

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st March, 1903.

I have the honour to submit the following report of the proceedings of the Education Board of Wellington for the year ended the 31st December, 1902.

BOARD.—At the beginning of the year the Board was composed of Messrs. J. R. Blair (Chairman), F. Bradey, A. W. Hogg, J. Kebbell, J. Robertson, W. C. Buchanan, W. W. McCardle, E. Feist, J. Young. Mr. McCardle tendered his resignation, necessitating a special election. Five candidates were nominated for the vacancy, and Mr. Lee was elected. The three members who retired at the end of March were Messrs. W. C. Buchanan, R. Lee, and James Robertson, who were re-elected. During the year twelve meetings were held. Mr. Blair was re-elected Chairman and appointed Treasurer. In July Mr. Blair, having arranged to leave the colony for six months, was granted leave of absence, and Mr. Bradey was appointed Acting-Chairman and Treasurer.

SCHOOLS.—At the end of the year there were 151 schools under the control of the Board.

ATTENDANCE.—The attendance at the end of the different quarters was—March—on roll, 15,365; average attendance, 13,134; June—on roll, 15,225; average attendance, 12,690; September—on roll, 15,155; average attendance, 12,514; December—on roll, 14,898; average attendance, 11,984. The falling-off in the average for the December quarter is accounted for by the prevalence of measles, whooping-cough, and scarlet fever.

TEACHERS.—In making the changes necessary to bring the teaching staff in line with the provisions of the Public-school Teachers' Salaries Act of 1901, the Board's Inspectors, Mr. Fleming and Mr. Bakewell, dealt most exhaustively with applicants for new positions; endeavouring, as far as practicable, to remedy inequalities by making equitable adjustments, and effecting as many promotions as the new appointments would admit of. Considerable difficulty was occasioned by the Board's regulations providing for a much larger proportion of pupil-teachers than the new scale would allow. No less than seventy pupil-teachers had to be provided with new positions as mistresses or assistants. After careful consideration, well-earned promotions were made and suitable positions found for the whole of the pupil-teachers and ex-pupil-teachers who had obtained certificates; places were also found for all but thirteen of those who had not fully qualified. The consideration shown by the Government in allowing these pupil-teachers to be retained as excess teachers until they could be permanently appointed enabled the Board to gradually bring the whole of the teaching staff into strict compliance with the new order. But for this concession a number of experienced ex-pupil-teachers would have had to retire, at least temporarily. The attitude of School Committees in readily concurring in the selections rendered the Board's task a pleasant one, and tended to prove that their hearty co-operation can be relied upon when the interests of the service and the welfare of the children are involved.

BUILDINGS.—New schools have been completed at Mangatiti and Rongokokako. Considerable additions have been made to the schools at Kaituna, Kilbirnie, Karori, and Newtown. Considerable improvements have been made to the school buildings at Dreyerton, Khandallah, Scarborough, Taita, Eketahuna, and Rintoul Street. Sites have been purchased for a school at Muritai and a new school at Wadestown. The present school at Wadestown is inadequate, and the site does not admit of building-extension. The recent subdivision of a large area of land in the locality rendered it expedient to accede to the repeated solicitations of the School Committee, and secure a site which would admit of ample accommodation, and meet the needs of increased settlement. The new site is ample in area, and will eventually occupy a good central position.

At the beginning of the year the Building Account showed an overdraft of £2,191 9s. 2d. In addition to the Government grant of £5,225 to meet general expenditure, special payments amounting to £6,333 3s. 7d. were received on account of buildings destroyed by fire. £38 14s. 1d. was received for rents, &c. The expenditure on account of buildings amounted to £13,542 9s. 3d., made up as follows: New buildings, £329 7s.; additions and improvements, £5,742 17s. 5d.; furniture and appliances, £533 9s. 4d.; sites, £902 8s.; plans and supervision, £218 14s. 6d.; £4,924 10s. for rebuilding the Terrace School, which was destroyed by fire; and £891 3s. expended for rents of temporary schoolrooms.

The General Account, which at the beginning of the year showed an overdraft of £5,532 7s., now stands at £893 18s. 3d. according to the audited accounts; but these figures are affected to the extent of £1,752 11s. 8d. received in December from rents of education reserves, which will be deducted from the January capitation. The account was therefore practically overdrawn to the extent of £2,646 9s. 11d. at the close of the year.

The total expenditure for the year was £76,319 2s. 3d. Of this amount, £42,264 14s. 8d. represented teachers' salaries and allowances, and £2,757 6s. 5d. incidental expenses of schools.

Contracts have been let for additions and improvements to the Petone School—practically a reconstruction of the whole building; for an additional class-room at Worser Bay; and for three more rooms at Brooklyn. Also for new buildings at Levin and the Hutt.

To meet pressing demands the Board relies on the Government to provide special grants, leaving the ordinary building grant for expenditure on existing buildings. From the funds available the Board hopes to overtake the more pressing requirements of existing buildings and place them in creditable repair. So far the list of urgent works, submitted at the close of the year, amounting to £1,649 15s., could barely be touched. Painting was undertaken at Mount Cook Infants', Newtown Infants', Kaiwarra, Porirua, Rongomai, Mauriceville West, Kaitawa, Kaitoke, and Paikakariki. The principal works to be considered during 1903 are new schools at Muritai and Epuni (since contracted for), and at the special settlement of Korokoro-Maungaraki, Mangarama, and Heatherlea. In the two last cases sites will have to be taken under the Public Works Act. Other works are new buildings at Carterton, and extensions at Pongaroa, Kereru, Makuri, Coonoor, and Shannon.