

PALMERSTON NORTH HIGH SCHOOL.

SIR,—

High School Board, Palmerston North, 6th July, 1904.

Your circular letter of the 26th May, with copy of letter from the Board of Otago High Schools, has been before us, and I was directed to reply to the different points whereon you solicit opinion:—

1. Yes; but there are many with more than average ability who are over fourteen years when they pass. Then, in this district they would have to pass Standard VI. under 13 years 7 months.
2. No; but hardships exist.
3. Not as a rule.
4. Our building is capable of holding more and our staff of teaching more.
5. No.
6. Certainly; clause 3 (*d*) will meet some cases—in our school two or three.
7. In this district, yes; about half of those gaining certificates of proficiency. This conclusion has been arrived at by taking last year's numbers.

With respect to age-limit: I am directed to write on this point that it will certainly be a hardship to some children, especially to country children who are often rather older than town children when they pass Standard VI. An age-limit will tend to make teachers push the children through the standards, and that is not desirable.

If the age-limit had been in force after last examination, as well as the addition to clause 12, only about one-half of those who were admitted free to the district high school would have received the privilege.

The age-limit would not act so harshly if Regulation 12 were amended as suggested in my letter of the 25th May.

If the Minister cannot see his way to amend (as suggested by us) to "the 1st of January *nearest* date of admission," there will at least be no objection to an amendment as follows: "The two years' tenure of a free place to count from the beginning of the term in which the pupil is admitted."

On the point of finance, a secondary pupil at a district high school costs the colony about £10 per year. The same boy if sent to a high school will cost the country at the very most 15s. more, but generally less.

The Secretary for Education, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

G. HIRSCH, Secretary.

WELLINGTON COLLEGE AND GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL.

SIR,—

Secretary's Office, Wellington, 26th August, 1904.

With reference to your letter of the 26th May on the matter of the representation made by the Otago High Schools Board, I am directed to enclose a copy of the letter received from the headmaster of Wellington College, to whom it was referred, giving his opinion upon the points raised. The Board in sending this expresses no opinion.

The Secretary for Education, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

CHAS. P. POWLES, Secretary.

[Enclosure.]

SIR,—

Wellington College, Wellington, 2nd August, 1904.

In answer to your request that I should give my opinion on the questions set forth in the enclosed circular from the Secretary for Education, I send you the following:—

1. I think the limit of fourteen years is too high. The boy who cannot pass Standard VI. before that age is to a large extent wasting his time by continuing work at a secondary school.
2. The scholarship limit of age should not be over fourteen years.
3. At the time of beginning secondary work a boy should be under fourteen.
4. Provided the school had room for them, I do not think the admission of a large number of dull boys would interfere with the organization of the work. They would form a separate class, and would make but little progress.
5. If the test for admission be made more strict for the higher age-limit, the object to be sought will, it seems to me, be defeated.
- 6 and 7. The cases in which really deserving boys are unable to pass the Sixth Standard before fourteen are so few—if there are any—that it is far better to deal with those cases in a special way.
8. The answer given by the Secretary for Education must meet most of the cases referred to by the Otago High Schools Board.

The Secretary to the Board of Governors, Wellington College.

Yours, &c.,

J. P. FIRTH.

THE NAPIER HIGH SCHOOLS.

SIR,—

Napier, 3rd June, 1904.

Your memorandum, regarding the letter from the Dunedin High Schools Board, asking for an extension of the age-limit at which children could be received into the high schools, was laid before the Governors of Napier High School on the 2nd instant. I have been instructed to reply as follows:—

1. As it is quite clear that free places are intended for those whose ability is above the average, and as the average age of passing Standard VI. (for the whole colony) is 13 years 10 months, all deserving and capable of acquiring secondary education should pass Standard VI. before fourteen.
2. The widespread belief indicated by the fixing of the Junior Scholarship age at fourteen, thirteen, or twelve is founded upon the fact, attested by experience, that a boy or a girl deserving of free education does show merit before such an age.