

FREE SECONDARY EDUCATION.

Under the free-place regulations free places are divided into two classes—junior and senior—both being tenable at secondary schools and district high schools.

Boys and girls who qualify for Junior Education Board Scholarships, whether they obtain scholarships or not, are entitled to Junior Free Places, and those who pass the special examinations for free places are also participants in the privilege. Junior Free Places may, again, be obtained by those who qualify for a certificate of proficiency—that is, essentially pupils who pass with credit the Sixth Standard of the public-school syllabus; but on this qualification the age of the candidate must not exceed fifteen years. Generally speaking, Junior Free Places are tenable for two years, with a possible extension in certain cases to three years without examination. In the case of district high schools they are tenable to the age of seventeen.

A Senior Free Place is tenable by any pupil who has passed the Civil Service Junior Examination or the Intermediate Examination, the latter of which is regarded as the special examination for Senior Free Places. Both these examinations are held simultaneously, and differ mainly in the fact that in the Intermediate Examination different papers are set in certain subjects to meet the requirements of non-competitive candidates. The passing of the Matriculation Examination is also regarded as a qualification for a Senior Free Place. But in a largely increasing number of cases Senior Free Places may now be obtained without the necessity of having recourse to an external examination. By a recent amendment in the regulations the Minister has been empowered to award Senior Free Places to eligible scholars who have satisfactorily completed a two-years course in a secondary school or district high school in accordance with the specified conditions, and are recommended by the Principal of the secondary school attended, or, in the case of a district high school, by an Inspector of the district, such recommendation being subject to the concurrence of the Inspector-General of Schools. Senior Free Places are tenable up to the age of nineteen.

For free places granted in secondary schools in accordance with regulations grants are payable on a sliding scale, in which the capitation payments vary according to the income of the school from public endowments, and are calculated in such a way as to secure to the school for each free pupil under instruction an annual income from public sources and from endowments taken together of not less than £12 10s. per pupil, which is estimated to be sufficient to cover the necessary expenditure.

The following are some of the figures for 1911 in regard to free places in secondary schools:—

Number of secondary schools giving free tuition		29
Total roll number in these schools, excluding lower departments		4,608
Number of free-place holders, 1911		4,021
" " " " 1910		3,685
Free-place holders as a percentage of roll number, 1911		87 per cent.
" " " " 1910		75 "
Total annual payment by Treasury for free places		£43,630
Cost to Treasury per free pupil, 1911		£10 17 0
" " " " 1910		£11 0 11

It will thus be seen that there are now very few pupils—only 13 in every 100—who pay fees for admission into secondary schools. That the free-place system has undoubtedly been fully taken advantage of by the people of New Zealand is evidenced by the enormous increase in free places in the last few years. In 1903 there were 1,600 free pupils at secondary schools; now the number has increased by more than 150 per cent.

In order to arrive at the total number of pupils in New Zealand receiving free secondary instruction it will be necessary to include also 156 other holders of scholarships or exhibitions granted by these schools or by endowed secondary schools not coming under the conditions for free places, 1,777 pupils in attendance at district high schools, almost all of whom were free pupils, receiving free tuition at an average cost to the Government of £9 19s. 2d. per pupil, 128 Maori pupils receiving free education in Maori secondary schools, and 1,260 holders of free places in technical