

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Napier, 31st January, 1882.

As required by clause 102 of "The Education Act, 1877," the Board of the Education District of Hawke's Bay has the honor to forward its report upon the condition and progress of education for the year ended December 31st, 1881.

The constitution of the Board has undergone a slight alteration during the year. Of the three members who retired by rotation in March, the Rev. D. Sidey and Mr. R. Harding were again returned, the third seat being filled by Mr. R. Dobson, who has consequently been a member of the Board since that time. Twelve meetings have been held during the year, and the following were the attendances made by each member: J. D. Ormond, Esq. (Chairman), 6*; Captain Russell, 6*; Rev. D. Sidey, 10; Robert Dobson, Esq., 8†; Rechab Harding, Esq., 11; Samuel Locke, Esq., 3; George E. Lee, Esq., 2‡; Frederick Sutton, Esq., M.H.R., 6*; Thomas Tanner, Esq., 10; James Nelson Williams, Esq., 7‡: total attendance, 69. Average at each meeting, 5.8.

During the year two new districts were constituted, viz., Makotoku, in the Seventy-Mile Bush, and Waerengahika, in the Poverty Bay District. The boundaries of the Napier, Port Ahuriri, Tara-dale, Norsewood, and Ormondville School Districts have likewise been modified, in accordance with the recommendations of the several Committees. The Hawke's Bay Education District is now subdivided into 32 school districts, containing 38 separate schools, with a teaching staff of 50 head teachers and assistants, and 34 pupil-teachers.

BUILDING OPERATIONS.—The building operations of the Board have not been extensive during the year. Several schoolhouses, as Porangahau, Napier Infants', Ormondville, and the teacher's residence at Makaretu have been erected or enlarged; the schoolhouse at Kaikora, which was burnt down in the early part of the year, has been rebuilt; and tenders have been accepted for schoolhouses at Heretaunga, in the Seventy-Mile Bush, and Wainui, at the extreme south of the district. A schoolhouse has also been erected at Patutahi, in the Poverty Bay District, but the funds were provided solely by the residents, who, finding that the Board was unable to assist them, determined to provide for themselves. The sum of £1,000, which was last year placed by the Government at the disposal of the Board, was totally inadequate to meet the pressing and necessitous applications of School Committees and residents in outlying districts asking for school accommodation, school improvements, and teachers' residences, and to the £1,000 the Board was compelled to add its own savings of £2,000 from the School Fund to meet cases of urgency which could not possibly be postponed. The sum which the Board is compelled to pay annually as rent for school-buildings, and to teachers in lieu of house accommodation, amounted last year to 34 per cent. of the full grant paid by the Government, and the sum left was not sufficient to pay for the painting of the schoolhouses in the district which the architect recommended should be undertaken. The Board would point out that its own usefulness as an educational body is thwarted by the present unsatisfactory system of apportioning grants for building purposes. This district at the coming into operation of the Education Act was very far behind most of the other districts in its educational requirements, and it is evidently impossible to carry out the erection of school-buildings and place this district on a competitive footing with other and more favourably situated districts so long as payments are made *pro rata* of the population. Besides, the Education Act implies that provision will be made by the Government for the erection of school-buildings so long as it can be shown that cases of urgency exist. That cases of urgency do exist in this district must be clear when it is stated that seven buildings now used for school purposes do not belong to the Board, and fifteen of the thirty-eight head teachers have no residences provided for them. The architect estimates that the sum of £10,993 will be required to complete all the necessary works in districts already in existence.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—The attendance at the schools does not show such appreciable increase as was shown in previous years. The average attendance at the Napier and Gisborne schools has greatly fallen off during the second half of the school year, arising from the prevalence of scarlatina and measles; and, as will be seen, the total average attendance for the district during the latter part of 1881 is less than during the corresponding period of 1880. It is the opinion of the Board that some concession should be made by the Government in cases where epidemics prevail in a district, as it is clear that teachers ought not to be compelled to suffer pecuniary loss from circumstances over which they cannot possibly have the least control. Had the Napier and Gisborne Committees closed their schools during the continuance of the epidemics (which they were entitled to do) the grant would have been paid by the Government on the previous quarterly attendance return, but, as the Committees decided to keep open their schools for the benefit of those who chose to attend, the School Fund suffers to the extent of nearly £300. Thus this Board has lost under the present system a sum of £300 from causes which are beyond its control.

EXAMINATION RESULTS.—The following table gives a comparative statement of the average number on the roll and the average attendance in the schools in the district for the past four years. It will be seen that the average attendance for the year is 2,348, or 4.3 per cent. higher than in 1880:—

Year.	AVERAGE WEEKLY NUMBER ON ROLL.						AVERAGE ATTENDANCE.					
	March.	June.	Sept.	Dec.	Average for Four Quarters	Percentage Increase previous Year.	March.	June.	Sept.	Dec.	Average for Four Quarters.	Percentage Increase on previous Year.
1878	1,520	1,797	1,854	1,985	1,789	...	1,259	1,612	1,580	1,649	1,525	...
1879	2,019	2,082	2,510	2,676	2,322	29.9	1,686	1,650	1,871	2,020	1,807	18.4
1880	2,893	2,979	3,003	3,046	2,980	28.8	2,244	2,220	2,204	2,334	2,250.5	24.5
1881	3,224	3,172	3,092	3,170	3,164.5	6.1	2,481	2,386	2,326	2,199	2,348	4.3

The Inspector's report on the condition of education shows that a fair number of children have

* Leave of absence on parliamentary duties. † For nine months. ‡ For three months.