

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	308	282	Yrs. mos. 15 1
" VI	...	...	...	...	1,398	1,284	13 11
" V	...	...	...	...	1,918	1,828	13 2
" IV	...	...	...	...	2,271	2,175	12 4
" III	...	...	...	...	2,483	2,383	11 4
" II	...	...	...	...	2,411	2,352	10 2
" I	...	...	...	...	2,476	2,351	9 1
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	7,581	6,793	7 0
Totals	...	...	...	...	20,846	19,448	11 6*

* Mean of average age.

About the middle of the year Mr. Thomas Hughes, headmaster of the Waltham School, came to our assistance, and carried out the work of inspection with his wonted energy, ability, and thoroughness. We feel that the thanks of all concerned are due to Mr. Hughes for agreeing to leave his school, and to the Waltham Committee for consenting to his absence, and we wish to record our appreciation of their attitude in this matter, which led them to realize the larger interests involved, and to regard the welfare of the community as having prior claims to that of the school.

The summary of results appearing in Appendix I* attached to this report shows that the average age of pupils in the various classes is still appreciably higher than in 1907, the last year in which pupils were reclassified after the Inspector's annual visit. This has arisen from the change in the date of classification, which for practically all classes raised the average age last year, and will tend to maintain similar conditions until pupils in the upper standards who were promoted at the time the change was introduced gradually leave the schools. The average age of the preparatory classes for obvious reasons has been unaffected.

STANDARD VII.—The increase in the average age of Standard VII (including pupils of the district high schools) may be regarded as a hopeful sign, inasmuch as it is an indication that many pupils are staying longer at school than has hitherto been the practice, and are continuing their studies when they have arrived at an age to realize the value of a good education. This fact is not without its bearing on the question of boy-labour, the supply of which for some time past has been falling considerably short of the demand. Employers are apt to express disappointment at the attainments of the boys they employ, and to compare them unfavourably with those who applied for work some years back. But is this not to be accounted for to a large extent by the extension of the period of school life, a result of the free education available at secondary and technical schools, and of the consequent limitation of the number of pupils seeking employment in each year? Many employers are, therefore, compelled to take into their service boys who have not worked through the school curriculum, and whom their teachers would hesitate to recommend for any position that makes a demand upon neatness, accuracy, and trained intelligence.

CLASSIFICATION AND PROMOTION OF PUPILS.—A good deal of discussion has centred round this heading of late, and we ourselves referred to it at some length in our report of last year. Its importance, however, is so obvious that we make no apology for again including it amongst the topics dealt with. A pupil who is moved through the standards with undue rapidity is not only a drag on other members with whom he is instructed, but being imperfectly equipped for advanced work is unable to assimilate and understand it with the necessary thoroughness, and so loses to a very large extent the benefit which ought to accompany school training. It is not too much to say that such advancement, constitutes a grave injustice, and can only result in positive and lasting injury to the pupil concerned a matter which, we regret to say, is frequently overlooked by both teachers and parents. There are, happily, in this district a large number of schools where the need for refusing promotion to all who have not worthily earned it is fully recognized, and where only those pupils are moved forward who are able to profit by higher instruction. This, however, cannot be said of all schools. In some, whether from want of experience leading to the setting-up of an unduly low standard, or from inability to withstand local pressure, the number of promotions shown on the class lists is by no means in keeping with what we might expect from conditions disclosed at the annual visit of inspection. We are inclined to the opinion that in the interests of the service it may become necessary, when these conditions obtain, for an Inspector to reclassify pupils as early as possible in the following year. There seems to be a tendency in some schools to keep a portion of the more backward pupils in the Preparatory classes until they have become much older than the average unit in this department. Though in general unwise to promote until work has been thoroughly mastered, in the case of the type of pupil we are referring to the interest both of pupil and school would be better served by placing him amongst children whose ages more nearly correspond to his own, even though the work he is asked to undertake may tax his ability and intelligence to the full.

EXAMINATIONS FOR CERTIFICATES.—For the purpose of awarding certificates of proficiency, examinations were held at forty-five centres during the months of November and December. To meet the case of several schools whose pupils could not be well served by a central examination special

* Not reprinted here.