

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Education Office, Blenheim, 11th March, 1910.

In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1908, the Marlborough Education Board has the honour to present the following report of the proceedings for the year 1909 :—

BOARD.—The members in office at the beginning of the year were : Eastern Ward—Mr. John Conolly, Mr. W. H. Macey, and Mr. W. B. Parker ; Central Ward—Mr. R. McCallum, Mr. E. H. Penny, and Mr. J. J. White ; Western Ward—Mr. H. M. Reader, Mr. John S. Storey, and Mr. John Smith. The members who retired by effluxion of time were Messrs. Macey, White, and Reader. At the annual election to fill the vacancies Mr. D'Arcy Chaytor was returned for the Eastern Ward, and Mr. White and Mr. Reader were returned unopposed to represent the Central and Western Wards respectively. At the annual meeting Mr. McCallum was reappointed Chairman. Twelve meetings of the Board were held during the year, the attendance of members being : Mr. Conolly, 11 ; Mr. Macey, 5 ; Mr. Chaytor, 4 ; Mr. Parker, 11 ; Mr. McCallum, 12 ; Mr. Penny, 11 ; Mr. White, 11 ; Mr. Reader, 12 ; Mr. Storey, 12 ; Mr. Smith, 10.

SCHOOLS.—The number of schools in operation at the close of the year was seventy-nine, being an increase of ten over the figures reported for the previous year. Four private schools were visited by the Board's Inspector during the year.

ATTENDANCE.—The average attendance for the year was 1,964, the figures for the four quarters being : March, 1,886 ; June, 1,974 ; September, 1,988 ; December, 2,006. The number on the roll at the close of the year was 2,270, being an increase of 107 over the figures for 1908. The percentage of attendance for the year—88.62—is an improvement on all previous figures in this district, and, provided the district continues to remain free from serious epidemics, the Board hopes to be able, with the assistance of School Committees, teachers, and parents, to report an attendance for the current year of not less than 89 per cent. At two or three schools only was the attendance very poor, but special efforts are now being made to raise the attendance at these schools to the same level as the rest of the district. The Board looks with favour upon the proposal to raise the standard of exemption to the extent recommended by the recent educational conference—viz., to raise the age to fifteen years, and to insist on the passing of the Sixth Standard Proficiency Examination.

The Truant Officer's figures for the year are : Number of informations, 6 ; convictions recorded, 4 ; cases dismissed, 2. The amount of fines received during the year was £1 17s.

TEACHERS.—At the close of the year there were in the service of the Board twenty-four male teachers, seventy-five female teachers, one male pupil-teacher, five female pupil-teachers, one male probationer, and three female probationers, making a total of 109. Of the ninety-nine teachers, fifteen males and twenty-two females are certificated, and two others hold licenses to teach.

TRAINING OF TEACHERS.—Saturday classes for teachers were held throughout the year, the subjects being cookery, woodwork, and agriculture. Country teachers make good use of the free railway passes granted by the Department, and the Board is pleased to learn that the passes are again available. The attendance at the classes was very satisfactory in the first part of the year, but afterwards showed a considerable falling-off. Three of our teachers sat for the City and Guilds of London Institute Examination in Cookery, two obtaining first-class passes. This year the Board proposes to inaugurate two or three new classes, and trusts that its teachers will avail themselves of the opportunity to further improve their efficiency.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.—The Inspector of Schools reports as follows : In every school visited physical instruction formed a part of the course ; it takes various forms—free gymnastics, dumb-bells, wands, clubs, breathing exercises, and military drill.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—There were in force at the close of the year twelve Board Scholarships, four National Scholarships, and a one-year private scholarship of £25 given by Mr. John Duncan, M.P. On the results of the Junior National Scholarship Examination, held in December, nine Board Scholarships, one Junior National Scholarship, and one private (Duncan) scholarship were awarded.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL.—Handwork is a prominent part of the training of our pupils, and in practically every school in the district some branch of this subject is being taught. The attendance at the school classes in woodwork, cookery, and needlework conducted at the technical school was very satisfactory. The Board regrets that it has received no inducement, except in the case of wood-carving, to conduct evening classes in connection with the Blenheim Technical School.

BUILDINGS.—The Board's building programme for 1909 was fairly extensive, and the amount expended under this head was £2,079 6s. 4d. The more important works undertaken were the erection of new schools at Nydia Bay and Endeavour Inlet, additional class-room at Marlboroughtown, teachers' residences at Tua Marina and Omaka, and additions at Seddon. The buildings now in course of erection or contemplated are : Additional room at Carluke ; new schools at Riverlands, Tahuahua, Nopera Bay, and Onahuku ; and a teacher's residence at Grovetown. During the year several members of the Board paid special visits, at their own expense, to the schools in their respective wards, and consequently they were able to give valuable advice to the Board in the allocation of grants for the general maintenance of its school buildings.

FINANCE.—The credit balance on all accounts at the 31st December was £28 17s. 2d., the balances on the separate accounts being : Administration, Dr., £92 2s. 9d. ; teachers' salaries, Dr., £170 19s. 10d. ; manual and technical, Dr., £97 2s. 4d. ; buildings, Cr., £389 2s. 1d.

THANKS.—The Board again places on record its appreciation of the good work being done by the School Committees in this district, and of the Press for their very valuable assistance.

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The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

R. McCALLUM, Chairman.