

ments were more or less unsatisfactory in character. The rented buildings were sometimes unlined, poorly lit, and otherwise unsuitable for educational purposes and for occupation by children. With the close of the war Education Boards are now desirous that the school accommodation should be brought up to a reasonable standard in adequacy and comfort, and, as indicating the views the Boards take of their requirements for new schools, additions to existing schools, and the requisite sites, it may be mentioned that while the grants applied for during the first six months of last year totalled £67,000, those for the corresponding period of the current year totalled £196,000.

As has been pointed out in former reports, many of the older school buildings, as judged by modern standards, are defective in important features such as ventilation, lighting, shape and size of class-rooms, &c. In other countries also the educational authorities, in their official reports, note that similar conditions obtain. Though the high cost of building at the present time may prohibit the adoption of a general scheme of reconstruction, some of the oldest schools are so badly constructed as to demand attention at the earliest possible opportunity. In some cases the most outstanding defects can be remedied by rearranging the existing accommodation and by otherwise improving the conditions, but in others remodeling is not possible, and entirely new buildings must be provided.

Of late years the plans submitted to the Department in connection with applications for grants have been more and more closely scrutinized, with a view to ensuring that they conform to the recognized principles of school-construction and admit of economical extension of the building should additions subsequently be found necessary. The adoption of this course, in conjunction with discussion between officers of the Board and the Department, has led to the erection of better schools, and to the adoption of a desirable measure of standardization of the class-room as the unit of school accommodation.

During the war the erection of teachers' residences practically ceased, but Education Boards are now submitting a number of applications that are regarded as urgent. This question of providing accommodation for the teacher is a difficult one to deal with. The need for residences is felt most in connection with schools of the lower grades, and it is to this class of school that most of the existing residences are attached. Yet so frequent are the changes in the teachers of small schools that there is no certainty that, if a residence is provided, it will be permanently occupied. One teacher may prefer to live in the residence; the next teacher may prefer to board. Again, the ebb and flow of population and the consequent fluctuations in the attendance at a school may result in the appointment of a married man where there was formerly an unmarried teacher, or *vice versa*, and the need for a residence waxes and wanes correspondingly. Indeed, at the present time there are upwards of one hundred residences unoccupied by teachers. Some of these are let, while others are vacant. The most common reason assigned for the teacher's failure to occupy the residence is that the teacher is a single woman and boards in the district. Owing to the difficulties of the case the Department prefers to pay house allowance, and has adopted a policy of not erecting a residence unless no other course appears possible.

During the year a substantial sum for the improvement of teachers' residences by providing bathrooms and washhouses was approved by Cabinet, and Education Boards were requested to supply the Department with a statement of their most urgent needs in this respect.

For the financial year 1918-19 the appropriation for public-school buildings was much higher than in any previous year—viz., £160,000. For 1917-18 the appropriation was £75,000. Unfortunately, when present and pre-war building-conditions are taken into account, the substantial increase in the amount of the appropriations does not enable a correspondingly increased amount of work to be carried out.

ROLL NUMBER.

(Tables B1 and B2.)

The number of children in attendance at public schools in 1918, as shown by the mean of the average weekly roll for the four quarters of the year, was 1·8 per