

test seems to set a premium on precocity which a purely merit test appears to obviate. We are also of opinion that the standard of the certificate of proficiency is too low, and the supply of free-place pupils might be more reasonably regulated by raising the standard.

2. The fixing of the age-limit for scholarships is largely a matter of expediency.

3. We are of opinion that the wish and the capability to take advantage of a high-school course is more important than any age question. The subordinate position now taken by Latin also obviates the necessity of getting the high-school pupil at the earliest possible age.

4. The number cannot be very large if the average of passing is 13 years 10 months, and it could, moreover, be regulated by a more searching educational test.

5. There seems to be no pressing necessity to regulate any admission test by age.

6. Question 4 rather presupposes a number which Boards could not deal with under the endowment scholarship regulation.

7. The number of cases of real hardship may be few, but that does not remove the responsibility of trying to relieve them.

8. The merit test might relieve the financial difficulty as efficiently as the present age test.

9. Although we have answered the questions seriatim, we think it sufficient to say that we are unanimously of opinion that the age test should not be the determining factor in the admission of a child to a secondary school.

JOHN DAVISON, Secretary.

#### TIMARU HIGH SCHOOL.

SIR,—

High School Board Office, 27th June, 1904.

The enclosed is a copy of the Board's reply to the various queries contained in the circular of the 26th May, 1904.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary for Education, Wellington.

J. H. BAMFIELD, Secretary.

[Enclosure.]

SIR,—

Timaru, 27th June, 1904.

In reply to the various queries contained in your circular of the 26th May, I am instructed to note as follows :—

1. The age-limit of fourteen years should undoubtedly be abolished, or, if not abolished, it should be raised at least to fourteen years and a half. This latter would serve two ends—leaving a larger margin for country children, and a larger interval to cover the delay between the date of examination and that of joining the school.

2. In the case of this Board the standard for the Junior Scholarships co-ordinates pretty well with the Fifth Standard; besides, the Junior Scholarship standard is not always a test of what resources and aptitudes a boy or girl may exhibit some time after.

3. It is not desirable to postpone it longer than can be helped, but by insisting on a low age-limit you may shut out pupils who, if they had the chance, might prove themselves well worthy of the advantage extended to them.

4. Not seriously in any case, but the Board would gladly take the risk.

5. If the scholastic conditions of entrance should be raised much higher—say, the Seventh Standard—the number of candidates, it is feared, would be considerably reduced; Seventh Standard qualifications are not to be attained in every school.

6. This, of course, in certain cases would be a considerate and generous way out of the difficulty, but we shrink from the round-about way of referring every such case to the Minister, involving both delay and uncertainty.

7. The possibility of hardship in not a few instances is obvious—at the present moment this Board can point to six or seven such instances.

8. This concession to district high schools we have reason to believe suits them admirably, and we would be pleased to have the same concession extended to us.

9. As to finance, taking into account all the possible contingencies open to us to imagine, any larger but still moderate expenditure would be more than counterbalanced by the advantages to be gained.

GEORGE BARCLAY,

Convener of Exhibition Committee Acting for Board.

The Secretary for Education.

#### WAITAKI HIGH SCHOOL.

SIR,—

Oamaru, 22nd June, 1904.

I am in receipt of your letter of the 26th May, in which you ask my opinion on several points raised by the Governors of the Otago Boys' and Girls' High Schools in a letter to the Hon. the Minister of Education dated the 5th February last, in which they ask the Minister to consider if he can see his way clear to remove the age-limit for pupils entering the high schools under fourteen years of age.

I shall endeavour to give you my opinion on the various points asked for in their order.

1. I have no belief in the argument often used, that a pupil may not show any ability till thirteen or fourteen years of age, but may afterwards become a brilliant scholar. My experience is entirely in the opposite direction; and I also find, on looking up the records of the Otago Education Board, that