

S6 Certificates.—The percentage of pupils who gained certificates of proficiency and competency respectively for the three years 1908–10 are as follows :—

	1908. Per Cent.	1909. Per Cent.	1910. Per Cent.
Gained certificates of proficiency ...	61·96	67·54	68·74
" competency ...	25·29	21·75	20·53
No certificate ...	12·75	10·71	10·73
	100·00	100·00	100·00

There has been a steady increase in the last four years in the number of certificates of proficiency issued, while the number of certificates of competency shows a corresponding, though by no means so marked, decline.

Average Age.—The average ages of the pupils in the several classes for the three years 1908–10 were as follows :—

	1908. Yrs. Mo.	1909. Yrs. Mo.	1910. Yrs. Mo.
Preparatory classes ...	7 2	6 11	7 0
Class S1 ...	9 3	9 2	9 2
" S2 ...	10 3	10 3	10 2
" S3 ...	11 3	11 4	11 3
" S4 ...	12 3	12 3	12 3
" S5 ...	13 1	13 0	13 1
" S6 ...	14 0	13 11	14 0
" S7 ...	14 9	15 0	15 0
Mean of average ages ...	11 6	11 5	11 6

Details for the several districts will be found in Table D3.

The Inspector-General in his report again calls attention to the high average age in Standard VI, and to the still increasing proportion of children in the preparatory classes. He points out that while the percentage of children on the school-roll between five and eight years of age has risen in the years 1905–10 from 29·8 to 31·1, the percentage of the roll in the preparatory classes has risen from 28·3 to 37·2. On the average, therefore, a longer period is being spent in the infant classes without, in his opinion, any corresponding advantage, but with this obvious disadvantage—that boys and girls begin their secondary education nearly a year too late.

Table D4 shows the number of pupils in each education district receiving instruction in the various subjects set forth in the syllabus. All scholars received instruction in English, and practically all in arithmetic, drawing, and physical instruction. It may be of interest to compare the numbers doing nature-study, handwork, and elementary agriculture during the past five years. The total number doing handwork in 1910 is not available, as the number has been split up under the headings of the various subjects included under the general title of handwork—viz., cookery, woodwork, needlework, elementary agriculture, and other branches of handwork.

	Number of Pupils.				
	1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.	1910.
Roll	139,302	141,071	147,428	152,416	156,324
Nature-study	120,833	122,660	128,716	134,651	136,341
Handwork	98,465	105,514	112,952	116,588	..
Elementary agriculture and dairy-work)	4,000	6,000	8,000	10,200	15,159
Cookery .. .. . )	..	..	..	..	5,155
Woodwork .. .. . )	..	..	..	..	5,532
Needlework)	53,901	53,789	55,065	55,911	54,606
Other branches of handwork .. )	..	..	..	..	100,772

It will be seen that, whereas the number taking handwork generally probably shows a very considerable increase, and the number receiving instruction in elementary agriculture and dairy work is half as much again as that for 1909, the number being instructed in needlework shows a decrease.

Conveyance of Children.

Conveyance by Rail.—Since the year 1895 children out of the reach of a primary school, but living near to a convenient line of railway, have been granted free passes to the nearest public school or private school; in 1902 this privilege was extended