

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **TOLLESBURY SCHOOL**

Tollesbury, Maldon

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114925

Headteacher: Mrs. P. Gee

Reporting inspector: Mr J Tyler  
20506

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2001

Inspection number: 192165

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 4-11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
School address: Tollesbury School  
East Street  
Tollesbury  
Maldon  
Essex  
Postcode: CM9 8QE  
Telephone number: 01621 869242  
Fax number: 01621 868637  
Appropriate authority: The Governing Body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr. A. Gilbert  
Date of previous inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Tollesbury School is a medium-sized, community primary school for boys and girls who are aged four to eleven. It has 211 full-time pupils. The school is situated in the village of Tollesbury and is very much a part of the local community. It mainly serves families in the village, whose social circumstances are generally more favourable than average, but a few children come from further afield. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Overall, pupils' attainment when they start school is above average, particularly in their language and social skills. Across the school, 49 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, for a variety of learning and behavioural difficulties and four of them have statement. The proportion of pupils needing additional support is about average. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, and only one is learning English as an additional language. Recent staff changes and shortages have affected the work of the school.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an improving school with a number of good features, but also a few weaker aspects. The school provides a sound education. The headteacher has successfully led staff and governors in raising pupils' attainment during the past four years. Results in national tests have improved considerably and, at the end of Key Stage 2, at a rate far better than the national trend. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with marked improvement since the last inspection in younger classes. Pupils achieve standards appropriate to their abilities in most aspects of their learning. By the age of eleven, the standards pupils attain in English and mathematics are well above national expectations. In science, whilst pupils achieve good results in national tests, their skills in enquiry work are weak. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are satisfactory overall, though the misbehaviour of a small minority is not always managed effectively. Despite improving attainment, a significant minority of parents is unhappy with some aspects of the school's work. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- ◆ Standards in English and mathematics are well above national averages.
- ◆ Strengths within teaching enable pupils to learn successfully.
- ◆ The headteacher and governors provide a strong lead in raising standards.

#### **What could be improved**

- ◆ Standards of scientific enquiry.
- ◆ Parents' perceptions of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

When it was inspected last in January 1997, the school was judged to be developing steadily and showing signs of improvement. Nonetheless, there were significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. Since then, the school has made good progress. Following the appointment of a new headteacher, the staff and governors have dealt effectively with most of the action points from the last inspection. The quality of teaching, particularly for the younger pupils, has improved considerably. Teachers have a better grasp of the standard required to attain various levels of the National Curriculum, and this is helping them to plan work that is better matched to pupils' needs. Teachers' confidence and expertise in information and communication technology have improved, but in science there are still some weaknesses. The curriculum is now planned more systematically, and teachers use these plans more consistently. There is greater emphasis on ensuring that pupils find out about other cultures. As a result of all these measures, standards of attainment have risen significantly since the last inspection, and the school has received a national award to recognise its achievements. The school has a sound capacity to raise standards further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by eleven-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools*
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	B	B	A	C
Mathematics	A	C	A	C
Science	A	C	A	A

<b>Key</b>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

\* This refers to schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

Attainment on entry to the school is above average compared with what is expected nationally. Pupils' achievements in relation to their capabilities are satisfactory during their time at the school. In the Year 2 national tests in 2000, results were similar to the national average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. The trend over the last few years has been slightly up, with results generally being above the national average. The trend for the Year 6 test results is also upwards, at a faster rate than the national trend. The school exceeded its targets in the national tests last year, although the targets were not particularly challenging.

Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 2 is above national expectations in English and mathematics. Pupils of all abilities have made good progress during this year. In Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are well above national expectations with a significant proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 5. Throughout the school, standards in science are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils reach high levels in tests because their knowledge is a particular strength, but their understanding and skills of scientific enquiry are weaker. Pupils are underachieving in this aspect of the subject. Standards in information and communication technology are broadly in line with national expectations. During the inspection, good work in history was a strong feature of studies in Key Stage 2. The school has a good reputation for music and drama.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The children enjoy coming to school. In most lessons, they show an interest in their work and concentrate well. In a few lessons, however, a minority of pupils lack enthusiasm and determination to carry out their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils behave well most of the time and this supports their learning. In the playground, however, lapses in behaviour or rough play sometimes cause problems. There have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Most pupils relate well to each other and adults, but a significant minority occasionally show a lack of respect. Pupils respond positively to opportunities for showing initiative and responsibility, although there are too few of these.
Attendance	Well above the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Reception	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 to 6
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with a number of good features. It was very good in 8 per cent of the lessons observed, good or better in 54 per cent, and at least satisfactory in 92 per cent. The 8 per cent of unsatisfactory teaching represents only one lesson. The quality of teaching for pupils in Years 1 and 2 has improved considerably since the last inspection. Throughout the school, most lessons are planned carefully and teachers provide a suitable range of activities that motivate pupils. In a few lessons seen, pupils were unclear about what they were expected to learn and this slowed the pace and led to some restless behaviour. However, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in most cases. Teachers' good subject knowledge in English and mathematics help pupils to develop good skills in literacy and numeracy. In science, teachers lack sufficient depth of understanding to plan appropriate investigative work. Teachers and assistants work well together to support pupils with special educational needs. Teaching generally meets the needs of all pupils, helping them to learn effectively.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which is generally well planned and organised. Investigative skills in science are not developed systematically. Grouping pupils by ability for English and mathematics is effective. The range of extra-curricular activities is sound, and good use is made of educational visits to enrich pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Individual education plans generally have precise targets that help teachers and assistants to focus on pupils' needs. The action planned to help pupils with behavioural needs is not precise enough to guide staff. Pupils with more pronounced needs are well integrated and provided for.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school is aware of the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language and plans satisfactorily for their needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. There are strengths in aspects of the school's work, such as through dramatic productions and educational visits. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are missed. Overall, the school does not have a coherent approach to pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides satisfactory care and support for its pupils, but procedures for aspects such as encouraging good behaviour are not implemented consistently enough. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good in English and mathematics. Teachers use the information to set targets for pupils' achievement, to track their progress and to plan appropriate work.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Since her appointment, the headteacher's effective leadership has led to a significant rise in standards. During a difficult period of staffing shortages, she has been ably supported by other staff with management responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are supportive, actively involved in the work of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They have good systems for monitoring the work of the school and this helps them when planning for the future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There is considerable evaluation of pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching and learning. As yet, however, the information gained is not being used sufficiently to focus school improvement. The school plan does not identify priorities precisely enough.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its funding and plans ahead. It pays satisfactory regard to the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Their children enjoy school.</li> <li>◆ Children make good progress.</li> <li>◆ The quality of teaching is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The way in which the school works with parents.</li> <li>◆ The leadership and management of the school.</li> <li>◆ The range of activities provided for children outside lessons.</li> <li>◆ The behaviour of some pupils.</li> <li>◆ The amount and consistency of homework.</li> <li>◆ Information from the school about how their children are progressing.</li> <li>◆ The school's response to their suggestions and complaints.</li> </ul>

A significant minority of parents is very unhappy with a number of aspects of the work of the school. A large proportion of the negative responses was received from parents of pupils in a class that has had a year of unsettled staffing. Inspectors agree that children enjoy attending the school, which has a happy atmosphere. The inspection found that pupils make sound progress overall and that teaching is satisfactory with some strengths. On matters relating to pupils' behaviour and homework, inspectors agree that the school is not consistent enough in its expectations. Inspectors judge that the leadership of the school is good overall, and has led to improved standards over the past few years. The range of activities outside lessons, including educational visits, is similar to that found in many schools. The information provided for parents about their children's progress is satisfactory. Inspectors had too little evidence to make a judgement on other matters.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Standards in English and mathematics are well above national averages**

1. In the 2000 national tests for Year 6 pupils, results were well above average. The trend in Year 6 results over the last few years has been up, at a faster rate than nationally. In the work seen in English, basic literacy skills were strong. Pupils sustain ideas through extended pieces of writing. They write in complex sentences that are well punctuated, and paragraph their work. Handwriting is good even though much of their work is in pencil. Pupils read fluently and show strong understanding of texts, as demonstrated in comprehension exercises and the use of reference books in other subjects. During discussions, pupils listen carefully and respond thoughtfully. They speak fluently and use a broad vocabulary. In mathematics, pupils show understanding as well as knowledge. They successfully apply what they have learned in solving problems. Pupils use skills from one aspect to find solutions in another, for example using number skills to help interpret data.
2. In both subjects, the curriculum is well planned to ensure the systematic development of knowledge and skills. Teachers use the detailed guidance to help plan lessons that are challenging and interesting, and pupils respond well to this. Information from assessments is used effectively to help set work at an appropriate level and to identify aspects of the subject that may need further development. The combination of these factors has a significant impact on the standards reached.

#### **Strengths within teaching enable pupils to learn successfully**

3. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, especially for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Throughout the school, most lessons are planned carefully and teachers provide a suitable range of activities that motivate pupils. The planning for an English lesson for infant pupils showed how the lesson was split into different parts, and set clear learning objectives (the precise knowledge and skills to be learned by the end) which helped pupils focus on the most important issues. Tasks were set at challenging levels for pupils of different abilities. Some junior pupils with special educational needs were successfully motivated because the work was relevant to the previous day's enjoyable and informative educational visit. Their positive response helped them to concentrate hard and improve their literacy skills when writing letters. Older pupils were highly motivated by the range of exciting events during their 'Tudor day', which involved preparing costumes and entertainments as well as learning about many aspects of life through handling artefacts.
4. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in most cases. In almost every lesson seen, this contributed to pupils learning successfully. Pupils know how they are expected to behave, are generally attentive and concentrate on their work. In a mathematics lesson for older pupils, a few pupils who became a little restless quickly regained their concentration when the teacher asked a challenging question that made them think about their work. This was an effective approach because it checked and extended their understanding at the same time as helping them to behave well. One class has had unsettled staffing this year and their behaviour has caused concern for the school and parents. A recent change of teacher has given pupils greater consistency of approach and, in the lessons seen, their behaviour was satisfactory. Pupils were given clear expectations and firm guidance, and helped to appreciate the effects of their actions on others.
5. Teachers' good subject knowledge in English and mathematics helps them to give clear explanations and ask searching questions. Throughout the school, pupils are taught to use the correct terms in both subjects. Younger pupils, for example, talk about a book's *author* and the *index* and, in mathematics, older pupils use terms such as *prime numbers* and *multiples*. Teachers' knowledge enables them to assess pupils' attainment accurately during lessons and to recognise the next step in learning. Pupils are confident to ask questions, knowing that the teacher's response will be helpful. Teachers and assistants work well together to support pupils with special educational needs. They understand the needs of individual pupils, offer good guidance and build their self-esteem through the

use of praise. Pupils with more pronounced special needs are treated with great care without having their independence stifled and the example set by adults is followed by other pupils.

### **The headteacher and governors provide a strong lead in raising standards**

6. The fact that the school has improved well since the last inspection is clear evidence of successful leadership and management. The staff work well as a team and share a common view of how the school can maintain its present strengths and improve aspects that are weaker. The headteacher and governors have played a key role in this, providing a vision and sense of purpose that are appropriate in meeting the school's aims and, in particular, in raising standards. The school development plan sets out a good range of targets which, although they are arranged with insufficient coherence, help staff to focus on what needs to be improved and how to achieve success. The headteacher and other senior staff monitor the quality of teaching and all staff are involved in looking at samples of pupils' work from across the school. These actions have helped to bring about improvements in teaching and the curriculum. Governors are well informed, which helps them to make decisions about the overall development of the school. They monitor the work of the school well, often in the light of spending decisions. For example, when the new computer suite was installed, governors monitored how it was being used to make sure that the large investment was being put to good use.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

#### **Standards of scientific enquiry**

7. Pupils attain good results in the Year 6 national tests, which focus primarily on their knowledge. However, they achieve less than they could in their understanding and skills of scientific enquiry. For example, some Year 6 pupils who reached high level in the national tests found it hard to devise a simple, fair test to answer a question about an aspect they had studied relatively recently. Some other junior pupils drew firm conclusion from an investigation that sought only half the evidence: their conclusions about pulse rate were factually correct, but the scientific approach was strongly flawed. Pupils in older classes do not have a clear method for planning investigations, carrying them out, drawing conclusions and recording their work. In some classes, pupils record the results of investigations in tables, draw clear diagrams and use graphs to communicate their findings, but this is not consistent throughout the school. Pupils in some classes have carried out very little practical work this academic year. The school does not have a systematic approach to teaching enquiry skills and one reason for this is the absence of a subject co-ordinator. Teachers lack sufficient depth of understanding to plan appropriate investigative work without clear guidance on how skills should develop from year to year, and they are not sufficiently supported. In previously completed work from some classes, there are examples of pupils misunderstanding what has been taught and teachers marking the work as correct.

#### **Parents' perceptions of the school's strengths and weaknesses**

8. A significant minority of parents is very unhappy with a number of aspects of the work of the school. The inspection found that, although some of their concerns are justified either in part or in whole, overall they are not. However, whether parents are right or wrong about particular aspects of the school, the fact is that some of their perceptions are negative. This is something that the school has not dealt with successfully.

9. A large proportion of the negative responses was received from parents of pupils in a class that has had a year of unsettled staffing. Parents of pupils in this class were especially concerned about the way in which the school works with parents, the management of the school and behaviour of pupils. Behaviour, which had deteriorated below the standard accepted by the school, has now improved as a result of more consistent expectations from the present class teacher. Several pupils in this class have significant behavioural or emotional difficulties and have individual education plans to help teachers plan appropriately. However, the targets and strategies planned are often insufficiently precise to ensure consistency of approach when pupils have different teachers.

10. In the school as a whole, some inconsistencies have led to parents' perceptions being more negative than they need be. Behaviour at play times is satisfactory overall even though it sometimes includes quite rough chasing and wrestling. Although no unpleasantness was seen during the inspection, pupils say that rough play leads to disagreements and occasional physical retaliation. Supervision during play at lunch time is not always effective in stopping this form of play. One supervisor was seen effectively encouraging pupils to play positive games with skipping ropes, bats and balls, while some others ignored rough play. The school has planned training for all staff in leading play, which is a very positive step. One reason for inconsistencies is that the school's behaviour policy is insufficiently precise about the range of rewards and sanctions and how they are to be used. Pupils say that staff deal with behavioural issues in different ways and find this unsettling on occasions. Although some parents expressed negative views about the amount of homework, their comments generally suggest that it is inconsistencies that concern parents more. Some classes have regular homework and parents know what to expect. In other classes, expectations vary through the year and homework is sometimes used for finishing off work rather than for preparation or for reinforcing and extending learning.

11. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is not planned carefully enough. Provision in these areas does not sufficiently encourage pupils to talk positively about the school and to reach higher standards of personal development, which parents would recognise and value. Opportunities are missed for helping pupils to develop pride in looking after their school, care for others and demonstrate a sense of responsibility. Year 6 pupils, for example, have few school-wide responsibilities that would encourage them to act more maturely and set an example to younger pupils. They do not undertake such important tasks as guiding visitors around the school on an open day and explaining all the good things that happen. Responsibilities within class are relatively limited throughout the school. It was noticeable that pupils who had specific responsibilities talked especially positively to inspectors about the school. Although pupils are taught to appreciate the differences between right and wrong, reinforcement in practical situations is inconsistent. After misbehaving, for example, pupils are not always asked to explain their actions or to consider how they have affected others.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

12. The school should now:

- (1) raise standards of scientific enquiry by:
  - ◆ appointing a subject leader for science;
  - ◆ introducing a systematic approach to the development of enquiry skills;
  - ◆ increasing teachers' subject knowledge of science;
- (2) improve the perception of the school held by a minority of parents by:
  - ◆ seeking ways to increase their confidence in the school and their understanding of how well the school is performing;
  - ◆ introducing greater consistency in play supervision, behavioural expectations and homework;
  - ◆ planning more coherently for pupils' moral and social development.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

13

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

10

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	8	46	38	8	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	211
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	49

#### English as an additional language

No. of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
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#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No. of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	18	14	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	18
	Girls	11	11	14
	Total	24	26	32
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	75 (89)	81 (91)	100 (100)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	15	18	16
	Girls	11	14	10
	Total	26	32	26
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	81 (91)	100 (100)	81 (91)
	National	82 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	17	14	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	13	13	17
	Girls	13	13	14
	Total	26	26	31
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	84 (77)	84 (69)	100 (77)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	11	14	14
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	24	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	77 (69)	87 (74)	87 (79)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	188
Any other minority ethnic group	3

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.9
Average class size	30.1

#### **Education support staff: YR– Y6**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	187

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	465,073
Total expenditure	459,971
Expenditure per pupil	2,170
Balance brought forward from previous year	25,942
Balance carried forward to next year	31,044

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	211
Number of questionnaires returned	63

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	51	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	33	48	14	5	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	37	28	16	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	52	18	14	0
The teaching is good.	34	45	16	3	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	46	20	10	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	30	45	14	11	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	23	52	19	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	11	42	38	9	0
The school is well led and managed.	11	41	25	21	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	17	55	20	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	38	36	10	5