

son, 22; Mr. McLeod, 18; Mr. Morison, 10; Mr. Turnbull, 0. In addition to the foregoing there have been held several meetings of a special Finance Committee appointed by the Board early in the year to consider the question of retrenchment. At these the attendance was also satisfactory. The doings of this committee are more particularly referred to under the heading "Retrenchment," in one of the closing paragraphs of this report.

SCHOOLS.—At the close of 1887 there were ninety-eight schools in operation. This number has been increased during the year (1888) by the opening of new schools in the following districts, viz.: Glenorchy, Longridge Village, Springhills, Waikawa, Waimumu, and North Wairio, so that there are now 103 schools established in this district, six of which are worked as half-time schools. One school (Redan, half-time) was closed, the attendance having fallen so low as not to warrant the Board in keeping it open. In establishing new schools the Board exercises extreme caution. In each case a visit of one of its officers is made to the district whence the application is received, and only after careful consideration of his unbiassed report on the merits of the case is action taken. To avoid an undue multiplication of small non-paying schools, and at the same time provide for the educational necessities of groups of families (limited in number though they may be) in remote rural districts, is a problem the solution of which occupies much attention.

ATTENDANCE.—The following figures indicate comparatively the roll number and average attendance for the years 1888 and 1887:—

	Roll Number.	Average.
Quarter ended 31st March, 1888	7,979	6,147
" 30th June, 1888	7,855	6,016
" 30th September, 1888	7,861	6,093
" 31st December, 1888	7,959	6,076
Average of four quarters, 1888	7,913·5	6,083
Average of four quarters, 1887	7,671·5	5,696·7
Increase	242·0	386·3

The percentage of average attendance to roll number is thus 76·8, or an advance of 2·6 on that of last year, not by any means a phenomenal increase, as might have been expected by the abolition of the working average. The fact that the roll number has increased by 242, while at the same time the average attendance is higher by 386, is a very satisfactory circumstance, not, however, to be attributed solely to the cause before mentioned.

With regard to the wisdom of the Government's resolve to make the abolition of the working average a leading feature of its retrenchment scheme, as applied to the Education vote, this Board, after the experience of the past ten months, is not convinced that the change is a desirable one, and would again direct attention to the peculiar hardship and injustice inflicted by making the salary of a teacher—partly, at least—dependent on the state of the barometer or other cause beyond his or her control. In towns or thickly-peopled country districts the hardship is not so severely felt, as the roads are generally good, and the pupils able to make a more regular attendance in consequence.

STAFF.—The number of teachers—male and female—in the service of the Board at the close of the year was 175, in addition to which six females were employed for several hours each week in teaching sewing only. This total of 181 shows an increase of nine over last year's numbers. The proportion of certificated to uncertificated teachers is slowly increasing, but, while the existence of so many small schools is a necessity, as it must unavoidably be in this district for perhaps a generation to come, the employment of certificated teachers and certificated teachers only, however much to be desired, must remain difficult of attainment. It cannot be expected that young men and women of natural aptitude, and who have qualified themselves by examination and experience, as is required in the department's regulations for those who would possess a full certificate, will be satisfied with the unremunerative salaries which this and other Boards similarly circumstanced are, in many instances, able to offer. It must not be thought, however, that this Board undervalues the supreme importance of possessing a highly-qualified staff of teachers, and it notes with pleasure the efforts being made by many of its teachers, especially by those who have recently entered the service, to secure classification. In several instances, however, teachers in schools yielding fairly good salaries are still uncertificated, and show no visible desire to improve their official status. In these cases, unless an attempt is made to pass the prescribed examination, the Board will probably at an early date consider the desirableness of removing such to schools of a lower grade, with the more radical alternative of dispensing with their services altogether. The difficulty of making appointments of certificated teachers to any but the smallest schools, before alluded to, does not now exist to the same degree as in past years.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Under regulations adopted by the Board in 1886, and which have been found to work very satisfactorily, the usual examination was held in June last. Twenty-seven candidates presented themselves, to the most successful of whom scholarships were awarded.

The scholarships of greatest value are awarded to successful candidates who during the currency thereof are compelled to absent themselves from their parents' homes; those of less value to the candidates resident in or near Invercargill. On the books of the Board there are now the names of fifteen scholarship holders, receiving amongst them a sum equal to £427 15s. per annum. The administration of the scholarship scheme has, so far as this district is concerned, been attended with very happy results. Many of our more talented youth have thereby received the benefits of a more liberal education than would certainly have fallen to their lot had they been left to their own or their parents' unaided resources.

PUPIL-TEACHERS.—As in previous years, there has been no lack of candidates for admission to the ranks of pupil-teachers. The annual examination of pupil-teachers and candidates for employ-