COUNCIL OF BRITISH OPHTHALMOLOGISTS

Report on Standards of Vision for Candidates for Scholarships and Teacherships under Local Education Authorities

In the interests of the community and of the individual it is important that scholarships and teacherships should not be granted to candidates suffering from such ocular defects as may be aggravated by long-continued study and lead to inefficiency or incapacity later in life. It is, therefore, advisable to establish, if practicable, standards of vision which shall exclude unsuitable candidates. At the same time standards should not be fixed so high as to exclude any appreciable number who might in practice prove fit.

The average age of entry upon a junior county scholarship is 11 years; the holder is transferred to a secondary school for five years. Supplementary scholarships are awarded at about 13 years of age, and are held for three or four years at a secondary school. Intermediate scholarships are granted at about sixteen for two or three years. Senior county scholarships are granted at the age of 18 years, and are tenable at a university for three or four years. Prospective teachers undergo training at a college between the ages of 17 and 20 years.

The errors of refraction of most importance in reference to education are myopia and high degrees of astigmatism.

Myopia is found in about 10 per cent. of children at the leaving age in elementary schools, and in about 10 per cent. of these myopes it becomes a serious defect; in the remaining 90 per cent. of the myopes the defect causes little inconvenience apart from the necessity for wearing glasses. It is generally agreed that in many persons prolonged near work on fine objects under comparatively poor lighting is a cause of myopia, or aggravates existing myopia, especially when astigmatism is present. If preventive measures are to be initiated, and the selection of individuals likely to become unsuitable for such special duties as teaching is to be avoided, it is necessary to determine at as early an age as possible the unfavourable cases. In elementary schools cases of myopia of considerable degree are found in infants under seven years of age, but the first routine test of vision is not made until the children are about eight years old. Of the cases examined at this age, and sent to clinics, some with diminished visual acuity and considerable myopia are transferred to myope classes; others are ordered glasses and return to school, but usually no sufficient effort is made, either at the clinics or at the schools, to warn parents regarding the future of these children.
At the age of eleven the child either is left to continue his education in the elementary school until fourteen years of age, or goes, frequently by means of a scholarship, to a school giving higher education of a more intensive kind. Successful scholarship candidates are then medically examined, and the first administrative difficulty arises in the elimination of those to be deemed medically unfit.

A child of eleven with 4.5 dioptres of myopia would by most authorities be deemed unfit for a scholarship. He must continue at the ordinary school, or, exceptionally, go to a myope class. A child of this age with 1.5 dioptres of myopia would be deemed fit for a scholarship. Between these limits of 4.5 and 1.5 dioptres of myopia a decision has to be given on many difficult cases. Many young myopes have good visual acuity with correcting glasses, and apparently healthy fundi, yet their defect is often progressive. The determination in all young myopes of the rate of progression is most important. The previous history, however, is often defective. It may be known that the child has worn concave glasses for some time, or, at best, there may be a record that vision was tested at the age of eight and found normal. More accurate records would be of great value, and it is desirable that such should be kept.

Astigmatism of considerable amount may cause want of efficiency, especially in those engaged in an occupation such as teaching, which involves much close or fine work. With very high degrees of this defect, visual acuity, even with correcting glasses, is usually subnormal.

The recommendations of the Council are as follow:

**Visual acuity.** In all candidates for scholarships and teacher-ships visual acuity, with correcting glasses, should be not less than 6/9 in the better eye.

**Myopia.** A child of eleven with less than two dioptres of myopia should be passed.

A child of eleven with two to three dioptres of myopia in either eye should be passed on probation and re-examined every six months.

A child of eleven with three or more dioptres of myopia in the better eye should be rejected for scholarship training.

At the age of fifteen those with more than four dioptres of myopia in the better eye should be deemed unfit to train for the teaching profession.

Candidates for entry to training colleges, who are, as a rule, about eighteen years of age, if they have more than five dioptres of myopia in the better eye should be rejected.
Astigmatism. Simple myopic astigmatism exceeding three dioptres in the better eye should be a cause of rejection of candidates both for scholarships and for training as teachers. In cases of compound myopic astigmatism, unless the myopia is stationary, astigmatism of even two dioptres may be a cause of rejection.

Cases of hypermetropic astigmatism should be rejected only if visual acuity, with correcting glasses, in the better eye is less than 6/9.

Hypermetropia. This defect should not be a cause of rejection unless vision, with correcting glasses, in the better eye is less than 6/9.

Special cases. If there is only one eye, or if there is only one useful eye, the other being amblyopic from non-progressive disease, which in no way affects, nor is likely to affect the good eye, the case should be judged on the condition of the good eye.

In the case of candidates for university and technical senior scholarships, or those intending to specialise as teachers of certain technical subjects, greater latitude may be allowed after consideration of special circumstances as to nature of work, condition of the candidate’s eyes in other respects, etc.

ANNOTATIONS

National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness,
Incorporated, New York City

Through the courtesy of the secretary we have received a bundle of the publications of this society, which was founded in 1915, for the purpose of meeting a need felt by workers in the field of prevention of blindness for some central agency to furnish information and to assist in forwarding this most important work. Among its supporters are physicians and laymen, men and women, interested in public welfare. "Half of all blindness is preventable; hence there is a field of activity for this committee in helping to create by agitation and education a condition of watchfulness and care that this great calamity to individuals and to Society shall not fall upon them needlessly."

The objects of this committee are as follow:
1. To endeavour to ascertain, through study and investigation, any causes, whether direct or indirect, which may result in blindness or impaired vision.
2. To advocate measures which shall lead to the elimination of such causes.