the several forms of handwork have been carried on in ninety-two schools during the year, while fifty-five classes in swimming and life-saving have been held. As was to be expected, the appointment of an instructor in agriculture, with an assistant to visit the country schools and advise teachers in practical work, has given a stimulus to elementary agriculture, in which subject no less than ninety-three classes have received the Department's recognition. At the Christchurch Technical College a very large number of classes in technical subjects have been held, the total number of individual students having been 913, as compared with 300 in 1906. These figures are exclusive of the 277 pupils on the roll of the day-school. In his report the Director refers to the important innovation in the trades department, where instruction has been given in machine-shearing and wool-classing, there having been no less than five classes in the latter subject. The movement in the direction of establishing a training-hostel in Christchurch at which girls may receive practical instruction in domestic science will be watched with great interest, and it augurs well for the ultimate success of the object in view that the Board of Managers have been able to raise, in so short a time, a substantial part of the necessary funds. At the Ashburton centre a healthy interest in both school and technical classes has been maintained, the commercial and industrial sides being well represented. At Rangiora classes in thirteen subjects have been held, as compared with five in the previous year, wool-classing having been added to the list, which it is confidently expected will continue to show a further increase, owing to the facilities offered by the very commodious and thoroughly equipped building the management now have at their disposal. At Kaiapoi the disadvantages under which the technical classes have been hitherto carried on will shortly disappear, the new building being, at the date of this report, ready for occupation. Appended to this report are the reports of the several centres, from which a general estimate of the work as a whole may be formed. (These are reprinted in E.—5, Manual and Technical Instruction Report.)

NEW REGULATIONS.—Last year the Board had occasion to protest against the action of the Department in formulating and putting new regulations into operation without due notice. This had reference to the regulations for staffs and salaries, gazetted on the 22nd December, 1909, and put into immediate operation. The same circumstance, the Board regrets to note, has again been in evidence, though on a more extended scale. New regulations affecting staffs, manual and technical instruction, and training colleges, have been issued at perhaps the most inconvenient time of the year, and without any previous notice whatever. In the opinion of the Board it would greatly conduce to the smooth working of the Act, so far as its administration by Education Boards is concerned, if all alterations in the regulations affecting the working of public or technical schools were gazetted not less than three months before being required to be put into operation.

* Based on average for last quarter of year.