

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.—At the end of 1904 the number of pupils in attendance was 12,201, and at the end of last year 12,486, showing an increase of only 285, a much smaller increase than during the previous year. The average attendance showed an increase of 383 over the attendance for 1904. The average weekly roll number and the average attendance for the four quarters were: First quarter—Roll, 12,674, average attendance, 10,827; second quarter—Roll, 12,579, average attendance, 10,654; third quarter—Roll, 12,463, average attendance, 10,743; fourth quarter—Roll, 12,615, average attendance, 10,873. The average for the year was 10,774, and a percentage of 85·6 of the mean of the average weekly roll number for the four quarters—that is 1·2 higher than in 1904, and 0·1 in excess of the average of the colony for the same year. Owing to the large number of schools in the backblocks the administration of the school attendance clauses is a rather expensive item. Application was made to the Department for a railway pass for the Truant Inspector without success.

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—The attendance at these schools was much the same as during 1904, the numbers of pupils in the secondary departments being 137 boys, 107 girls. The amount paid during the year to head teachers and special assistants was £1,179 12s.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION.—Mr. Ritchings Grant gave instruction in woodwork to the pupils in the upper classes at the three schools in Palmerston North, the Wanganui and Hawera District High Schools, and, by arrangement with the Board of Governors, at the Palmerston North High School. Cookery classes were conducted at the same centres by Miss Mollison, the classes in Wanganui being held in a room at the Technical School, for the erection of which a grant was received from the Government. The classes at Hawera were carried on as during the previous year at considerable disadvantage in the science room.

Other classes were held during the year as follows: Kindergarten, &c., at 89 schools; elementary agriculture at 14, chemistry at 2, ambulance work at 1, chip carving at 1, perspective at 2, swimming and life-saving at 3, advanced plain needlework at 1, and dressmaking at 2. Instruction in needlework was given during the year at 38 schools in charge of male teachers, the average attendance at which did not exceed 40. Owing, doubtless, to the low rate of capitation difficulty was found in some cases in obtaining suitable teachers.

The Technical School at Wanganui was largely attended during the year owing to the provision in the regulations for free instruction to holders of Junior Technical Scholarships. So great was the attendance at the classes in some subjects that the Board was compelled to erect three class-rooms. Suitable provision was made for the plumbing classes by the erection of a workshop, for which a grant was received. Cookery classes were held in the room built for the school classes. As showing the benefit derived from the provision in the regulations for the technical scholarships, it may be stated that the additional capitation earned under these regulations by junior technical scholars exceeded £300. The classes at Palmerston North Technical School were fairly attended, the largest being the Saturday classes for teachers. These classes had a larger attendance at Hawera than the ordinary art classes, which were but poorly attended.

TRAINING OF TEACHERS.—The woodwork classes held in Wanganui were attended by very few teachers. From the beginning of July classes for the instruction of pupil-teachers in drawing, singing, mathematics, Latin, and science have been held on Saturdays at Palmerston North, Marton, Wanganui, and Hawera.

BUILDINGS.—The additions to Taihape, Kaitoke, and Lytton Street (Feilding) Schools, contracts for which were entered into in December, 1903, were completed during last year. The new schools at Makohau, near the site of the old Glen Nevis School, and Kaukatea were completed during the year, the latter being opened in April. A grant of £800 was made by the Government for the erection of a new school at Foxton, and the contract for this work was let in October. In February, 1905, two rooms of the Queen's Park School, Wanganui, were destroyed by fire, and in their place were erected three rooms fitted with up-to-date furniture. The cost of this work exceeded the amount granted for the reinstatement. The Pine Creek School, begun in 1904, was completed during the year. A contract was let for the rebuilding of two rooms of the Waverley School. The residence at Turakina was condemned, and a contract entered into for the erection of a new building. The Hurleyville residence was enlarged, and contracts entered into for the erection of residences at Utiku, Table Flat, Rata, and Mokoia, all of which, excepting Table Flat, were completed by the end of the year. Contracts were let or additions made to the residences at Bull's, Denlair, Mangatoki, and Hunterville, and minor additions to other residences. New schools were built at Wangachu, Mangaeturoa, and Rangiwaea, a contract let for a school at Waipuru, and considerable additions made to the schools at College Street, and Terrace End (Palmerston North), Westmere, and minor additions to other schools. Painting schools and residences and making repairs before painting necessitated an expenditure of more than £500.

INSPECTION.—Towards the end of the year Mr. W. Gray, M.A., B.Sc., Chief Inspector, resigned his position, having been selected for the Principalship of the Wellington Training College. The vacancy was filled by the appointment of Mr. G. D. Braik, M.A., who had for many years held a similar position under the Southland Board, and who is carrying on the duties of Chief Inspector with energy and ability.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURE STUDY.—Realising the necessity of placing the work in elementary agriculture and the instruction of teachers in this subject and nature study under an expert, the Board appointed Mr. James Grant, B.A., supervisor of the school classes in elementary agriculture and instructor of teachers' classes, and he has already made great progress in the work of organization and instruction. An experimental station is being established at the Halcombe School for the purpose of giving instruction in the propagation of seeds.

PHYSICAL DRILL.—Physical drill is taught in all schools, and instruction in many cases is given in deep-breathing exercises, which have proved very beneficial. A special report on these exercises has been forwarded to the Department.

FINANCE.—From the statement of receipts and expenditure it will be seen that the amount paid in teachers' salaries and allowances (including house allowance, £1,480 17s. 6d.) was £43,004 13s. This amount includes £252 12s. 10d. paid to relieving-teachers. The sum of £2,886 7s. 4d. was paid to School Committees. On small additions, repairs, and painting the sum of £2,743 19s. was expended, on rebuilding £373 19s. 5d., and from special grants £4,159 10s.