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NEW BASIS OF FREE PLACE AWARDS

In 1957, admission of pupils to all grant-aided secondary high schools was for the first time done through a Common Entrance Examination and all scholarship and free-place awards to these schools were based on a strict order of merit in the examination. Previous to this and beginning about 1948, a Scholarship Examination was set annually to award the small number of scholarships which were available and which included the Code Scholarship, scholarships to parishes unprovided with any grant-aided secondary schools and the Foundation Scholarships of some endowed schools.

All other pupils were admitted to these schools on subjective tests set by individual schools. The results of such tests were applied with great elasticity and by and large many pupils who could hardly profit from secondary education gained entry because their parents were able to pay the fees. Many pupils of high potential from among the masses just could not find the means of attending such schools and turned inevitably to the Jamaica Local examinations within and outside of the primary schools.

2. The introduction of the Common Entrance Examination in 1957 may have been intended to make sure that pupils entering high schools possessed the potential to benefit by such education. But the main objective of Government's policy enunciated in that year was that of all those pupils who achieved a minimum standard in the Common Entrance Examination and for whom places could be found in high schools, roughly 60% would be admitted on the free-place basis, irrespective of the means of their parents. *One of the main justifications of this policy would be that a large number of children of poor parents who, in the past, were unable to enter and pay fees should then be afforded the opportunity of a good grammar school education, the fees being paid by Government.* This would have been a laudable aim and would imply a more equitable dispensation of social justice.

3. The corollary to the award of free places was the payment of grant-in-aid by Government for nearly all the rest of the children who had achieved the minimum standard in the C.E.E. This grant-in-aid has been about £31 10/- per year constantly since the early 1950's. Such pupils are required to pay the tuition fees of the school they attend. Schools were also allowed to admit not more than 2% of their yearly intake who had failed the C.E.E. It should be pointed out that pupils who win free places are assigned to high schools which are nearest to their homes with the following provisos:

- (a) Each free place pupil names the schools of his first and second choice, and this is carefully studied by a Placement Committee who grants the request if it is practicable;
- (b) Pupils of certain religious persuasions are assigned to schools of that persuasion if there is room;
- (c) Pupils in social and psychological need of boarding accommodation are carefully considered for such placement;
- (d) If parent(s) attended a particular school and wish their children to attend the same school, this desire weighs in the assigning of a school.

4. Assistance to Scholarship Winners and Free Place Pupils

(i) Scholarship winners are usually assigned to the school of their choice and have all their expenses paid. They are the children adjudged to be of highest potential as demonstrated by their topping the list of those passing the C.E.E. In the view of the present Government the award of a scholarship is justifiable on the basis that every facility should be given the most promising scholars in the community to develop their potential to the fullest. A scholarship is awarded as a reward for high potential and also as an incentive to high academic achievement by all schools and all pupils.

(ii) Free Place

In the view of the present Government the free place award should not merely be a reward for brilliance; it is assistance to those who show good potential and could only develop such potential if given Government assistance. The tuition fee is paid by Government and an Assistance Committee works out, on the basis of detailed investigation of the means and circumstances of the parents, just how much additional assistance has to be given to the needy pupil in the way of maintenance, books, clothing, transportation, etc. The implication of this statement will be taken up further on in this Ministry Paper.

(iii) Grant-aided Pupils

Pupils eligible for grant-in-aid have reached a satisfactory standard in the C.E.E. and have to pay tuition and all other fees. For this reason, after the scholarships and free places have been awarded, the remaining existing places in high schools are filled by grant-aided pupils. Because it is doubtful as to which pupil will be able to take up such places on the payment of tuition fees, about twice as many pupils as places which exist are notified of eligibility for grant-in-aid. Such pupils may negotiate with any school they wish to enter and no restriction is laid on their choice of school. *The real crux of the matter is that if enough places existed in high schools and fees were forthcoming from whatever source, all such pupils notified as reaching the minimum standard for grant-in-aid could enter and profit by the type of education provided there.* The net result is that children unable to pay school fees do not apply at all while others interpret their eligibility as an award of a 'half-scholarship' and enter school for a few terms before discovering that they are not qualified for further Government aid beyond the grant-in-aid of £10 10/- per term, which has always been paid by Government long before the previous Government took office.

4. Schedule A sets out a distribution of the number of award of scholarships, free places, and grant-aided places that have gone to pupils entering secondary schools since 1958.

- (a) Primary Schools
- (b) Secondary Grant-aided Schools
- (c) Preparatory or Private Schools.

It also sets out the potential number of pupils in such schools from which the awards were made respectively in 1961:

Special attention is directed towards the results of the 1961 awards, although the trends inherent in the 1961 results are clearly established in previous results. Observe the implications of these results when the percentage of free places is based on the number of pupils entered from different types of schools; Primary Schools got 6%, Preparatory Schools got 32% and Grant-aided Schools got 33%. (See Table D). As disturbing as the small percentage secured by Primary Schools is in comparison with the other two types of schools, the situation is even worse when interpreted in the following way. For Preparatory Schools, investigation has proved that the number entered for the C.E.E. is at least 90% of enrolment of the age-group 10+–12+ at those schools. Investigation has also shown that the number entered from Secondary Schools is nearly 100% of those eligible for taking the examination a first, second or third time. Schedule B shows that the enrolment in Primary Schools during 1961 from the eligible age-group (10½–13) is approximately 84,000 of which 978 or 1.1% got free places against 32% from Preparatory Schools and 33% from Grant-aided Schools. Surely social justice requires a new basis of award of these free places.

5. It is therefore proposed that as from 1962–63, 70% of the available free places based on the C.E.E. will be awarded to pupils from Primary Schools and 30% to pupils from other schools. The total number of children in all types of schools in the age-group 10+ to 12+ in 1961 was 88,000. Of these approximately 84,000 were in Primary Schools and 4,000 in other schools. The 84,000 or 95½% were awarded 978 free places while the 4,000 or 4½% received 1,155. Since the applicants for the CEE held in 1962 for admission in 1963 were not aware of this new basis of award, a pupil will be deemed to be from a Primary School if he has been entered from such a school on his application form in 1960, 1961 or 1962, and from another type of school if he has otherwise entered it. Subsequent to 1962, however, a child will be deemed to have attended a Primary School if he had spent at least three years in a Primary School immediately preceding the Common Entrance Examination.

6. In order that everyone might be assured that there will be no lowering of standards of pupils admitted to High Schools on account of this new basis of award the following proviso will be strictly observed. **NO PUPIL WILL BE AWARDED A FREE PLACE WHO FALLS BELOW THE CUT-OFF POINT IN THE C.E.E. RESULTS REQUIRED FOR GRANT-IN-AID.** There need to be no fear, however, that enough pupils of the required standard will not be forthcoming from the Primary Schools via the C.E.E. Schedule C shows what the results on this basis of award would have been if applied to the results of the C.E.E. held in 1961. The 1,400 free place awards (70%) to Primary Schools would have come from pupils who had not dropped below 289 marks in the C.E.E. a point below which grant aid awards have generally been made to pupils in most High Schools prior to 1961. It may be observed also, that the cut-off point of 289 marks was for boys while that for girls was 303 which is above the mean. This follows the well-established trend in this examination that girls perform at least 10 points better on the whole than boys.

The essence of the new basis of award is that pupils attending Primary Schools will do the same objective tests and marked on the same standards as pupils from Secondary and Preparatory Schools. *In order to be awarded a free place on the new basis all pupils must have reached a standard guaranteed as sufficient for such pupils to cope with high school education.* But for the award of free places Primary School pupils will compete against pupils attending Primary Schools while those attending Secondary and Preparatory Schools will compete only against pupils attending Secondary and Preparatory Schools.

7. One of the general results of this new basis of awarding free places will be that approximately 500 more pupils from Primary Schools will enter Grant-aided Secondary Schools and these pupils would not have had this opportunity under the old basis. It should also be noted that this new basis will not necessarily prevent any child from any other schools from getting a secondary education.

8. It is realised that more places will have to be found in Secondary Schools because of the increased intake from the Primary Schools. The Ministry proposes to meet this difficulty by recommending, that, as a temporary measure, schools will be permitted to admit 35 pupils into a Form instead of 30 as in previous years.

9. Attention is called to the fact that in 1961, about 2,000 pupils reached a standard making them eligible for grant-in-aid only, whereas the available places in schools were 1,177. The distressing fact is that of the 823 who did not take up these grant-aided places, 520 had reached the age limit and will be too old to enter grant-aided schools after 1962.

10. Irrefutable arguments will now be adduced to show that the former basis of award of free places was neither ethical nor equitable, and that the new proposed basis of award will achieve a more equitable dispensation of social justice. It will be appropriate to bring into evidence the findings of P. E. Vernon, M.A., Ph.D., D.S.O. (Professor of Educational Psychology, University of London), from a recent piece of research which he carried out on the spot for the Government of Jamaica in 1960. Professor Vernon is world-renowned in the field of Educational Measurement. Paragraph 11 of this Paper gives the essence of Vernon's findings which are relevant to the subject of this Ministry Paper.

11. Professor Vernon stresses the fact that the early intellectual development of children is largely influenced by the environment in which they grow up, and though he goes on to show that the majority of children residing in rural areas of this country grow up in such unstimulating social environment that their mental development is retarded, he concedes the point that a considerable number of children of ability are produced in these environments, notwithstanding their handicaps. He supports this latter view through data obtained from investigations he made in a number of schools randomly selected; he shows that children from schools in rural areas were in no way doing less well than those from urban areas, in the same schools. *In fact, his survey shows that children with infant and primary backgrounds tend to get off to a much better start in high schools than those who have had only private schooling, and that these children continue to keep their place, even after as many as three years in high schools.*

There have been numerous complaints from the staff of high schools, complaints which, no doubt, are highly subjective and emotional, that pupils from primary schools, especially the rural areas, have not been fitting in very well into the community of high the school. *Professor Vernon, however, shows that his findings indicate that rural pupils who have passed the Common Entrance Examination are surmounting the handicaps of travel, boarding and unfavourable conditions.* Certainly, there are numbers of children, who, for one reason or the other, have failed to fit themselves into the new atmosphere of the high school, but this has largely been due to the lack of necessary guidance in the schools themselves rather than to any built-in inadequacy for the rural child to adjust to high school life.

Professor Vernon asks the question—"Is it just that children of well-off parents receive scholarships?" To this, he gives the answer—"No". He asserts that there must certainly exist a tendency for the wealthiest family to win the greatest proportion of free places because of the early educational opportunities afforded the children and on the other hand, the fee-paying places at the lower end of the scale tend to go to the children of less well-off parents who, in most instances, because of their own educational inadequacies are unable to provide their children with that stimulating environment which is so necessary for mental growth and development. Hence, those children do less well on the Common Entrance Examination. Professor Vernon suggests that some enquiry might be instituted as to how parental means might be assessed and this used as a basis for the award of free places. He shows also that the position of the grant-in-aid of fee paying pupil is thoroughly anomalous, since they do not—as they were presumably supposed to—provide a kind of safety valve for families with not so bright children which can afford to pay for secondary education. Instead, these grant-in-aid or fee-paying places go chiefly to the less well off. His investigation showed that these grant-in-aid places are relatively more numerous in the country schools than in the Kingston ones. He found the same tendency even in Kingston schools with a high reputation. From information received from a representative number of first year pupils on their previous education, he found that amongst the children whose schooling had been mainly primary, 44% were grant-in-aid, and 56% free places, whereas of those whose schooling had been mostly private and whose parents had paid most for their pre-high-school education, only 32% were grant-in-aid and 68% free places.

12. After all that has already been said there is no doubt whatever, that the former attempts to award free places as a reward for high potential have resulted in penalizing a large number of pupils with high latent potential which has not been sufficiently nurtured because of the unfavourable social environment in which the children of the masses are rooted. This method of award has unintentionally discriminated in favour of 5% of the children of the CEE age-group who can afford to attend Private Preparatory Schools, or to pay tuition fees or full fees in the lower forms of High Schools. Vernon has pointed out that those pupils from preparatory schools who win free places do not necessarily get off to a better start than grant-aided pupils of primary schools, nor do they necessarily make better progress.

The Ministry officials carried out a survey recently which laid bare certain clear trends which are in support of Vernon's views. 971 free place and scholarship pupils and 1,057 grant-aided pupils in the Third Form of 20 high schools in 1961, but admitted in January, 1959 on the results of the CEE, were assessed by their own schools on the results of their own internal examinations during the year 1961. The results of these assessments are as follows:

		Above Average	Average	Below Average
Free Place	971	28%	53%	19%
Grant-aided	1,057	12%	53%	35%

This analysis was based not on objective tests as in the awards via the CEE. Similarly, the pupil who might be regarded as above average in a poor school might be assessed in a school of a higher standard as just average or even below average. Bearing in mind the subjectivity of this survey and the lack of scientific assessments there is no claim of infallibility of the results presented. Nevertheless, it is an accepted principle that in samples of this size one error of over-estimation usually cancels out another of under-estimation. General trend is that the bulk of the children falling in the average of the free place group is the same as those in the grant-aided group. It is also significant that 12% of the grant-aided group as against 28% of the free place group are rated above average.

13. The principle of making arbitrary and almost mechanical adjustments for the purpose of securing a proper balance in the award of free places is nothing new. The previous Government were driven by sheer realisation of the inequality of the distribution to handicap girls to the extent of approximately 10 points and also to handicap candidates from the Corporate Area to the extent of up to 20 points. That meant that a girl had to earn 10 points more to get a free place than a boy from her own school, and a child from the Corporate Area had to earn, in some instances, up to 20 points more to get a free place than another child from the rural area. In spite of this, it has been found that the rural child from any type of home, but particularly the rural child from a poor home, is still under a severe handicap.

14. The use of objective tests in English, Intelligence, and Arithmetic for selection to different types of schools is almost universal in advanced English speaking countries, but everywhere they are used the educators and psychologists state clearly that while tests have a predictive value as to the potential of pupils, the subsequent performance of pupils show that many mistakes in one direction or another are always made. The experts also agree that where tests are mainly verbal, and presume a certain measure of literacy and also where the pupils have the benefit of a sophisticated environment such as that of townships and of better class homes, the rural child from an unsophisticated environment is at a disadvantage. His potential may be as high as any but to test him on material requiring verbalism and a sophisticated environment is putting him at a disadvantage at the age of 11+. Many attempts have been made to construct tests that will equalise the chances of both groups but little success has been achieved. Vernon's findings in Jamaica have made much of this situation. When it is remembered that the proposed new division of 70% to 30% rests on the proviso that no pupil will be awarded a free place if he has not achieved at least the minimum standard required for grant-in-aid there can be no talk of a lowering of standards or of discrimination against the 5% of the age group who have the good fortune to sit the CEE from the favourable and sophisticated environment of a secondary school or of a preparatory school which concentrates on the sole objective of scoring the highest marks in the three subjects of the CEE.

15. It is significant that although the largest number of free places ever awarded to Primary Schools was 978 in 1961, an average of 1.3 pupils per school in 1959 the total was 779 and the average was approximately 1 per school. As against this some Preparatory Schools were awarded as many as 69 in one year and this has represented as high as 42% of total entry.

16. It is also proposed that as from 1963, pupils will not only be required to apply to sit the CEE, but in addition, their parents will be asked to apply for scholarships and free places on the declaration that they are unable to pay the fees or could pay only under very severe financial strain. The result of this ought to be that a large number of parents who can afford to pay will not apply on their children's behalf, and this will create more opportunities for poorer children.

SCHEDULE A

ANALYSIS OF FREE PLACES AND GRANT-AIDED AWARDS TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS, GRANT-AIDED SCHOOLS AND PREPARATORY SCHOOLS ADMITTED 1958-1961

	1958		1959		1960		1961		Per-centage of awards
	Per-centage of awards		Per-centage of awards		Per-centage of awards		Per-centage of awards		
Primary	48	876	45	779	49	873	46	978	46
Secondary		530		459		1,472		1,036	
Preparatory	52	427	55	513		393	51	347	54
		957		972		469		432	
Total		1,833		1,751		1,802		Total	2,133

	Number entered 1961	Number eligible to sit Age-Group 10½-13. 1961
Primary Schools	14,230	84,000
Secondary Schools	1,262	1,262
Preparatory Schools	2,658	3,000

SCHEDULE B

ENROLMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF 10-12 YEAR OLDS 1961

Parish	10 Years	11 Years	12 Years
Kingston	2,803	2,306	3,150
St. Andrew	3,011	2,856	2,732
St. Thomas	1,860	1,296	1,876
Portland	1,645	1,256	1,909
St. Mary	2,247	1,804	2,157
St. Ann	2,972	2,252	3,370
Trelawny	1,346	1,165	1,640
St. James	1,733	1,208	2,312
Hanover	1,272	1,151	1,719
Westmoreland	2,749	2,124	3,149
St. Elizabeth	2,983	2,536	3,094
Manchester	2,708	2,170	2,799
Clarendon	4,179	3,317	3,789
St. Catherine	3,787	3,749	3,638
Total	34,295	29,190	37,334

SCHEDULE C

STATISTICS SHOWING CUT-OFF LEVELS FOR 1,400 PRIMARY SCHOOL CANDIDATES ON THE 1961 COMMON ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

Parish	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES				Total
	Boys	Marks	Girls	Marks	
Kingston	219	354—289	172	366—303	391
St. Andrew	106	366—289	89	405—303	195
St. Thomas	14	321—289	13	330—303	27
Portland	18	354—289	17	364—303	35
St. Mary	32	353—289	29	362—303	61
St. Ann	47	371—289	56	363—303	103
Trelawny	15	324—289	24	372—303	39
St. James	32	349—289	31	340—303	63
Hanover	17	319—289	17	367—303	34
Westmoreland	39	362—289	53	368—303	92
St. Elizabeth	29	367—289	39	373—303	68
Manchester	29	348—289	45	354—303	74
Clarendon	49	339—289	53	355—303	102
St. Catherine	63	387—289	58	370—303	121
Total	709		696		1,405

SCHEDULE D

COMMON ENTRANCE EXAMINATION, 1961

Free Places Analysed by Types of Schools

	No. of Candidates Entered	Free Place Gained	Percentage
All Primary Schools	14,230	978	6%
Primary Schools (Kingston, Urban and Suburban St. Andrew)	3,053	333	10%
Primary Schools (Rural)	11,177	645	6%
Private Prep. Schools in Kingston, Urban and Suburban St. Andrew	1,882	604	32%
Private Prep. Schools other than in Kingston and St. Andrew	776	129	16%
Grant-aided Schools	126	418	33%

SCHEDULE E

SCHOOLS OBTAINING HIGHEST NUMBER OF FREE PLACES—1961

Grant-aided Secondary G.A.	No.	Primary E	No.	Preparatory P	No.
G.A. 1	18/24	E. 1	14/143	P. 1	69/161
G.A. 2	18/44	E. 2	39/305	P. 2	24/68
G.A. 3	32/49	E. 3	25/94	P. 3	60/141
G.A. 4	51/77	E. 4	21/157	P. 4	27/57
G.A. 5	15/41	E. 5	18/115	P. 5	24/32
G.A. 6	15/42	E. 6	15/195	P. 6	28/45
G.A. 7	14/36	E. 7	15/134	P. 7	22/29
G.A. 8	14/20	E. 8	15/69	P. 8	20/47
G.A. 9	16/30	E. 9	15/105	P. 9	21/30
G.A. 10	21/68	E. 10	16/76	P. 10	22/44

BREAKDOWN OF FREE PLACE AWARDS

City Areas	1,166
Country Areas	968

SCHEDULE F

NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS WHICH RECEIVED NO FREE PLACE OR SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS

	1959	1960	1961
Kingston	7	6	8
St. Andrew	24	24	23
St. Thomas	30	32	26
Portland	26	30	27
St. Mary	38	40	39
St. Ann	37	36	25
Trelawny	19	10	14
St. James	11	13	12
Hanover	27	18	14
Westmoreland	31	31	28
St. Elizabeth	51	39	41
Manchester	37	28	26
Clarendon	36	34	36
St. Catherine	42	44	33
Total	416	385	352