

*School Buildings.*—New schools were erected at Buscot (a newly established district), and at Kaihiku, Ranfurly, and Caversham to take the place of worn-out buildings. The erection of the new high-school buildings at Balclutha and two temporary class-rooms at the Otago Boys' High School were also carried out by the Board. Schools added to and remodelled include Miller's Flat, Clinton, Oamaru North, and Oamaru South. Improvements in the direction of remodelling have been effected at St. Leonard's and Tapanui, while in several other cases the lighting and ventilation were improved. Extensive ground improvements have been a feature of the year's work, Pukeuri, Ardgowan, Palmerston, Hillend, Owaka and Maori Hill being cases in point; while more than the average number of schools have been provided with increased asphalted areas. This work has been made possible by the efforts of School Committees in raising money locally.

The interior renovation of residences has called for considerable outlay. There is an increasing tendency for teachers to move on immediately their grading can secure them a better position, and the incoming teacher invariably requires some renovations and improvements which his predecessor was content to do without. It is difficult to resist these demands, as many of the residences are ill-planned, judged by present-day standards, and lacking in those conveniences long since looked upon as necessities in a home.

The cost of upkeep is an ever increasing one, as a very large proportion of the buildings in this district were built upwards of fifty years ago. What with the ravages of time on the one hand and the demand for modern improvements on the other, to say nothing of the increased cost of labour and material, it is not a matter for surprise that the Maintenance Grant does not cover as much ground in the course of a year as it did a decade ago. The Board believes that its building-work is carried out economically. Administration charges are kept as low as is consistent with efficiency. Last year, building expenditure exceeded £48,000, while salaries in the Architect's department amounted to £1,644.

*Replacement of Long Desks.*—The sum of £2,000 (Department, £750; Board's Rebuilding Fund, £750; Maintenance Fund, £500) was expended in this direction during the year, and some thirty-seven schools were either wholly or partially equipped with dual desks. Approximately 6,100 children now occupy modern furniture, and it will cost about £14,500 to similarly accommodate the remainder. The Board submits that the Department should allocate a definite sum annually for this work, the Board to supplement this with a similar amount from its Maintenance Fund. A total of £1,000 a year from these two sources would complete the work in about fifteen years. If the Maintenance Fund is required to bear the whole cost it may take thirty years, as there is little left for this purpose after satisfying the urgent demands for repairs and renovations. In a large number of the schools still to be equipped the providing of the furniture is only part of the cost, as, to make room for it, galleries must be removed and floors lowered, this necessitating in many cases the lowering and remodelling of the windows also.

*Training College.*—In August the jubilee of the College was celebrated, and suitable functions were arranged by both present and past students.

*Conveyance and Board of Children.*—At the end of the year the number of children in receipt of allowances was as follows: Conveyance allowance, 665; horseback allowance, 9; boarding-allowance, 77; total, 751. The total cost of the above services was £5,197 19s. 3d. In most cases the amount of the Government grant is paid direct to the parents concerned, but in twenty-three instances it has been found necessary to let special contracts. In nineteen of these contracts, catering for 236 children, the cost last year exceeded the amount allowed by the Department by £644 8s. 11d. This represents an increase of £118 8s. 2d. on the amount which the Board's General Fund had to find last year. This heavy annual charge is gradually depleting the credit in the General Fund, and the Board, notwithstanding its sympathy with isolated backblock settlers, must aim at a gradual curtailment of expenditure in this direction.

*Truancy and Irregular Attendance.*—Sixty-eight notices were served on parents and guardians for the irregular attendance of their children. One hundred and eighty-four cases of irregular attendance were investigated. Ten penalty summonses were issued under section 62 of the Education Act, and convictions obtained in all cases. Of eighty-nine pupils in classes below Standard VI in the city and suburban schools who terminated their school course in December 1926, fifty-nine passed Standard V, twenty-eight passed Standard IV, and two passed Standard II.

*Instruction of Teachers.*—Probationers and probationary assistants attended special classes in drawing under Mr. R. Donn, in singing and speech-training under Mr. A. H. Robinson, and in elementary agriculture under Mr. E. S. Green and Mr. A. Lipscomb.

*Retardation of Pupils.*—The Inspectors report that the teachers' annual examination reports reveal a rather disquieting state of affairs with regard to retardation. Out of a roll of 21,284 pupils there are 6,105, or 28·7 per cent. retarded. The Inspectors propose to ask head teachers of schools where there is a large amount of retardation to formulate definite plans for the treatment of the retarded pupils.

*Balclutha High School.*—The control of this school has now been transferred from this Board to a local High School Board. The Board is glad to have been of use in the preliminary work associated with the purchase of the site, the erection of the buildings, the appointment of the staff, and the carrying-on of the school during the first year of its establishment. The roll number at the end of the year was 122.

*Special Schools.*—During the year the Sara Cohen Memorial School for physically retarded pupils was placed under the Board's control. The Moray Place special school for backward or retarded pupils continues to carry on successfully its useful work. The Board regrets that the special classes at Burns Hall for hard-of-hearing children and speech-defects have had to be discontinued for a time because there is no teacher with special training available. The teacher's report shows that there were twenty-eight day scholars in attendance, and in every case improvement has been affected.