

The table is useful in showing the retardation occurring in the school-life of the pupils. The average age of children in the Dominion in S1 at the end of the year is nine years, in S2 ten years, and so on. These ages are one year higher than would be the case if all children began school at the age of five and spent two years in the preparatory classes and one year in each of the following standards. It is therefore taking a very liberal view to regard children up to ten years of age at the end of a year in S1 as being of normal classification. This is done in the table, the numbers below the lower horizontal lines then representing cases of retardation, the numbers above the upper horizontal lines representing children brighter than the average. 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	..	..	..	..	..	6
„ S1	..	..	..	67	16	17
„ S2	..	..	..	66	14	20
„ S3	..	..	..	64	13	23
„ S4	..	..	..	63	15	22
„ S5	..	..	..	68	13	19
„ S6	..	..	..	72	15	13
Classes S1-S6				67	14	19

The average percentage of cases of retardation in S1 to S6 inclusive is 19, the highest rate 24 per cent.—obtaining in S3. This means that 24 out of every 100 children enrolled in S3 at the end of the year were over twelve years of age. Since, under normal conditions a child should pass out of S6 at the age of thirteen, it is very apparent that great numbers of our children are much too old for the standards they have reached. A similar calculation to the above has been made in respect of 450,000 children in England, in which two years less has been taken as the normal age, a child being regarded as backward if it was over ten years of age when ready to pass out of S3. From the statistics thus obtained 35 per cent. of the children were found to be backward, 45 per cent. normal, and 20 per cent. advanced. If a similar age were taken for the normal in New Zealand the percentage of backward children would be very much greater than in England. Many of the causes of retardation such as mental backwardness, physical incapacity, and migration from school to school are impossible or difficult to remove. On the other hand, delay in beginning school life is responsible for a great number of children being over the average age, although when measured by the length of time spent at school they cannot be regarded as cases of retardation. The establishment of special auxiliary classes for the care of backward children will have to be extended as opportunity permits.

The average ages of the pupils in the several classes for the two years 1917 and 1918 as at the end of the year's instruction were as follows :—

						1917.		1918.	
						Yrs. mos.		Yrs. mos.	
Preparatory classes	..	..	..	..	..	7	1	7	0
Class S1	..	..	..	..	..	9	1	8	11
„ S2	..	..	..	..	..	10	2	10	1
„ S3	..	..	..	..	..	11	3	11	1
„ S4	..	..	..	..	..	12	3	12	1
„ S5	..	..	..	..	..	13	1	13	1
„ S6	..	..	..	..	..	13	10	13	11
Mean of average age						9	9	9	10