

and 33 respectively for the previous year. Senior free places in secondary schools, district high schools, and technical high schools are tenable up to the age of nineteen. To technical schools other than technical high schools this age-limit does not apply.

The following are some of the figures for 1914 and 1915 in regard to free places in secondary schools :—

		1914.	1915.
Number of secondary schools giving free tuition	..	30	31
Roll number of these schools	5,604	6,033
Number of free-place holders at end of year	5,061	5,593
Average number of free-place holders during year	5,279	5,624
Free-place holders as a percentage of roll number	..	90 per cent.	93 per cent.
Total annual payment by Government for free places	..	£56,186	£71,075
Cost to Government per free pupil	£10 12s. 1d.	£12 12s. 5d.

While the roll number of secondary schools giving free tuition shows an increase of 429 in 1915, the number of free-place holders has increased by 532, the percentage of pupils receiving free education thus rising from 90 to 93 per cent. This increase is largely accounted for by the fact that the Wanganui Girls' College was open to free-place holders for the first time in 1915. The very small proportion of pupils paying fees at secondary schools is worthy of note.

In order to arrive at the total number of pupils in New Zealand receiving free secondary instruction it will be necessary, however, to include also 104 holders of scholarships or exhibitions carrying free instruction not otherwise enumerated, which are granted by the secondary schools included above or by endowed secondary schools not coming under the conditions for free places, 1,968 free-place holders at district high schools, 92 Maori pupils receiving free education in Maori secondary schools, and 1,769 holders of free places in technical high schools. Consequently, there were approximately 9,526 pupils receiving free secondary education in the Dominion, exclusive of those holders of free places in technical schools (mostly evening students) who, while not taking full-day courses, were nevertheless receiving free education of secondary grade.

With reference to the length of stay of junior-free-place holders at secondary schools, it appears that of 2,506 entering secondary schools in 1915, 586, or 23·3 per cent., left during or at the end of the first year. The question of making it compulsory for free pupils to remain at the secondary school for at least two years has often been advocated and has been seriously considered; but, in view of the many difficulties involved in enforcing such a stipulation, it has been decided, for the present at least, to take no steps in the direction indicated. There is good reason to believe, however, that a fair proportion of the free pupils entering secondary schools would be better provided for at continuation schools of a technical character. It is proposed to take steps accordingly to make the selective process more discriminating, if this can conveniently be done without hardship. The percentage of free-place holders remaining only one year at district high schools was considerably higher, but as pupils frequently remain for one year or less at these schools with little further object than that of finishing off their primary-school course, they may fairly be disregarded in this connection.

The following table gives a summary of the various secondary free places at the end of the year for which payment was made by Government :—

FREE PLACES IN DECEMBER, 1914 AND 1915.

	1914.			1915.		
	Boys.	Girls.	Total.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
(i.) Secondary schools—						
(a.) Junior free pupils	2,024	1,556	3,580	2,197	1,858	4,055
(b.) Senior free pupils	864	617	1,481	838	700	1,538
Totals	2,888	2,173	5,061	3,035	2,558	5,593
(ii.) District high schools	1,067	1,033	2,100*	956	1,012	1,968
(iii.) Maori secondary schools	48	59	107	40	52	92
(iv.) Technical high schools—						
(a.) Junior free pupils	703	792	1,495	768	771	1,539
(b.) Senior free pupils	71	108	179	76	154	230
Grand totals	4,777	4,165	8,942	4,875	4,547	9,422

* Total roll number of pupils at district high schools.