

seventeen. A Senior Free Place is tenable by any pupil who has passed the Intermediate Examination, which in its non-competitive form is regarded as the special examination for Senior Free Places.

This examination is held in various centres at the same time and places as the Public Service Entrance Examination, and in its competitive form is used for scholarship candidates. For non-competitive candidates different papers are set in certain subjects to meet the somewhat less exacting requirements of a purely pass qualification. Senior Free Places may also, however, be obtained without external examination after a two years' course on the recommendations of the principals of schools subject to the concurrence of the Inspector-General, and this form of qualification is becoming increasingly applicable.

Senior Free Places in secondary schools, district high schools, and day technical schools are tenable up to the age of nineteen. To technical schools of a different character this age-limit does not apply.

The following are some of the figures for 1912 and 1913 in regard to free places in secondary schools :—

	1912.	1913.
Number of secondary schools giving free tuition ...	29	30
*Total roll number, excluding lower departments ...	5,542	5,803
Number of free-place holders ...	4,450	4,592
Free-place holders as a percentage of roll number ...	80 per cent.	79 per cent.
Total annual payment by Government for free places ...	£50,199	£51,917
Cost to Government per free pupil ...	£10 15s. 5d.	£10 15s. 11d.

\* The total roll of all secondary schools is taken, including Wanganui Girls' and Boys' Colleges and Christ's College, but these three schools are not included in the number of secondary schools giving free tuition.

It will thus be seen that there are now very few pupils—only 21 in every 100—who pay fees for admission into secondary schools. That the free-place system has undoubtedly been fully taken advantage of by the people of New Zealand is evidenced by the enormous increase in free places in the last few years. In 1903 there were 1,600 free pupils at secondary schools; now the number has increased by nearly 190 per cent.

In order to arrive at the total number of pupils in New Zealand receiving free secondary instruction it will be necessary to include also 155 other holders of scholarships or exhibitions granted by the secondary schools included above or by endowed secondary schools not coming under the conditions for free places, 1,837 pupils in attendance at district high schools, almost all of whom were free pupils, 108 Maori pupils receiving free education in Maori secondary schools, and 1,507 holders of free places in technical schools. Consequently, there are approximately 8,200 pupils receiving free secondary education in the Dominion, exclusive of those holders of free places in technical schools who were art students or evening students, or who were taking courses which may be more appropriately described as technical than as secondary.

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, 1912 AND 1913.

	1912.			1913.		
	Boys.	Girls.	Total.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
(i.) Secondary schools—						
(a.) Junior free pupils ...	1,770	1,440	3,210	1,815	1,466	3,281
(b.) Senior free pupils ...	664	576	1,240	759	552	1,311
Totals ...	2,434	2,016	4,450	2,574	2,018	4,592
(ii.) District high schools ...	863	952	1,815	900	937	1,837
(iii.) Maori secondary schools ..	50	53	103	53	55	108
(iv.) Technical day-schools ...	613	762	1,375	676	831	1,507
Grand totals ...	3,960	3,783	7,743	4,203	3,841	8,044

In the above table (in the case of the secondary schools and district high schools) the roll at the end of the year has been taken; a fairer estimate of the number of persons receiving free secondary education in public institutions would be obtained by taking the average roll throughout the year and including in the total the holders of foundation and private scholarships or exhibitions who received free tuition not paid for by Government. We obtain thus the following approximate figures :—