

are paid almost wholly according to the average daily attendance in the several education districts, it is of the utmost consequence that the school-registers and the returns should be thoroughly trustworthy. In this respect the department is entirely dependent on the carefulness and good faith of the teachers, except in so far as the Boards direct the Inspectors to scrutinize the attendance-registers, and the Chairmen of School Committees follow the practice of comparing the returns with the registers before attaching their signatures.

The quarterly returns, besides enabling Boards to report to the department as to the numbers in attendance, should also prove of much value to them by affording periodical information respecting the state of the schools in such a shape as to enable them to form a tolerably correct opinion respecting the sufficiency or otherwise of the staff employed in each school.

The average daily attendance is ascertained by dividing the total number of morning and afternoon attendances taken together by the total number of times (morning and afternoon reckoned separately) that the school has been at work during the period for which the computation is made. In order, however, that the capitation allowance may not be unduly affected by bad weather, epidemics, or any unusual occurrence, a second computation is made, throwing out of account the mornings and afternoons on which the attendance has been less than one-half of the children then belonging to the school. The result of this second computation is named the "working average," and upon it the payments to Boards are based. Both the "strict average" and the "working average" must be shown in the quarterly returns to the Boards and to the department, and both are given in the foregoing summary (Table C) and in Table No. 10 of the Appendix, the difference between them being 1,609 for the entire year, and 1,461 for the last quarter. The differences in former years were as follows: In 1879, for the entire year 1,657, for the last quarter 1,437; in 1878, for the entire year 2,475, for the last quarter 1,204. The figures for the entire years show that the difference between the "strict average" and the "working average" is diminishing. The difference in 1880 was at the rate of 2.58 per cent. on the total strict average attendance for the colony, as compared with 3.13 per cent. in 1879, and 5.43 per cent. in 1878. It is the working average which is referred to in other parts of this report where the average daily attendance is mentioned.

The total number of different entries on the school rolls during the year 1880 was 117,418, as compared with 109,499 during the previous year. The number of scholars returned as belonging to the schools at the close of 1880 was 82,401. At the close of 1879 and 1878 the numbers were respectively 75,566 and 65,040. The returns for 1880 give 62,234 and 64,407 as the average attendances for the whole year and the last quarter respectively, as compared with 54,724 and 58,738 for the corresponding periods of the previous year, being an increase of 7,510 for the year, and of 5,669 for the fourth quarter. The average attendance for the past year was about 53 per cent. of the total number of enrolments; for the previous year it was about 50. But no reliance whatever can be placed on the number of recorded enrolments of scholars for an entire year as indicating the number of different children who were actually in attendance during the same period, for it is well known that many children change from school to school at short intervals, and their names may consequently be entered in two or more school-registers within the space of a year, and sometimes even of a single quarter.

There is reason to believe that the number on the roll at the end of the quarter fairly represents the actual number belonging to the school, but its accuracy depends very much upon the care with which useless names are removed as soon as possible from the roll. The form of quarterly attendance return requires the teacher to remove at the end of a quarter, if he has not done so before, the names of children who were on the roll at the end of the preceding quarter, but have not attended since. The number of cases of children whose names are on the roll at the end of one quarter and who do not attend during the next is very great, such breaks apparently occurring most frequently at the end of the year, as is natural. In the four quarters of 1880 the number of such cases was 20,372, distributed as follows: First quarter, 7,442 of the former scholars did not return; second quarter, 4,320; third quarter, 5,072; fourth quarter, 3,538.