

FREE SECONDARY EDUCATION.

(Table K5.)

Free places are divided into two classes—junior and senior—both being tenable at secondary schools and district high schools, or, under somewhat different conditions, at technical schools.

Generally speaking, junior free places are tenable for two years, with a possible extension in certain cases to three years. In the case of their being held at district high schools they are tenable to the age of seventeen. The means of qualification are—

- (1.) For entrance to secondary schools and district high schools—
 - (a) Special examinations for Junior National Scholarships,
 - (b) the certificate of proficiency.
- (2.) For entrance to technical high schools the means of qualification named in (1), or the certificate of competency in S6, with a special endorsement of merit in handwork and elementary science, which for the purposes of technical schools is deemed to be equivalent to a certificate of proficiency.
- (3.) For entrance to technical classes other than technical high schools the means of qualification named in (1) or (2), or, under special conditions applicable to industrial courses only, a recommendation by the Inspector of Schools if a pupil is over fourteen years and has been in regular attendance at a public school up to a date not more than six months prior to the date of admission to the technical classes.

The special examination for junior free places hitherto serving as an additional means of qualification for junior free places is not longer to be held, the scholarship examination serving the purpose.

Senior free places are tenable at secondary schools, district high schools, and technical high schools up to the age of nineteen, and at technical classes other than technical high schools for three or in some cases four years. The means of qualification for senior free places are the Intermediate or other equivalent examinations, or the recommendation of the Principal or Director of the school or classes attended based on the school records and examination results, or the recommendation of an Inspector of Secondary Schools, or in the case of district high schools of the Senior Inspector of the district, or in part on such a recommendation and in part on the results of a special examination.

The conditions set out above are as prescribed in regulations recently gazetted. The provision for qualification for senior free places on the recommendation of the principal or director of secondary or technical schools has been in existence for the last three or four years, but in the case of secondary schools it was suspended in 1916 partly on account of insufficient inspectorial staff. Partial exemption was granted, however, to 543 candidates for the Intermediate Examination, who were either not required to take the examination in science subjects or received credit for individual practical work done during the year in subjects not included in the examination programme.

In accordance with the amended regulations referred to, it will be compulsory in future for every girl during the tenure of her junior free place to receive instruction in home science, and for every boy attending the secondary department of a district high school (of not more than seventy pupils) to receive instruction in agriculture and dairy science.

The following are some of the figures for 1915 and 1916 in regard to free places in secondary schools :—

	1915.	1916
Number of secondary schools giving free tuition ..	31	31
Roll number of these schools	6,033	6,585
Number of free-place holders at end of year ..	5,593	5,826
Average number of free-place holders during year ..	5,624	6,045
Free-place holders as a percentage of roll number ..	93 per cent.	92 per cent.
Total annual payment by Government for free places ..	£71,075	£74,380
Cost to Government per free pupil	£12 12s. 5d.	£12 6s. 10d