

upon an intermediate secondary course at an earlier age is now under investigation by the Department, and it is hoped shortly to present a draft scheme for discussion by educational authorities with a view to some advance being made in the near future.

A record is kept of the percentages of children in the various classes and of the various ages, the percentage of pupils in the preparatory classes being in 1920 34·85 per cent. of the whole number—a very slightly lower figure than that for the previous year. Any reduction in this figure is welcomed as one sign that the retardation suspected in these classes is being overcome. The fact still remains, however, that at the end of the year 21 per cent. of the pupils were eight years of age and over, and 6 per cent. nine years of age and over.

Children leaving School before passing S6.

A matter for serious concern, commented on in previous years, is revealed in the classification tables, which show a great discrepancy between the number of pupils in S1 and in S6. In 1915 there were 22,896 children in S1, the majority of whom, allowing for various contingencies, should have been in S6 in 1920. It appears, however, that there were only 14,084 pupils, or 61 per cent. of the number, in S6 in 1920, so that 39 per cent. of the pupils left school without doing the work of S6, and similarly 19 per cent. left school before completing the S5 syllabus. The actual number of children who left school in 1919 without having passed S6 was 5,169—half as many as left having passed that standard. The standard of work reached in S6 is the least educational equipment that a child should have before taking up its life's work, so that the provision of the Education Amendment Act of 1920, making it compulsory for a child to attend some school until the age of fifteen years instead of fourteen as at present, will, when it comes into force, be beneficial in reducing this large number of insufficiently educated children. The provision of free places at technical schools offering training in subjects related to industrial occupations to specially recommended pupils who have not passed S6, has been of some assistance to such children, about six hundred free places of this kind being taken up in 1920.

Examination of Pupils.

Although examination results are no longer regarded as the best and only indication of the value of the work of teacher and scholar, they nevertheless doubtless serve to some extent to gauge the accuracy, thoroughness, and application with which the school-work has been carried out. Inspectors of Schools realize to-day that their work embraces something more important than merely applying the measure, and that demonstrations and assistance to the teacher in following the best methods of developing the child are of more value than merely testing the amount of information that has been imparted to it. As part of their duty, wherever possible, they conduct personally the S6 examinations, awarding proficiency and competency certificates. In the case of small schools it is often necessary to conduct synchronous examinations under the Inspector's supervision; the latter method, however, is not favoured by Inspectors, who have little opportunity other than by an examination of written answers of estimating the ability and educational standard of the individual pupils. The examinations resulted in 10,618 certificates of proficiency being awarded, the number representing 70·5 per cent. of the S6 roll, and 2,176 certificates of competency, representing 14·5 per cent. of the roll. Of the latter certificates, 312 were endorsed for merit in science or in handwork. The percentage of proficiency certificates awarded was 2·2 greater than in 1919, and the percentage of competency certificates 1·5 less, so that the average results for the two years do not show any wide difference. The range difference in the results for the various districts was not so great as in the previous year, although the fact still calls for remark that the percentage of proficiency certificates awarded was as high as 80·2 in one district and ranged in the various districts down to a figure as low as 62·5 in one education district. The opinion is expressed, however, that the results are not to be taken as a reliable indication of the relative efficiency of the work of the districts, depending as they do partly on a natural fluctuation and partly on the unavoidable difference in standard set up by the Inspectors.