

and he adds, "How far can we safely postpone the beginning of science proper, laboratory work, &c.?" Probably the answer would now be to this effect: "That from fourteen to sixteen there should be an increased amount of rudimentary-science work, such as weighing and measuring, and of the all-important work of accurate description."

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FREE PLACES.—At the annual examinations held by the Department, 130 candidates qualified for junior free places, 104 of these obtaining more than half-marks on the papers set for the Junior National Scholarships. At the Civil Service Junior Examination thirty-seven candidates qualified for a senior free place.

PUPIL-TEACHERS AND PROBATIONERS.—The first appointments of probationers under the Act of 1908 were made this year. It is too soon yet to express an opinion on this method of recruiting the teaching profession, but it seems to us that if probationers are to be given the best opportunity, not only of learning their profession but also of continuing their studies, they ought to be placed in the district high schools. As most of our pupil-teachers had passed either the Civil Service Junior or Matriculation examinations, only a few were required to sit for the first examination, and of these one failed. During the year three probationers and one pupil-teacher whose reports were unsatisfactory were given notice of the termination of their engagement.

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—Our reports on the working of the district high schools vary little from those of previous years. There is an improvement in the teaching of English literature, and the value of more concrete work in mathematics is becoming more generally recognized. There is also an improvement in both the laboratory and practical work in science and agriculture, but more recognition is still required of the fact that care in setting out the work done is a most important part of scientific training. In the book-keeping classes also more attention should be paid to neatness in the written work. The results obtained in the Matriculation and Civil Service examinations show that the teachers in these classes have worked earnestly and faithfully and with a marked degree of success from the examination point of view. It is a matter for regret that the salaries are not adequate to the services rendered by our secondary teachers.

"With a view to bring about a more intimate relation than generally speaking at present obtains between the course of instruction in district high schools and rural pursuits," the Department has promised an additional grant where the programmes are based on approved rural and domestic schemes. We are pleased to note that these suggestions have been adopted by the Board for our country district high schools, and arrangements are now being made to establish the classes necessary for this purpose. There has been a gradual decrease in the number of scholars attending the district high schools in the country, but it is to be hoped that the adoption of a programme more in touch with the requirements of the district will make these classes more popular than they at present seem to be.

It has been stated that, judging from the finished product of our primary schools to-day, our results are not as good as they were some ten years ago. Now, ten years ago the finished product of our primary schools came from Standard VII, the programme for which, being merely advanced Standard VI work, contained no secondary subjects such as Latin, algebra, geometry, &c. The average age of the Standard VII pupil was fourteen years eleven months, and the age limit for scholarships being then fifteen years, this standard provided the majority of our scholarship candidates. But with the extension of the district high school system and the advent of free places, the old Standard VII has practically disappeared, the present Standard VII really consisting of children attending the secondary classes of our district high schools. The scholarship age limit, moreover, has been reduced from fifteen to fourteen years, and our scholarship candidates are now all drawn from Standard VI, in which the average age is thirteen years ten months. Now, it is manifestly unfair to institute a comparison between the present Standard VI pupil and the former Standard VII pupil, who was not only a year older, but had practically been twice over the same ground. That the average age of the highest class of the primary school is under fourteen years of age is a fact that appears to be lost sight of by many of those who are crying out for the introduction of special subjects into our primary course. Farmers' Unions, Chambers of Commerce, and similar associations all seem to look to the primary schools to prepare the boy for the special vocation with which each is connected. We are pleased to note the interest that many of these bodies are taking in our educational system, but it is to the technical school and the high school, certainly not to the primary school, that they should look for this special vocational training. As a matter of fact, many of the foremost educationists of the day deprecate any kind of specialization until the boy is at least sixteen years of age. In our primary schools there should be no attempt at specialization. Our aim should be to select studies with the idea that the boy "to be liberally educated should be learning how to learn."

We have, &c.,

T. R. FLEMING, }
F. H. BAKEWELL, } Inspectors.
J. S. TENNANT, }

The Chairman, Education Board, Wellington.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 3rd February, 1910.

We have the honour to report that all the Board schools were duly inspected and examined within the school year that ended on the 31st December last. Special reports on the schools were also submitted for the Board's information and consideration. The weather for the whole period was exceptionally favourable for visiting the remote parts of this extensive education district, and whenever possible household schools and private-adventure schools have been also inspected and examined. The list containing information with regard to each school which is appended to this report contains