

George H. Swan. Dr. Spencer and Messrs. Carlile and Sutton were the three members who retired in March, as required by section 15 of the Education Act. Dr. Spencer did not seek re-election, and the following gentlemen were returned: Mr. Carlile, Mr. Sutton, and Mr. Douglas McLean.

The Board is represented on the Board of Governors of the Napier High Schools by Mr. Ormond and Mr. Carlile.

During the year twelve ordinary and one special meeting were held for the transaction of business. At the first meeting, in April, following the annual election of members, the present Chairman was re-elected.

No new districts have been formed since the date of the last report, and the number of schools—viz., forty-six—remains the same as last year. A new school known as Waerenga-o-kuri has been opened, but this was balanced by the closing of the small subsidised school at Rissington, which was mainly supported by Mr. Hutchinson, a settler in that district.

The forty-six schools under the Board are classed according to attendance as follows:—

10 schools	contain each an average of	less than 25 pupils.
13	"	between 25 and 50 pupils.
8	"	50 and 100 "
7	"	100 and 150 "
6	"	150 and 300 "
0	"	300 and 500 "
2 schools	"	contain an average of over 500 pupils.

The number of teachers employed in the Board schools at the close of the year was 148—viz., forty-six head or principal teachers, forty-one assistants, and sixty-one pupil-teachers and ex-pupil-teachers. Seventy-six of the principal and assistant teachers hold certificates of competency from the Education Department. The average salary paid to each principal teacher was £177 6s. 9d., and to each assistant teacher £124 12s. 9d., and for all teachers £102. Of those who are uncertificated the Board is pleased to state that a fair number presented themselves at the recent examination for certificates, and it is expected that in a short time few uncertificated teachers will be found in any of the district schools. In those cases where uncertificated teachers have been at work for a long time, and in a measure have grown old in the service, the Board is inclined to deal leniently with them; and it would be well if merit certificates for good and long services could be issued to this class of teachers. The number of pupil-teachers shows a slight increase for the year. Of those now employed ten are in the first year, fifteen in the second, thirteen in the third, and thirteen in the fourth year. According to the regulations, those pupil-teachers who complete their four years' course with credit may continue at the same school for another year as ex-pupil-teachers at an increase of salary amounting to ten pounds on that paid to fourth-year pupil-teachers. There are now ten ex-pupil-teachers engaged in this way. This arrangement, which has now been in existence for some years, has tended to improve the condition of the schools where pupil-teachers are employed, besides enabling young teachers to prepare themselves for the certificate examination on the completion of their five years' term of service under the Board. The annual examination of the pupil-teachers took place in December. The results will be found among the tables appended to this report.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—The number of children attending the schools, as shown by the latest returns, is 5,700. The average attendance for the December quarter was 4,627, or an average of 31.2 pupils to each teacher employed by the Board. For the year the average roll number was 5,827.5, and the average attendance 4,679.25. It thus appears that the December quarter shows a falling-off compared with the attendance results for the whole year. A similar remark applies also to the September quarter. In the first half of the school year the numbers who attended at the schools exceeded those who attended in the second half by more than two hundred names; but the average attendance compared with the roll number, by which means the regularity of children at school is tested, was much better in the second half of the school year than it has ever been before in the district. The actual school increase for the year compared with the year 1887 is 8.3 per cent. in the average attendance and 6.4 per cent. in the number of pupils returned as attending school. From these percentages it is seen that the average attendance shows a much larger increase for the year than the roll number. But this increase in the average attendance by no means represents the actual improvement shown to have taken place during the year in the more regular attendance of pupils at school. This is the first year the schools have been worked under what is known as the "strict average attendance regulation," which allows no kind of concession whatever to schools for poor attendance arising from bad weather, sickness, or similar non-preventible causes. The old regulation allowed for these under certain conditions, and capitation payment to Boards was estimated on what was known as "working average," which excluded the bad-attendance days. Under these circumstances it might fairly have been anticipated that the average attendance estimated on the "strict average" would not compare favourably with the old "working average," but the reverse is the case. As already pointed out, the strict average attendance shows a marked improvement over the working average for 1887, the latter being 78.4 per cent. of the roll number, whilst for the year under notice the average attendance was nearly 79.8 per cent. of the roll number.

It is somewhat curious that the abolition of the working average, in estimating the capitation payment, should have been the means of doing so much good in the way of improving the average attendance and the regularity of children at school. In fact, it would appear that the schools have been greatly benefited by the new regulations, and this without pecuniary loss to the teachers.

The following table gives the average weekly roll number, and the working average attendance in the Board schools for each quarter since March, 1878, to December, 1887. For the year 1888 the strict average instead of the working average is shown:—