

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.

The numbers of pupils receiving instruction in the several subjects of the syllabus for each education district is shown in Table D4. In English, arithmetic, and drawing these numbers are practically identical with the roll numbers. It may be interesting to note the continued increase of the numbers doing nature-study, handwork, and elementary agriculture:—

				Number of Pupils.			
				1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.
Roll	...	...	...	139,302	141,071	147,428	152,416
Nature-study	...	...	...	120,833	122,660	128,716	134,651
Handwork	...	...	...	98,465	105,514	112,952	116,588
Elementary agriculture and dairy-work (included in the above)				4,000	6,000	8,000	10,200

Conveyance of Children.

Conveyance by Rail.—Since the year 1895 children out of the reach of a primary school, but living near to a convenient line of railway, have been granted free passes to the nearest public school or private school; in 1902 this privilege was extended to holders of scholarships and free places in secondary schools, district high schools, and technical schools; and at the beginning of 1909 the same concession was granted to other secondary pupils who were compelled to travel by rail in order to attend school.

The amount paid in railway fares on this account for 1908 was £9,437, in 1909 it was £13,186, made up as follows:—

				1908.	1909.
				£	£
Primary pupils	...	...	...	4,145	5,769
Pupils attending—					
(a.) Secondary schools	...	...	...	1,489	2,199
(b.) District high schools	...	...	...	1,043	1,368
(c.) Technical schools	...	...	...	2,760	3,850
Total	...	...	...	£9,437	£13,186

Conveyance by Road and Water.—For the last six years grants have been made to Education Boards for the conveyance of children from outlying localities to central public schools as contemplated by section 44 of the Act. The allowance has been made at the rate of 6d. per child per day of attendance at