

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1914, the Education Board of the District of Hawke's Bay has the honour to submit the following report of its proceedings for the year 1927 :—

The Board.—The personnel of the Board at the end of the year was as follows : Napier Urban Area—Messrs. J. Clark Thomson (Chairman) and R. C. Wright ; Gisborne Urban Area—Messrs. J. S. Wauchop and T. A. Coleman ; Hastings Urban Area—Messrs. G. A. Maddison and C. Lassen ; North Ward Rural Area—Messrs. G. McKay and A. King ; South Ward Rural Area—Messrs. R. P. Soundy and W. Cuthbertson. The only change in the personnel during the year was occasioned by the retirement of Mr. G. Crawshaw, who did not seek re-election. The Board has placed on record its appreciation of the long and valuable services rendered to education by Mr. Crawshaw in various capacities. Mr. T. A. Coleman was elected unopposed to fill the vacancy.

Finance.—The credit cash balance on all accounts at 31st December, 1927, was £4,940 18s. 10d. The cost of general administration in 1927 was 5·57s. per pupil in yearly average attendance. It must be stated in this connection that this cost includes administration charges in respect of the Board's workshop and the manual and technical side, to neither of which branch has any special officer been appointed, nor is any special payment or allowance made for services rendered by the Board's staff.

The Maintenance Account, which for several years past has been in an unsatisfactory state, has through careful administration been kept in a fairly satisfactory position. The Board has found it difficult, however, to comply with the requests for assistance towards the installation of septic-tank drainage systems. £225 was spent in 1927, and applications now under consideration would, if approved, involve the Board in an expenditure, under present arrangements for financing the cost, of £293. This special expenditure, with the expenditure on desk replacements referred to in the next paragraph, places a heavy tax on this account, and renders it difficult to find the funds necessary to keep the schools in an efficient state of repair. Judicious expenditure of the amount available has, however, been made, and the painting of the Board's schools buildings has been steadily proceeded with during the year.

During the past three years the sum of £3,315 7s. 1d. has been spent on desk replacements. That sum is comprised of Government grants, £1,291 1s. 9d. ; £996 12s. 6d. from the Rebuilding Fund ; and £1,027 12s. 10d. found by the Board, of which £918 8s. 6d. was provided in 1927. It is estimated that a sum of over £1,000 is still required to complete these replacements. The Board's finances will not permit of this heavy drain upon its funds, and consequently it may be several years before this most necessary work can be completed.

Attendance.—The attendance figures disclose quite an extraordinary position, inasmuch as although the average roll number shows an increase of 152 over the year 1926, the average attendance decreased by nearly 350. This is accounted for by the fact that the attendances were affected by epidemic sickness throughout practically the whole year.

Schools.—A new school was opened at Awapuni (Gisborne) on the 1st July, a small school was reopened in the Board's building at Flemington, and five household schools were recognized. Three household schools were closed during the year, and two schools in temporary buildings at Mutuera and Ruanui.

Proficiency Examination and Junior National Scholarships.—As in former years, a synchronous examination was arranged for the outlying schools, the pupils in other schools being examined either at convenient centres or at their own schools. For the synchronous examination cards in English and arithmetic were provided by the Department, whilst other special papers were prepared by the Inspectors. The Board arranged for responsible supervisors to be present.

Teachers.—The conditions in respect to the supply of trained teachers have vastly improved during the past few years. In fact, at the present time there is a definite surplus of trained teachers. For 1926 and 1927 a fewer number of probationers were appointed than in previous years. The number of students leaving the training colleges at the end of 1928 and 1929 will correspondingly be reduced, and it may be that the supply will the more nearly correspond with the demand in 1929 and 1930.

There were two instructors in agriculture, nature-study, and dairy science, five in woodwork, and four in domestic science. Instruction in manual-training classes at Woodville is given by teachers on the staff of the Palmerston North Technical School.

Organizing Teachers.—The Inspectors report most favourably on the efficient state of the smaller country schools, and in a great measure this happy result is due to the efforts of the organizing teachers, who have carried out their duties whole-heartedly, and to the complete satisfaction of the Board and Inspectors. During the greater part of the year two organizing teachers were employed, one in the northern and one in the southern portion of the district. The number of uncertificated teachers had, however, decreased to such an extent that it was found possible to dispense with the services of one organizing teacher, who was appointed to a position in a school.

District High Schools.—At the end of the year there were six district high schools in operation. Rural-course instruction has been given as in previous years, and every encouragement is given to pupils to proceed to the full length of their secondary education. Science work is conducted on sound lines, and all the secondary departments have the benefit of the advice and assistance of the Board's agricultural instructors.

Manual and Technical Instruction.—Handwork : Classes in elementary handwork were conducted in all schools.