

per annum, was paid in one sum on the 1st July last, as a special allowance varying according to the grade of the school from two-fifths to one-quarter of the usual quarterly payment. The allocation was made so as to benefit more largely the smaller country schools, and at a time of the year when the strain on the Committees' resources was most urgent.

The aggregate amount paid to School Committees during the year was £2,708 5s. 4d., and this sum works out at almost 5s. 8½d. per pupil on the mean average attendance for the year, or 2½d. (equal to £108 per annum) per pupil in excess of the sum stipulated in section 4 of the Act previously referred to.

FREE CLASS-BOOKS.—From the terms of a circular recently issued, the Board notes the intention of the Department to continue and extend the privilege of free class-books for pupils in attendance at public schools, and notes also with some degree of satisfaction the introduction in certain standards of the substitution of grants for the purchase of stationery in lieu of certain books to be purchased by the pupils. This innovation, strongly recommended in a more complete sense by this and other Board's in their annual reports for the year 1910, indicates a desire on the part of the central authority to accept reasonable suggestions for an amendment of the past system. This Board believes that the Department might, with manifest advantage to all concerned, extend the principle thus introduced so that it might apply to all classes and to all text-books. The vote for free class-books (and stationery) might advantageously be applied to the purchase of all requisites necessary for use in school or for home exercises. The portion of the grant so far set free is quite insufficient to provide an adequate supply of stationery for the whole year's work. It is generally agreed that to provide supplies of stationery which would in effect perish in the using would be infinitely preferable to purchasing text-books which, under the conditions of the grant generally applied, can never fully serve the end sought for. The danger to the pupils from a hygienic point of view of handling indiscriminately the text-books used by all and sundry would thus be avoided, and the expense saved to parents would be approximately as great in the one case as in the other. The Board, however, while admitting that it may be quite fair to expect School Committees, out of their present too meagre allowance, to provide an amount equal to that disbursed for stationery as an equivalent for the substitution of one text-book in each standard, considers that it would be an intolerable burden were they expected to provide a sum equal to that spent in the purchase of stationery in substitution for all text-books.

INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS.—This subject is adequately dealt with in the general report on the year's work furnished by the Inspectors, a copy of which has been supplied to your Department.

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—The report of the Director of Manual and Technical Instruction sets forth in full all that is necessary to be recorded in respect of this branch of our educational system.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND FINANCES.—In addition to the highly essential work of maintaining the school buildings, teachers' residences, outbuildings, fences enclosing school-grounds, and glebes in an efficient state of repair, the Board has undertaken during the year several very important new works. The erection in brick of new infant schools in the districts of Mataura, North Invercargill, and Waihopai has been completed at a cost exceeding £800 in each case; new schools have been established and buildings provided at Glenorchy and North Makarewa; additions to schools at Nightcaps and Orepuki have also been completed; while new residences have been provided for the teachers at Waikaka Siding and Edendale, the latter in place of an old and worn-out building past profitable service. More detailed information respecting these works is given in Departmental Return No. 1. Additional new works, grants for which have been approved by the Department, are now in progress, of which full particulars will appear in next year's report.

According to last year's balance-sheet, the Maintenance and Rebuilding Account showed a credit balance of £7,795 7s. 7d. The Public Schools (New Buildings) Account, however, showed a debit balance of £4,989 14s. 8d.

As has been explained in a letter to your Department under cover of which was forwarded the Board's balance-sheet and allied returns, the deficit on the Public Schools Account has arisen in consequence of the past imperfect system of debiting to that account expenditure in excess of the grants for new works actually approved by the Department. As indicated in last year's report, it is proposed in this year's balance-sheet to remove this long-standing anomaly of carrying forward from year to year an unexplained deficit by a transfer of £3,345 18s. 8d., the acceptance of which will place both accounts (Maintenance and Public Schools) on a satisfactory basis. The only alternative to this proposal is to ask for a special grant from the Department to extinguish the deficit, an alternative not seriously contemplated.

The Board notes with great satisfaction that the new form of balance-sheet approved by Audit and Education Departments respectively, brought into use for the first time in the preparation of the 1910 accounts, promises to work quite satisfactorily. This Board advocated such a reform for many years prior to its introduction. The improved form of the return makes it possible to show each account separately, with the balances standing to debit or credit of each as the case may be. The various items of income and expenditure are shown in the balance-sheet itself, and need not here be repeated; while the detailed expenditure as it applies to individual schools and districts is fully set forth in Departmental Return No. 7. Return No. 5, Statement of Assets and Liabilities, gives further particulars respecting the Board's financial position. The total balance to the credit of the Board at the close of its financial year (31st December) amounts to £5,216 11s.

The Board has reason to congratulate itself on the completion of another year's successful administration, and the maintenance of a credit balance sufficient, with accruing revenue, to meet all reasonable demands which may arise in the year now current.

In conclusion, the Board records its hearty appreciation of the facilities granted by the Department for the promotion of the educational interests of the important district which it has the honour to represent.

DUNCAN GILCHRIST, Chairman.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.