

OTAGO BOYS' AND GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL.

Staff.

Boys' School.—Mr. A. Wilson, M.A.; Mr. J. S. S. Cooper, M.A.; Mr. M. Watson, M.A.; Mr. G. M. Thomson, F.L.S.; Mr. T. D. Pearce, M.A.; Mr. J. MacPherson, F.E.I.S.; Mr. F. H. Campbell, M.A.; Mr. J. Hanna; Mr. D. Sherriff; Mr. G. E. Butler.

Girls' School.—Miss M. E. A. Marchant, M.A.; Miss F. M. Allan, M.A.; Miss H. Alexander, B.A.; Miss E. E. Little; Miss M. W. Alves; Miss F. M. Wimperis; Miss F. Campbell, M.A.; Mr. G. M. Thomson, F.L.S. Mr. J. Hanna; Mr. W. E. Taylor, F.R.C.O.; Miss J. C. Longford.

1. REPORT OF THE GOVERNORS.

I have the honour to forward report of the Board of Governors for the year ended the 31st December, 1902.

I am pleased to state that the general work of the schools, and the various organizations connected therewith, have been carried on satisfactorily during the year, and that the results of the competitive examinations show that the usual standard of efficiency is being maintained.

During the year twenty-one boys and twenty girls received free education, owing to their having obtained the requisite number of marks in the Otago Education Board Senior and Junior Scholarships Examinations.

As you are aware, the Board in January last decided to accept your offer of £6 per capita for free places in the schools to all pupils under fourteen years of age who passed the Sixth Standard in the primary schools. During the first terms of the current year sixty-three boys and fifty-one girls have availed themselves of this offer, and, although the short time allowed prior to the commencement of the school year necessarily caused some dislocation of existing arrangements, the experiment promises to be successful as far as the pupils are concerned.

I desire to take this opportunity of referring to the following points in the regulations for free places which, in the opinion of the Board, require consideration, and also to express a hope that you will see your way to amend the regulations in the direction indicated. The Board desires to point out—That since the endowments of the various secondary schools vary in value relatively to the demands made upon them, and since the revenue from the endowments of the same school varies from time to time, any capitation grant which ignores this inequality and proceeds on the assumption that all secondary schools have endowments of equal value must be inequitable. That the Board, whilst willing to give the scheme proposed by the Government a fair trial, is convinced that the financial assistance offered is, owing to the restrictions imposed, totally inadequate to enable the Board to meet the cost of carrying on the Dunedin High School. That the conditions offered by the Department are materially different from those suggested in the first place to the Minister of Education by the Board in July last. The Dunedin High Schools are staffed only for present requirements. In order to receive its present revenue under the new conditions the schools will be required to educate 66 per cent. more pupils, besides some fifty free pupils stipulated by the Department under Regulation 2, (a)—viz., one free place for each £50 of net revenue derived from endowments. It is obvious that the added numbers will require an increased staff, and consequently lead to increase of expenditure. That by Regulation 4, which limits the age of pupils entitled to the £6 capitation, a much smaller influx of pupils must take place than was anticipated by the Board when it made its proposals to the Department, and that in consequence the anticipated income is still further reduced. That by the proposed regulations injustice is done to such pupils in the primary schools as obtain the certificate of proficiency at a more advanced age than fourteen. There seems no good reason for excluding such pupils from the benefits of secondary education, and such exclusion will necessitate an X standard for their benefit in the primary schools. This regulation (4) bears with special hardship on country pupils, the great majority of whom, whilst able to pass the education test, are excluded by the age test. That Regulation 11, which excludes from the privilege of free education all pupils on the books of a secondary school for any part of the year 1902, though such pupils may have obtained their certificate of proficiency within the prescribed limit of age, appears to this Board to be unreasonable and unjust. It is a further injustice to these pupils that by the terms of the regulation they would also be excluded from the second examination two years hence provided for the other pupils by Regulation 6. That four years is not a sufficiently long course to provide for pupils at secondary schools. Provided a pupil makes satisfactory progress, a superior limit of age should alone determine the time that a pupil may pass at a secondary school; and this superior limit should be the maximum age at which candidates may compete for a University junior scholarship—viz., nineteen. That the test proposed is not in itself sufficient to insure the highest work being done in secondary schools, fourteen being too advanced an age to begin secondary work with any hope of reaching the best results. To secure the best material for secondary schools it is necessary to maintain and even to extend the present system of scholarships, so that promising pupils who are able to pass the Sixth Standard at an earlier age than that prescribed by clause 4, or Fifth Standard pupils who are able to win such scholarships by public competition, may receive the full benefits of secondary education. That pupils of exceptional ability who pass the Fifth Standard at an early age—say twelve—and therefore give the best promise of profiting by secondary education, should be admitted on payment by Government of the same capitation as Sixth Standard pupils. That, to make the proposed scheme practicable, pupils should enter the secondary school at the beginning of the school year—in February. It is difficult to see how this can be arranged, except by holding the Inspectors' examinations in city schools towards the end of the school year. In the case of country pupils it might perhaps be arranged that they remain in the Sixth Standard of the primary school till the end of the year in which they pass the Sixth Standard. That Regulation 5, which provides that "payment on account of any pupil shall cease after two years from the 31st of December preceding the date of his admission," offers to pupils entering the secondary schools late in the year a period of free education considerably less than two years.