

ATTENDANCES.—The table appended to this report exhibits full information as to the number of scholars in attendance during the year. The attendances for the December quarter of 1879, compared with those for the corresponding quarter of 1878, are as follows:—

	No. of Schools.	Numbers on Roll.			Average Attendance.		
		Male.	Female.	Total.	Male.	Female.	Total.
December quarter, 1879 ...	202	7,384	6,625	13,959	5,711	4,977	10,688
„ „ 1878 ...	193	6,424	5,504	11,928	5,020	4,075	9,095
Increase	9	910	1,121	2,031	691	902	1,593

The increase is mainly due to the increased accommodation which the Board has been enabled to provide in the schools in Auckland and at the Thames. The aggregate average attendances represent 76½ per cent. of the numbers on roll. In some country schools the average is less than 60 per cent; in some town schools it is as high as 90 per cent.

AGES.—The number of scholars above the statutory age of fifteen was 251 as compared with 385 for 1878. The Board adhered to its rule of not allowing teachers to include in their returns the attendance of children under five years of age.

STANDARDS.—The report of the Inspector of Schools contains the information required in regard to examinations for standards. The first examination was held in August. The Board desires to call special attention to the remarks of the Inspector as to the value of standards.

SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION.—The table attached shows the numbers receiving instruction in the different subjects specified in section 84 of the Act. During the past year the teachers of singing at Auckland and at the Thames have been continuously employed; and a third teacher has been appointed to visit the schools in the Waikato District. Singing is taught on the Tonic Sol Fa (Curwen's) method. Teachers of military drill and gymnastics have also been employed for the schools in and near Auckland and at the Thames; and gymnastic apparatus of a simple kind has been supplied to these schools. The Board hopes in time to supply the means of physical training to all the schools.

The Board has engaged the services of a drawing master for the Auckland schools and for the teachers' training class. Further information as to the degree in which the course of instruction prescribed in section 84 of the Act has been followed, is furnished in the Inspector's report.

EVENING SCHOOLS.—The following is a summary of a report already forwarded in answer to Circular No. 42:—Nineteen evening schools were in operation during the year, having an average attendance of pupils ranging from three (3) to twenty-six (26). The aggregate average attendance for the year was 171. The Board has no special information as to the manner in which these schools are conducted. The subjects taught are generally reading, writing, and arithmetic; but in some schools instruction is also given in the other subjects prescribed in section 84 of the Act. The classes are generally held on three evenings in the week, and are attended by male students only. The teacher generally charges a weekly fee of one shilling to each student, and the Board includes the average attendance in calculating the teacher's salary, but no capitation allowance is received from the Education Department in respect of it. All incidental expenses, lighting, &c., are defrayed by the teacher. It is believed that a grant in aid would encourage many teachers to open evening schools in country settlements where they are often much needed. In the City of Auckland the want has to some extent been supplied by the establishment of evening classes in special subjects, under the Board of Governors of the Auckland College and Grammar School.

FINANCE AND ACCOUNTS.—The statement of accounts and the statement of assets and liabilities at the 31st December, 1879, are appended. Details and explanations of various items are furnished in compliance with Circular No. 43. The accounts show that the Board has managed, by strict economy, to keep its ordinary expenditure within the limit of its income, and to apply a small balance towards buildings.* The increase in the expenditure under the head of "Departmental Expenses," is due to the large outlay incurred in alterations, fittings, and furniture for the Board's offices, which before were in a most dingy and unfurnished state. The items printing, advertising, and legal expenses, include all charges under these heads, both on ordinary account and in respect of buildings.

In the report for 1878, reference was made to the exceptional position in which the Board is placed in regard to the maintenance of small schools. It is evident that so long as payments to Boards are regulated uniformly according to average attendance, a district like that of Auckland, having a large proportion of small schools, is placed at a very serious disadvantage. The Board took occasion in July last to represent this matter to the Government. It was shown that the annual deficiency in the cost of salaries alone amounted to a large sum. It was also shown that the proportion of large or "paying" schools is not sufficient to meet the deficiency, and that to adopt the principle of aiding such small schools to the extent of the capitation allowance only, would be to inflict serious injustice on the residents in many of the country settlements of this district.

The Board suggested that the capitation allowance for such schools might be so increased as to provide funds for paying the teachers a minimum salary of (say) £120, and for defraying a share of the expenses of inspection and administration. At present the Board is unable to raise the scale of salaries to a standard corresponding with that existing in other districts of the colony; but a new scale has been adopted for the salaries of head teachers, to come into force from 1st January, 1880, which will to some extent reduce the present inequality of pay. The Board desires to urge this matter on the attention of Government, in the hope that action may be taken to provide more efficiently for the maintenance of small schools. The question is one of very great importance in its effect on the Board's finances.

A summary of the school fund accounts is forwarded herewith. The form of account differs slightly from that issued by the department, which did not exactly correspond with the instructions issued by the Board regarding the administration of this fund.

* The sum of £3,974 2s. 4d. is entered as a refund from Building Fund Account, in repayment of amounts advanced in previous years from the ordinary fund for school furniture, and chargeable against Building Fund. The net balance actually applied to buildings during the year 1879 was therefore (£4,500—£3,974 2s. 4d.)=£525 17s. 8d. For the sake of convenience separate accounts are kept of "Maintenance" and "Buildings."