

WESTLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Hokitika, 13th January, 1903.

I have the honour to present the report of the Westland Education Board for the year ending the 31st December, 1902.

THE BOARD.—In August Messrs Bruce, Baucke, and Michel retired, and Messrs H. L. Michel, T. W. Duff, and J. J. Clarke were elected by the School Committees. At the succeeding meeting Mr. Grimmond was re-elected as Chairman, and Mr. Michel was appointed treasurer to the Board and representative on the Hokitika High School Board of Governors. Mr Grimmond was re-appointed School Commissioner for the ensuing three years.

During the year one special and twelve ordinary meetings were held.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS.—At the beginning of the year thirty-five schools were in operation. Later, three household schools—Five-mile Beach, Taipo, and Waiho—were closed, while a new school was established at Kumara Junction, and the Bruce Bay school was reopened. There were, therefore thirty-four schools open at the end of the year.

ATTENDANCE.—The total roll-number for the district at the end of the year was 1,121, a decrease of sixty-three as compared with that of the previous year. The average attendance was 87.9 of the average roll-number.

TEACHERS.—The number of teachers in the employ of the Board at the end of the year was 52, including 8 head teachers, 25 sole teachers, 13 assistants, and 6 pupil-teachers. Of the adult teachers all, with one exception, in schools with an average attendance of twenty or more possess certificates, distributed as follows:—B1, one; B2, one; C1, one; C2, one; D1, seven; D2, three; D4, one; D5, one; E1, two; E2, one; E3, two; E4, three.

SECONDARY EDUCATION.—The secondary class connected with the Hokitika District High School has had an average roll-number of thirty-six, and thirty-four belonged to the class at the end of the year. Of this number seven were scholarship-holders, and since the 1st April the remainder attended without payment of fees under the regulations of the Education Department. A separate report is presented on the results of the examination at the end of the year.* The class receives instruction by the headmaster during about half of the ordinary school time, and an extra assistant master devotes the whole of his time to such instruction. Both masters are graduates.

The grant to certain students of free secondary education reported last year has been still further extended by the provision for the free attendance at the secondary class of pupils that have passed the Sixth Standard under suitable conditions as to attendance. This arrangement and the necessary strengthening of the staff have been rendered possible, partly by the receipt of the Government capitation and partly by a substantial increase in the grant made by the Hokitika High School Board.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—Seven scholarships were in force during the year, and all the holders attended the secondary class of the Hokitika District High School. At the examination at the end of the year there were seven candidates of whom five qualified by securing 60 per cent. of marks. The two heading the list have been awarded scholarships.

MANUAL INSTRUCTION.—Handwork consisting of modelling in plasticine and folding and cutting exercises in paper have been introduced in all the larger schools and a number of smaller ones. This instruction has been confined in nearly every case to the preparatory classes and Standards I. and II. The Board provided text-books for the teachers and the necessary material. To obtain a repayment of the cost, application is being made in accordance with the regulations of the Education Department.

The special class for instruction in woodwork connected with the Kumara School and under the direction of Mr. G. A. Bell has continued in operation during the year, the number of pupils being eighteen. At the close of the year the Hokitika Committee made application for the establishment of a similar class in connection with the Hokitika High School, and the Board has decided to assist the Committee to obtain recognition of the class by the Education Department and to complete the other preliminary arrangements.

PHYSICAL DRILL.—As required by section 4 of "The Physical Drill in Public and Native Schools Act, 1901," I have to submit the following statement relating to the manner in which the requirements of the Act have been carried out:—In all schools where the teacher is qualified to give such instruction it is required by the Board that the time-tables shall arrange for the devotion of a minimum of one hour per week to this branch of the course; and the necessary material in the form of wands, dumb-bells, clubs, &c., is provided free, so that the cost of such apparatus shall form no impediment to the introduction of physical drill into any school. In the two largest schools the boys of the upper standards are formed into cadet corps, and in addition to company drill the usual manual and extension exercises form part of the course. The girls of these classes receive regular instruction in physical exercises, and the lower classes are trained in free or other exercises. In all other schools with an average attendance exceeding twenty, also in a few of the smaller schools, physical drill with some form of apparatus forms part of the course of study. Two of these schools have also combined to form a cadet corps. In respect of household schools and certain other of the smallest schools, the teachers have not been trained in teaching or in the particular branch referred to, and it has in these cases not been found feasible to provide for physical drill. The number of schools giving such instruction, has, however, increased during the year.

FINANCE.—The requirements in connection with the Building Fund have been unusually great, and the receipt of an advance on the vote for 1903 was necessary to make provision for urgent works and services. The receipts during the year amounted to £1,367, including the ordinary grant of £750, an advance on the following year's vote of £300, and special grants for new buildings

* This will be found in a separate paper.