

Attendance.—The low percentages of attendance were due to epidemic sickness. For several years past school attendances have been similarly affected by sickness, and it has been thoroughly demonstrated how unreliable and unsatisfactory the average attendance is as a basis for the grading and staffing of schools. Under normal conditions the average attendance is about 91 to 91·5 per cent. of the roll for all schools in the district. In the larger schools it reaches 92 plus per cent. In no quarter in 1927 or 1928 did the percentage exceed 91. In the first quarter of 1927 it reached 90·3 per cent., but since then 90 per cent. has not been reached, the percentages being 88·4, 86·8, 87, 89·8, 89·1, 87·1, and 89·1. It is overwhelmingly obvious that the provisions of the regulations which are intended to enable adjustment of yearly average attendances by the elimination of two quarters in one year are totally inadequate to meet satisfactorily the conditions of sickness existing over an extended period. There have been no quarters' attendances on which to calculate a yearly average attendance which would approximate the normal figure under normal conditions. In 1928, for example, no percentage of attendance higher than 89·8 was reached, and as a corollary the yearly average attendances fixed for grading and staffing of the schools for 1929 are only on the average approximately 89·5 of the roll number, instead of the normal 91 to 91·5. A drop of 1 or 2 per cent. does not seem very much when expressed merely as a unit of percentage, but it makes all the difference to many schools—it adversely affects the grading and staffing, and in schools of Grades I to VI it reduces the salaries payable. The inherent defects of the present system are clearly and definitely discernible. These defects have been recognized for years, yet the efforts of Education Boards and others in pressing for the substitution of the average roll as the basis for staffing and grading of schools have so far failed. The Board trusts that in the overhaul of the regulations and the proposed consolidation of the Education Act this reform will be made during the current year.

Schools.—Five household schools were opened and seven closed. The school in the Board's building at Flemington was closed, and the school at Waitahora was temporarily closed at the end of the year.

Refresher Course.—A large number of teachers attended a course at Napier during the first term vacation, and, from the keenness displayed, there is every reason to think that considerable benefit will accrue to both teachers and scholars from the interest and instructive lectures given.

District High Schools.—At the end of the year there were six district high schools in operation. In addition, there was a Standard VII class, with a roll of nineteen, under a special assistant at Norsewood. 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 agriculture instructors. Further expansion was effected in the provision of much-needed accommodation for secondary departments by the erection of a separate building at Te Karaka District High School on a plan similar to that built at Wairoa in the previous year. This provision has been very keenly appreciated by parents, scholars, and teachers alike.

Manual and Technical Instruction.—Classes in elementary handwork were conducted in all schools. It is noted with pleasure that your Department proposes to increase the range of schools to which kindergarten material may be supplied. Modern methods of instruction have for a considerable period demanded this extension, and it is satisfactory to record that the limitation hitherto imposed on the scope of teachers' work in the smaller schools will to a great extent be removed by the enlargement of scale of supply.

Commercial Instruction.—The institution of instruction in commercial subjects to the secondary pupils of district high schools has unquestionably proved of very material benefit. Five schools have established classes in book-keeping, shorthand, and typewriting. In the case of the remaining school it was not found possible to procure the services of an instructor. Advantage has been freely taken of purchasing typewriters by means of subsidy on voluntary contributions, and it should not be long before every secondary department is adequately equipped.

Medical Inspection.—The reports of the School Medical Officers show that the general improvement noted in previous years in the standard of cleanliness amongst the children, and also in their dietary and general well-being, has been maintained. The teaching staffs co-operate heartily in this important branch of school activities. During the year the Health Department divided the district, and a second Second School Medical Officer has now taken charge of the work in the schools in the Poverty Bay and East Coast areas.

Special Classes.—Opportunity classes have been conducted in Napier and Hastings. The classes have proved of great benefit to the less fortunate children who are not capable of benefiting by instruction in the ordinary school classes. The number of children in these two classes at the end of the year was thirty-one. Applications for the institution of these classes in other centres are now under consideration. An experiment was conducted early in the year in the establishment of a health camp at Puketitiri for these children, under the ægis of the School Medical Officer, and although the weather was unpropitious for the greater part of the period it is felt that a good deal of benefit accrued to the children. The thanks of the Board are due to your Department, the Health Department, the Defence Department, and to citizens of Napier and Hastings for generous assistance in cash and in kind, which contributed greatly to the success of the camp.

Conveyance and Board of School-children.—At the end of the year the number of children in respect of whom allowance was paid (excluding those conveyed on the railways) was as follows:—

					1927.	1928.
Conveyance allowance	..	..	..	..	619	768
Horseback allowance	..	..	..	..	21	21
Board allowance	..	..	..	..	109	119
					749	908