

If the pupil begins his school life at the age of five years, and spends two years in the preparatory classes and one year in each succeeding standard, he should pass out of S6 at the age of thirteen years. It is found, however, that the average age for each class is about one year higher than would be the case if these conditions were universal. This is largely due, no doubt, to the entrance age being very often higher than five years. The figures in the heavy type in the table indicate children whose classification may be regarded as normal in comparison with the average ages prevailing. For example, nine years is the average age in S1 at the end of the year, therefore children between the ages of eight and ten years in that standard may be regarded as falling within the limits of a normal classification. The numbers above the heavy type figures in the table are above normal classification and represent the brighter children, and those below the heavy type figures are below normal classification, representing cases of retardation. It is not possible from the table to show cases above normal classification in the preparatory classes, or cases of retardation in S7.

An examination of the figures discloses the following results:—

Class.			Normal Classification.	Above Normal Classification.	Below Normal Classification.
			Per Cent.	Per Cent.	Per Cent.
Class P	..	..	..	..	7
.. S1	..	..	67	14	19
.. S2	..	..	66	14	20
.. S3	..	..	64	13	23
.. S4	..	..	64	14	22
.. S5	..	..	67	15	18
.. S6	..	..	71	17	12
.. S7	..	..	..	19	..
Classes S1–S6			66	15	19

The average percentage of cases of retardation in S1 to S6 inclusive is 19, and the highest rate—23 per cent.—obtains in S3. Investigation into this matter has been made in other countries, where somewhat similar conditions have been found to prevail. The Education Department of Victoria estimates the cases below normal classification in its schools at 22·2 per cent., the figures being based on the assumption that children commence school at the age of six years. Various causes are mentioned to account for the position, of which the most important are—(1) Lateness in beginning school life; (2) physical incapacity due to various causes; (3) mental dulness; (4) irregularity of attendance; (5) migration from school to school. The onus of some of these circumstances rests with the parents, while others are practically unavoidable. It is hoped that the medical inspection of school-children will do something towards removing the evils of (2), the necessity now being fully realized of giving special attention and care to physically weak children. The matter of providing special instruction for mentally backward children is also receiving attention, although in small schools it presents a somewhat difficult problem. In view of the fact that a very lenient view has been taken of what may be regarded as normal classification, the fact that 19 per cent. of the children fall below that standard can scarcely be regarded as satisfactory.

On an entirely different matter—namely, that of the comparison of the number of children in S1 with the number in S6, the classification table is also instructive. It immediately appears that there are only a little over half as many children in the higher standard as there are in the lower. To estimate more accurately, however, the number of S1 children that reach S6 it is necessary to take the number of pupils over a period of five years. The figures are found to be as follow:—

Year.	S1 Pupils.	Year.	S6 Pupils.	Percentage of S1 Pupils reaching S6.
1906	16,839	1911	10,032	60
1907	16,996	1912	9,920	59
1908	17,628	1913	10,373	59
1909	18,668	1914	10,803	58
1910	19,033	1915	11,339	60