

1905.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION : SECONDARY EDUCATION.

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE REGULATIONS REGARDING
FREE PLACES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS BY ABOLISHING THE AGE-LIMIT.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

No. 1.

CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION TO ALL ENDOWED SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN OPERATION.

SIR,—

Education Department, Wellington, 26th May, 1904.

I have the honour, by direction of the Minister of Education, to forward to you a copy of a letter he has received from the Board of Governors of the Otago High Schools, and to ask for an expression of your opinion as to the advisability of carrying out the proposal contained therein. There are, as you will doubtless see at once, many points to be taken into consideration before a decision can be arrived at; among others, the following points may be named:—

1. The average age of passing Standard VI. is 13 years 10 months: Would not a boy or girl with ability above the average—for it is for such that these free places are intended—pass Standard VI. before the age of fourteen, especially under the new syllabus, whereby the number of subjects in small schools is less than formerly?

2. Does not the fixing of the Junior Scholarship age by most of the Education Boards and by educational authorities in other parts of the Empire at fourteen, thirteen, or even twelve years point to a belief that a boy or a girl deserving of free secondary education would generally show merit before such an age was reached? Is this widespread implied belief founded upon error?

3. Is it desirable from the point of view of the pupils to postpone the commencement of secondary education until they are fourteen or fifteen?

4. How would the admission of a large number of pupils fourteen or fifteen years of age, who had only just passed Standard VI., affect the organization of the secondary schools?

5. If the age-limit were removed or raised, should the test for admission be made more strict for those of advanced years? If so, would the object asked for be gained?

6. If there are some who, from late mental development or inferior advantages, could not pass Standard VI. before fourteen, and yet give promise in other ways, would not their case be met by free places given under clause 3 (*d*), which, subject to the approval of the Minister, are more or less at the discretion of the governing bodies of the secondary schools? It might even be possible to extend the discretion given under this clause to a somewhat larger proportion of the free places.

7. Are there many cases of hardship—that is, of really deserving boys or girls who cannot fulfil the conditions laid down in the present regulations? No regulations, of course, can avoid hardship altogether.

8. There is at present no limit of age for those admitted to free places at district high schools, most of whom remain at the same school at which they gained their certificate of proficiency.

There are other points to be considered, especially that of finance, but the Minister will be glad to have the opinions of your Board of Governors on the matter.

I have, &c.,

G. HOGBEN,

Secretary for Education.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors.