

The following is a summary of the examination statistics for 1909 :—

Total roll at time of annual examination	...	...	...	153,161
Present at examination	...	...	...	145,496
Present in preparatory classes	...	...	...	52,888
Present in classes S6	...	...	...	9,480
„ classes S7	...	...	...	1,938
Standard VI certificates gained, viz.,—				
Certificates of proficiency	...	...	6,403	8,465
„ competency	...	...	2,062	

Details of these figures for each district are given in Table D2 of E.—2.

S6 Certificates.—The percentage of pupils who gained certificates of proficiency and certificates of competency respectively in the three years 1907–9 are shown below :—

		1907.	1908.	1909.
		Per Cent.	Per Cent.	Per C. nt.
Gained certificates of proficiency	...	59.00	61.96	67.54
„ competency	...	23.98	25.29	21.75
No certificate	...	17.02	12.75	10.71
		100.00	100.00	100.00

The raising of the standard required for a certificate of proficiency, introduced by the regulations of 1908, has not, therefore, apparently had the effect of lessening the number of such certificates awarded.

Average Age.—The average ages of the pupils in the several classes for the three years 1907–9 were as follows :—

			1907.	1908.	1909.
			Yrs. Mo.	Yrs. Mo.	Yrs. Mo.
Preparatory classes	...	...	7 1	7 2	6 11
Class S1	...	...	9 1	9 3	9 2
„ S2	...	...	10 1	10 3	10 3
„ S3	...	...	11 1	11 3	11 4
„ S4	...	...	12 1	12 3	12 3
„ S5	...	...	13 0	13 1	13 0
„ S6	...	...	13 10	14 0	13 11
„ S7	...	...	14 11	14 9	15 0
Mean of average ages	...	...	11 5	11 6	11 5

Details for the several districts will be found in Table D3 of E.—2.

The average age for the Dominion of the pupils in Standard VI at the time of the annual examination was thirteen years eleven months. It may be worthy of serious consideration whether this age is not too high for the moderate standard of attainment reached by the pupils.

The Inspector-General of Schools in his report attributes the high average age in Standard VI principally to what he considers to be the unduly long time that pupils appear to be kept in the preparatory classes. He points out that, whereas by reason of the increase of population the percentage of the total school roll under eight years of age has risen during the years 1905–9 from 29.8 to 31.1, the proportion in the preparatory classes has risen in the same period from 28.28 to 36.66 per cent. of the roll, and the average age in Standard I has risen from eight years eleven months to nine years two months. Meanwhile, the interval between the average ages of the children in Standards I and VI respectively has fallen slightly—namely, from four years ten months in 1905 to four years nine months in 1909; so that the high age in Standard VI does not appear to be due to any change in the rapidity of promotion through the standard classes, but chiefly to the high age in Standard I—or, in other words, to the length of time that children are kept in the infant classes. There is probably no sound reason for this; moreover, if the age at which a certificate of proficiency was gained was substantially lowered, all those pupils proceeding to secondary schools (that is, a considerable proportion of the total) would begin their secondary education at an earlier age, which, in the opinion of most of those who are in a position to judge, would be a most desirable consummation,