NELSON.

SIR,— Education Office, Nelson, 16th March, 1899.

I have the honour to lay before you a report of the proceedings of the Education Board of the District of Nelson for the year 1898.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD.—At the annual election of three members of the Board in March the retiring members were Messrs. Talbot, Beuke, and Colvin. The last-named gentleman, who, being a resident of Westport, especially represented the West Coast portion of the education district, did not offer himself for re-election, and Messrs. Talbot, Beuke, and Thomas Bailie, of Westport, were elected unopposed. The following gentlemen now form the Board, viz.: Messrs. George Talbot (Chairman), William Henry Phillips, jun., William Norris Franklyn, William Lock, Philip Best, Andrew Thomas Maginnity, John Deidrich Beuke, Thomas John Baigent, and Thomas Bailie.

MEETINGS OF BOARD. — During the year the Board has held twelve monthly and thirteen adjourned meetings, the average attendance at each meeting being eight.

SCHOOLS.—At the end of the past year 120 schools were at work, inclusive of thirty-six aided and household schools. Four new schools were opened, one was closed, and the boys' and girls' schools at Lower Wakefield were amalgamated, making a net increase of two in the number of schools at work at the end of the year as compared with those open at the end of the previous year.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS.—New school districts have been constituted at Bainham, Burnett's Face, Inangahua Junction, Motueka Valley, and Summerlea. There are now sixty-five school districts within the Education District of Nelson.

ATTENDANCE OF SCHOLARS.—The average weekly number on the roll during the past year was 6,016·5, while during the year 1897 it was 6,082, showing a decrease of 65·5 for the year. The strict average attendance during the past year was 4,825·5, the working average being 4,926·75. The corresponding figures for the previous year were: Strict average, 4,895·25; working average, 4,999, a decrease of 69·75 and 72·75 respectively, and this notwithstanding the opening of the new schools referred to above.

WESTPORT DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL.—The establishment of a district high school for Westport having been approved by the department, subject to certain conditions which were accepted by the Board, a new building has been erected, in which the work of secondary education is to be carried on, and arrangements were made for the opening of the school on the 1st February, 1899. The whole of the Westport Schools have been amalgamated and placed under the charge of Mr. Frederick Neve, M.A., with an efficient staff, Mr. D. A. Strachan, M.A., being appointed first assistant master in charge of the classes on secondary subjects. It is hoped that the success of the school in the future will justify the radical change effected and the large expenditure involved.

NEW BUILDINGS.—New schools have been erected at Millerton and Motueka Valley, and a teacher's house has been built at Central Takaka. A new school has also been erected at Pokororo in place of the one destroyed by fire, and such portions of the Reefton School as were destroyed by the fire there have been rebuilt. The upkeep of the numerous wooden buildings is a great charge on the Board's funds, no less a sum than £549 9s. having been expended under this head during the past year.

BOARD'S FUNDS.—The Board began the year with a credit balance on General Account of £965 3s. 7d., with liabilities £128 8s. 3d., while at the end of the year the balance to credit of that account was but £702 5s. 11d., and the liabilities were £165 14s. On Building Account the credit balance at the beginning of the year was £831 8s. 2d., the liabilities being £1,060 10s. At the close of the year the balance to credit of Building Account was £1,497 11s. 3d., the liabilities being £1,594 18s. 5d.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Education. GEORGE TALBOT, Chairman.

GENERAL STATEMENT of RECEIPTS and EXPENDITURE for the Year ending 31st December, 1898.

Receipts.	£	s.	d.
To Balance—			
On Building Account	831	8	2
On General Account	1,136	15	7
Government grant for buildings ..	2,958	0	0
Subscriptions and donations for buildings	20	0	0
Other receipts for buildings—			
Bank interest	15	0	0
Contractors' deposits	24	19	0
Government statutory capitation ..	17,730	7	6
Scholarship grant	370	7	2
Inspection subsidy	300	0	0
Payments by School Commissioners ..	856	10	0
Sale of school-books	565	2	6
Refund	1	0	0
Bank interest	12	0	0
Rents	5	0	0
Payment to Board in error	1	1	0
	£24,827	10	11

Expenditure.	£	s.	d.
By Office staff—salaries	300	0	0
Clerical assistance to Treasurer ..	5	5	0
Departmental contingencies ..	464	9	10
Inspectors' salaries and travelling-expenses	810	0	0
Teachers' salaries and allowances (including, rent, bonus, &c.)	15,627	13	9
Incidental expenses of schools ..	2,006	5	0
Training of teachers	171	9	10
Scholarships—			
Paid to scholars	350	12	0
Examination expenses	17	8	10
School buildings—			
New buildings	1,688	9	5
Improvements of buildings ..	549	9	9
Furniture and appliances	98	10	3
Bank interest on overdraft ..	0	6	6
Deposits returned	15	0	0
Purchase of school-books	521	8	9
Bank interest on overdraft, General Account	0	3	10
Refund, payment in error	1	1	0
Balance—			
On Building Account	1,497	11	3
On General Account	702	5	11
	£24,827	10	11

GEORGE TALBOT, Chairman.
STEAD ELLIS, Secretary.

Examined and found correct—J. K. WARBURTON, Controller and Auditor-General.