

It must be explained that some Inspectors state the ages of the children presented for examination, while others state the ages of those that passed. The report of the North Canterbury Board gives the ages "at last birthday," and it was therefore necessary to add a half-year to each statement of age for that district before entering it in the table.

The standards were intended to represent six stages, with an interval of one year between each stage and the one next to it, so that there should be a difference of five years between the average age of passing the first and the average age of passing the sixth. In Wanganui the difference is exactly five years, and in Otago $5\frac{1}{5}$ years. In Southland it is less, but in this case the age for the Sixth Standard is anomalous, being slightly lower than the age for the Fifth. In all the other districts the difference is more than five years, and the mean difference for the eight districts from which returns have been received is five and a half years. On the whole, Marlborough is the district in which the ages are lowest. Wellington, Nelson, and Westland stand next, with equal ages, very slightly in excess of those in Marlborough. Next comes Wanganui. North Canterbury and Otago follow, with equal ages. Southland shows the highest average age, notwithstanding the anomaly already referred to.

The returns from some districts give the average age of the children of each class in every school. From these returns Table Q has been compiled, showing the lowest, and also the highest, average class-age for every standard. As before, the age is in some cases the average age of the whole class examined, and in other cases the average age of those that passed.

TABLE Q.—AVERAGE AGES OF CLASSES AT STANDARD EXAMINATIONS.

EDUCATION DISTRICTS.	Average Ages of Classes for Standards					
	I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.	VI.
New Plymouth (presented) ...	6 to 13	8 to 13	9 to 15	11 to 14	12 to 15	...
Wanganui " ...	6·9 " 12	7·4 " 14·3	9·8 " 14·5	10·4 " 15·2	12 " 14·6	12·7 to 14·8
Marlborough (passed) ...	7·4 " 14	8·1 " 11·9	9·4 " 12·7	11 " 13·7	11·5 " 13·3	12·3 " 14·1
Nelson " ...	6·3 " 10·9	8·1 " 13·3	8·5 " 14·3	11·3 " 14·1	11 " 14·8	12·7 " 16·3
North Canterbury — Mr. Restell's district (passed) ...	8 " 10·5	8·5 " 12	10·5 " 14·5	11·5 " 15·5	12 " 16·5	13 " 17·5
Otago (presented) ...	7·8 " 13	8·5 " 13·8	9·9 " 13·3	11·2 " 14·9	11·3 " 18·8	12·4 " 17·5
Lowest ages stated ...	6	7·4	8·5	10·4	11	12·3
Highest ages stated ...	14	14·3	14·5	15·5	18·8	17·5
Range (lowest to highest) ...	8	6·9	6	5·1	7·8	5·2
Means of 20 sets of figures (8 sets in Table P, and 12 sets in Table Q)	9·2	10·3	11·6	12·7	13·4	14·2

It is impossible to say to what extent such differences of age as are shown in these two tables depend on the relative intelligence and progress of the children in different districts, and how far they depend on different interpretations of the standards and different methods of examination. The use of standards is quite new to some districts, where they were introduced for the first time by the regulations of 1878, which did not come into full operation until July, 1879. It seems probable that some teachers have under-estimated the requirements of the standards, and have so been led to present children too early; while, on the other hand, some have failed to apprehend the extent to which the standards discourage the heavy work that falls chiefly on the faculty of memory, and have also been exceedingly careful (perhaps too careful) not to present any but those that could satisfy the demands of the most exacting Inspector. It may be expected that use will produce a tendency to uniformity of practice on the part both of Inspectors and of teachers. A comparison between schools under the same Board and the same Inspector is not affected by all the sources of error that render comparison between districts unsafe. Investigation of the returns from one district ought to throw some light on general questions of organisation. For example, if it is found that a country teacher, working single-handed and having a full school, can present his pupils for examination in the several standards at an age in each standard considerably below the corresponding average age in a large school, with its infant department, its minute classification, and its well-paid principal teachers, such