

An examination of the figures discloses the following results, which differ very little from those ascertained for the year 1915 :—

Class.			Normal Classification.	Above Normal Classification.	Below Normal Classification.
			Per Cent.	Per Cent.	Per Cent.
Class P	..	..	..	..	7
„ S1	..	..	68	15	17
„ S2	..	..	65	14	21
„ S3	..	..	63	14	23
„ S4	..	..	64	14	22
„ S5	..	..	69	15	16
„ S6	..	..	70	19	11
„ S7	..	..	..	20	..
Classes S1-S6	..	..	66	15	19

The average percentage of cases of retardation in S1 to S6 inclusive is 19, and the highest rate—23 per cent.—obtains in S3. The increase in the percentage of retardation up to S3 is partly due to the fact that the retardation accumulates as a child's school-life progresses. The falling-off again in the higher classes is accounted for to some extent by the fact that backward children frequently leave school before reaching these classes. More reliable figures regarding this matter would be those based on the length of time a child has been at school when it is in a certain class rather than on its age when in that class. The fact that many children do not begin school until seven years of age is apt to make them appear retarded when they have probably made the average progress for the length of time they have been at school. The general opinion among educationists appears to be that a child is ready to commence its primary education at the age of five or six years. In the above figures a very lenient view has been taken of what may be regarded as normal classification, and the percentage number of retardations at least calls for comment. The causes leading to retardation were mentioned in last year's report, and it is necessary on this occasion only to remind parents and teachers of a waste in time and efficiency that could often be avoided.

Age of Pupils.

The average ages of the pupils in the several classes for the two years 1915 and 1916 as at the end of the year's instruction were as follows :—

			1915.		1916.	
			Yrs. mos.		Yrs. mos.	
Preparatory classes	...	...	6	11	7	0
Class S1	...	...	9	1	9	1
„ S2	...	...	10	1	10	1
„ S3	...	...	11	2	11	2
„ S4	...	...	12	2	12	2
„ S5	...	...	13	1	13	0
„ S6	...	...	13	10	13	9
Mean of average age	...	...	9	9	9	9

The figures for each education district are shown in Table C5 of E.—2. There is still a considerable range of difference in the average ages for the various districts. The difference between the highest and lowest average ages for all classes is five months, and the range of difference in the individual classes runs from six months in the preparatory classes to ten months in S4. The District of Nelson shows the lowest average ages through all the standards, its average for all classes being nine years and six months, while the average age for all classes in Taranaki is nine years and eleven months, the average ages for the individual classes being proportionately high. The lack of uniformity in the various districts is not desirable, as there does not appear to be any reason why the children of one district should be more advanced than