

The distribution of the children in classes according to standards is shown in Table No. 2 (Appendix, page 2), of which Table E is a summary:—

TABLE E.—CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO STANDARDS AT THE END OF 1885.

STANDARDS.	Boys.	Girls.	Totals.	Percentage.				
				1885.	1884.	1883.	1882.	1881.
Too young for line next following ..	14,994	13,157	28,151	27.49	27.33	27.62	27.32	25.45
Preparing for Standard I. ..	9,634	8,944	18,578	18.14	19.19	19.10	19.15	20.23
" " II. ..	8,417	8,127	16,544	16.16	16.14	16.21	16.12	16.83
" " III. ..	8,160	7,727	15,887	15.51	15.51	15.80	15.95	17.14
" " IV. ..	5,760	5,638	11,398	11.13	11.15	10.94	11.72	11.44
" " V. ..	3,621	3,393	7,014	6.85	6.27	6.32	6.21	5.73
" " VI. ..	1,686	1,675	3,361	3.28	3.25	2.91	2.64	2.38
Passed Standard VI. ..	755	719	1,474	1.44	1.16	1.10	0.89	0.71
Totals ..	53,027	49,380	102,407	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The proportion of pupils above Standard IV. is slowly increasing in each of the three classes, being 11.57 per cent. at the end of 1885, as against 10.68 in 1884, and 8.82 in 1881. The proportions of the classes preparing for Standards II., III., and IV. are the same for 1885 as for 1884; at the same time they show a decline since 1881 from 45.41 to 42.8, corresponding to the increase in the higher classes. The proportion of children not yet ready to pass Standard I. is less for 1885 than for 1884, the percentages for the two years being 45.63 and 46.52, and the difference being what is required to balance the improvement in the numbers above Standard IV. The proportion below Standard I. (45.63) is, however, almost as large now as it was in 1881, when it stood at 45.68.

The average age at which the several standards are passed varies considerably in different districts, being lower in the Nelson District than anywhere else, and highest in Southland and Auckland. As the standards were framed under a law which makes school attendance compulsory between the ages of seven and thirteen, the average age on passing Standard I. would naturally be eight, and the age for Standard VI. would be thirteen, the mean being ten years and a half. The actual mean for 1885 is 11.6 years; or, practically, the same as that for former years (11.5). In Nelson, the passes occur about nine months after what may be considered the normal age, and in Auckland and Southland about a year and nine months late. About one-half of the excess of the actual over the normal age arises at the outset of the career of the pupils, by their passing the First Standard rather late, and the rest appears in the form of a space of more than a year between the ages of passing the First and Second Standards respectively, and a similar space at the next stage. It seems that the steps from the Third Standard to the Sixth are not generally found to require more than a year's work each. Table F shows for each district the average age at the time of passing each standard.

TABLE F.—AVERAGE AGE OF PUPILS AT STANDARD EXAMINATIONS.

EDUCATION DISTRICTS.			Average Ages (in Years) for Standard.						Mean of Ages.				
			I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.	VI.	1885.	1884.	1883.	1882.	1881.
Auckland ..	..	..	9.1	10.5	11.2	12.8	14.1	15.7	12.2	12.1	12.2	12.4	..
Taranaki ..	..	..	8.7	10.0	11.8	13.0	13.6	14.6	11.9	11.6	11.1	11.5	11.4
Wanganui ..	..	..	8.6	10.0	10.9	12.1	13.4	14.0	11.5	11.5	11.6	11.4	11.6
Wellington ..	..	..	8.7	9.8	11.2	12.2	13.2	14.0	11.5	11.6	..	..	..
Hawke's Bay ..	..	..	8.7	10.2	11.1	12.4	13.2	13.8	11.6	11.7	11.7	11.6	11.8
Marlborough ..	..	..	8.7	9.9	10.8	12.2	13.1	14.1	11.5	11.6	11.2	11.2	11.4
Nelson ..	..	..	8.2	9.5	10.6	11.9	13.2	13.7	11.2	11.2	11.3	11.3	11.1
North Canterbury ..	..	..	8.7	9.7	11.2	12.2	13.3	14.0	11.5	11.6	11.9	11.9	11.8
South Canterbury ..	..	..	8.4	9.7	11.2	12.1	13.3	13.9	11.6	11.2	11.0	11.2	..
Westland ..	..	..	8.5	10.2	11.6	12.2	13.1	13.7	11.5	10.9	13.3	11.0	11.2
Grey ..	..	..	8.4	9.8	11.1	12.2	13.2	14.0	11.4				
Otago ..	..	..	8.9	10.2	11.4	12.2	13.1	13.9	11.6				
Southland ..	..	..	9.6	10.9	12.2	13.0	14.0	14.7	12.4	..	..	..	11.7
Mean of thirteen returns ..	..	..	8.7	10.0	11.3	12.3	13.4	14.2	11.6	[11.5]	[11.5]	[11.5]	[11.5]
Range (difference between highest and lowest) ..	..	..	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.1	1.0	2.0	1.2	1.2	2.3	1.4	0.9
1884—													
Mean of eleven returns ..	..	..	8.7	9.9	11.3	12.3	13.1	14.0	..	11.5	..	..	..
Range (difference between highest and lowest) ..	..	..	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.9	1.1	..	1.2	..	..	..