INSPECTION REPORT

ST BEES VILLAGE SCHOOL

St Bees

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 122164

Headteacher: Mrs F Gunn

Reporting inspector: Mrs E Parry 2615

Dates of inspection: 5-7 February 2001

Inspection number: 194604

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Main Street

St. Bees Cumbria

Postcode: CA27 0AA

Telephone number: 01946 822392

Fax number: 01946 822392

Appropriate authority: Local Education Authority

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Donaldson

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members				
2615	Eileen Parry	Registered inspector		
14404	Alan Rolfe	Lay Inspector		
3533	Alan McGregor	Team Inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

Peak Education Partnership 19, Huddersfield Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire. S70 2LT

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Bees Village School is a small school serving the coastal village of St Bees in West Cumbria. Currently 156 children attend the school; 90 boys and 66 girls. The school serves the local village and some homes which are further away. Only nine children, about six per cent, have free school meals. This is well below the national average and reflects the fact that most people living in the village have jobs. The proportion of adults with higher educational qualifications is about three times the national average and a considerable proportion of the children come from advantaged homes.

All the children are from white British families. Six children have statements of special educational needs which is a higher proportion than is usually found in schools nationally but fewer children, around seven per cent, are on the special educational needs register.

The school has no nursery. Children start in the reception class when they are four years old. They come with a wide range of skills and abilities, from those with special educational needs to the more able but overall, their attainment when they start full time education is better than in most schools.

The school is oversubscribed and is building an extra classroom to accommodate the increase in numbers.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Bees Village School is a warm and friendly community where pupils reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the ages of seven and eleven. Pupils' consistently good behaviour enables teachers to concentrate on teaching. Teaching is very good overall. Parents, other relatives and friends provide excellent support in the weekly workshops and other lessons helping to promote high standards. The headteacher provides very good leadership and strong vision about promoting the school as part of the community. She is well supported by staff and by governors. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Results in the national tests for seven and eleven year olds are well above the national average.
- Teaching overall is very good.
- Pupils' very mature and responsive attitudes to school enable teachers and other adults to concentrate all their efforts on teaching and pupils' learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The school uses the expertise of helpers very well to promote children's learning.
- There is a caring environment with very good provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

What could be improved

The building has limited space and is currently short of one classroom

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has sustained the good quality of education and the high standards that pupils achieve that were noted in the last inspection in March 1997. The issues it was asked to address have been effectively tackled. Curriculum planning is based on the latest national guidance and the curriculum is effectively enriched through visits and through volunteers who help in school. Pupils are given opportunities to develop personal skills and this shows in the mature and responsible way they respond. There is a rich range of work on displays that successfully demonstrates the school's response to improving the children's spiritual and cultural development.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

	compared with				
Performance in:	ć	similar school s			
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	Α	Α	Α	В	
Mathematics	A*	A*	Α	В	
Science	A	A	Α	Α	

Key	
well above average above average	A B
Average	С
Below average	D
well below average	Е

Results in the national tests for eleven year olds have been sustained in the last three years at a level which is well above the national average. When measured against schools where the take up of free school meals is of a similar proportion, results have been above average in English and mathematics and well above the average in science. The school set high targets for eleven year olds to reach in the national tests and these were reached.

Results for seven year olds in the national tests have been equally good. They have been well above those nationally in the last three years in reading, writing and mathematics, above those of similar schools in reading and mathematics, and well above in writing.

The sample of lessons and work seen suggest that standards in other subjects are also good. For example, children are doing well in information and communication technology (ICT) and in history. Some of the school's pupils who have music lessons in the village regularly perform to the school in assemblies to a very high standard in a string orchestra.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment		
Attitudes to the school	Children of all ages have very good attitudes to work and to school. They listen carefully, concentrate and try hard.		
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well. Members of the school council are trusted to deal with incidents, often minor disagreements, brought to their attention from their classmates. They try to resolve problems amicably before going to staff for help.		
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good. Younger pupils work and play together sensibly. Older pupils have a mature and thoughtful approach to their learning.		
Attendance	Above the average		

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Very good

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.

All lessons were judged to be at least satisfactory with 87 per cent of them being good or better and 53 per cent being very good. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well. In the very best lessons, planning shows how the full range of ability in the class is catered for, teaching very successfully engages pupils' interest, lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils learn a lot within a session. On a few occasions, teaching is more gently paced and not quite as successful in motivating children to produce their very best efforts.

The school has implemented the numeracy strategy effectively. Lessons are well planned to cover the fact that most classes have two year groups, particularly in group work. Teachers try hard to make mental and oral sessions equally demanding for the full range of two year classes containing talented youngsters as well as those with learning difficulties, for example by pitching questions at the level of the individual's ability.

The sample of literacy lessons observed and evidence from books and displays suggests that literacy is taught well. Children are taught to read competently and their writing is of a good standard. The national literacy strategy has been introduced effectively.

A number of parents, friends and relatives make a substantial contribution to pupils' learning by working with them in small groups during the workshop sessions and in other lessons. Teachers use these people's skills very well giving them chance to work on demanding tasks with small groups of children. This in turn releases teachers to work with greater concentration on a smaller number of groups.

Pupils work well by themselves, in pairs and in groups. Strengths of their learning include their willingness to ask questions to help their understanding, to engage in discussions and to

offer extended and complex explanations of what they are studying. $\mbox{\bf OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL}$

Aspect	Comment	
The quality and range of the curriculum	The youngest children are given experiences across the full range of the curriculum for reception although the lack of a permanent classroom affects the way this is organised. The curriculum for infants and juniors is very good. ICT opportunities are wide and developing well.	
Provision for pupils with special educational needs Very good. Teachers' planning ensures that children of abilities are catered for within lessons. Children with seducational needs have individual education plans; the similar rate of progress to others in their class but at the level.		
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good in all four aspects. There are good opportunities for children to enjoy the world around them and to feel excitement and wonder. Many of the displays reflect how the school helps children to look at people from other times and cultures. Children are given a range of social opportunities and encouraged to develop their moral sensibilities.	
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teachers are caring and supportive. Arrangements for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are sound. There are very good arrangements to assess children's learning and provide for their particular learning needs.	

The school works very well with parents, relatives and friends making excellent use of their special skills to support teaching and learning in the classrooms.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment		
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives a very good lead to staff with strong visions of the school's development within the community. She is well supported by the staff who are developing effective management skills for their particular responsibilities.		
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities Very well. Governors are actively involved in managing the school and statutory responsibilities are fulfilled.			
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher and governors evaluate what is happening in the school and use information well to plan what needs to be done next.		
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning and control are secure. Teachers are supported effectively with good quality resources for subjects. The principles of obtaining the best value for decisions are well understood.		

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved	
 The school expects pupils to work hard. The school helps children to become mature and responsible individuals. The school works closely with parents. Reading is well taught. Children like coming to the school and make good progress. Teaching is good. 	 Being better informed about how well children are getting on. Homework being set even on a voluntary basis. Working closely with parents. The range of extra curricular activities. 	

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. Children like coming to school, work hard and are making good progress. The team did not look specifically at children's competence as readers but within the context of other subjects, they are developing good skills by the time they are eleven. Children accept responsibilities readily and staff encourage them to learn how to be an active part of a community. The school involves parents in different ways with a good number helping in lessons such as the workshops. Teaching is very good overall. Some parents disapprove of the homework that the school sets regularly. However, although the school has said that this is voluntary, it has not made it clear enough for example by saying so in the Information Booklet. The school must set homework as this is a national requirement. The range of extra curricular activities including visits, is similar to what is usually found in schools of this size.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Results in the national tests for seven and eleven year olds are well above the average and pupils do well in other subjects.

- 1. Results in the national tests for eleven year olds have been sustained in the last three years at a level which is well above the national average. Boys and girls do equally well and around half of the group last year reached the higher level 5. The school also ensures that more able pupils have the chance to take the even higher level 6 tests and occasionally, pupils will achieve at that level. When measured against schools where the take up of free school meals is of a similar proportion, results have been above average in English and mathematics and well above the average in science. The school set high targets for eleven year olds to reach in the national tests and these were reached.
- 2. Results for seven year olds in the national tests have been equally good. They have been well above those nationally in the last three years in reading, writing and mathematics, above those of similar schools in reading and mathematics and well above in writing. Boys and girls do equally well and there is always a good number achieving the higher levels.
- 3. Pupils do well because they are taught effectively. Teachers make good use of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy; lessons are interesting and worthwhile. Lessons are prepared thoroughly. Teachers take care to meet the needs of classes which contain two year groups as well as a range of pupils from those with special educational needs to the more able. Careful assessments are made of what pupils can do and targets set for individual improvement. Records show that all pupils make at least the expected rate of progress. Those who have special educational needs make equally good progress through well matched activities and very good support. In science, an additional factor in achieving high standards is the superb quality of support provided by volunteer helpers who work with groups of pupils.
- 4. The sample of lessons and work seen suggest that standards in other subjects are also good. For example, children are doing well in information and communication technology (ICT). During the inspection, reception class children quickly learned how to draw lines and fill in enclosed spaces using the spray or the fill icons. Year 3/4 pupils learned how to write their names using a sequence of instructions in a logo program. Older pupils were mesmerised and somewhat tongue tied initially by their first video conference with another school where they were able to see and talk to the pupils at the same time. In history, Year 5/6 pupils knew about the Treaty of Versailles, could talk about some of the causes of World War 1 and were able to discuss the links with World War 11 intelligently. Some of the school's pupils who have music lessons in the village regularly perform in a string orchestra at assemblies and concerts showing skills of a very high standard. Others do well with recorders and wind instruments.

Teaching overall is very good

- 5. During the inspection, no teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Of the fifteen lessons seen, five were judged to be good and eight very good. Teaching for the under fives and in Key Stage 2 was consistently good or better.
- 6. Teachers plan all lessons well making good use of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. They have a good level of knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and make sure that they teach the basic skills well. In the very best teaching, lessons

move at a brisk pace and pupils learn a lot within a session. Teachers are positive and enthusiastic in their approach and take care to see that the content of lessons is suitable for the range of needs of the pupils in their classes. A good example is the way that teachers pitch some questions at an easier or harder level in the mental and oral parts of numeracy lessons or provide related activities to those the class is following for pupils with learning difficulties when the content is too hard. The group work of literacy and numeracy lessons works successfully because activities are presented at suitable levels and support is carefully targeted at the group which most needs this. In the context of teaching that is usually good and often very good, there are a few occasions when lessons move at a more sedate pace and sometimes more able pupils work through common tasks when they could start at a slightly higher level as in a Year 3/4 lesson on time. A scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics also suggests that, because of the sheer volume of material they complete, more able pupils may at times be doing some work which is too easy. A music lesson for the Year 1/2 class brought in a satisfactory level of response from the pupils but was not active enough to fully engage the pupils' interest especially as it was the first lesson in the afternoon after a windy playtime outside and children were unsettled.

- 7. Teachers make very good use of resources to enrich learning. Budding scientists were encouraged to experiment with types of resistance offered by different surfaces. Others considered whether air has weight or what chemical changes result from mixing plaster of paris with water. Younger pupils looked at what happens as a balloon filled with water and frozen begins to melt. In situations such as these, pupils are encouraged to say what might happen, to describe what did happen and to give reasons. In history, older pupils were fascinated by artefacts from World War 11 and middle juniors learned from looking at Ordinance survey maps that different countries may need completely different sets of symbols to describe their different geographical conditions.
- 8. The teacher in the reception class ensures that the youngest children come to school happily and settle quickly into school routines. Considerable thought has gone into planning activities around the restrictions that come from having no classroom base. Disruption of learning is kept to a minimum by organising activities to share another classroom as well as to use the hall and the scout hut for lessons. These excellent efforts, ensure that the children experience all the strands of the foundation curriculum. However, they cannot provide the natural flow and greater choice that comes from settled accommodation.
- 9. An unusual feature in this school is the level and quality of support from volunteers. Teachers recognise the skills that these people bring and deploy them to group tasks in ways that use the additional expertise very effectively. Good examples of excellent support were seen in a range of subjects including science, mathematics, art, design and technology and history.

Pupils' mature and responsive attitudes to school enable teachers and other adults to concentrate all their efforts on teaching and pupils' learning

10. In almost all lessons, pupils' attitudes to their work and their behaviour are very good. This contributes greatly to the calm and purposeful working atmosphere in classrooms enabling teachers to teach and to concentrate on helping those pupils who need further explanation. Pupils listen attentively as teachers and adults talk to them and apply themselves as diligently to written tasks as to practical ones. Very occasionally, some pupils are a little restless and slower to settle down. Throughout the school pupils work as well in pairs and in groups as they do on their individual tasks. Strengths of their learning skills include their willingness to ask questions to help their understanding, to engage in discussions and to offer extended and complex explanations of what they are studying.

11. The school council is a very useful way of helping the pupils to understand how a community lives and works together. Each class has elected members. Pupils work to help each other by resolving problems. Older members of the council show a quite mature and reflective sense of their responsibilities. For example they were able to discuss the difficulties of making decisions if one of them happens to be particularly friendly with one the complainants. They were very clear that friendship should not be allowed to cloud their decisions and that there might be occasions when it was better to refer to the headteacher. The headteacher and governors listen to suggestions made by pupils and do take action on their concerns. Younger pupils, for instance asked that the open classrooms be given separating walls so that they were not disturbed by noise from the adjoining class. This has been done. Action is being taken on other suggestions, such as playground improvements.

Leadership and management are very good

- 12. The headteacher gives a strong lead to developing teaching and learning within the school and she is well supported by staff. Teaching is monitored regularly and the results written down and shared. This makes sure that teaching continues to develop. For example, a focus on the mental and oral parts of numeracy lessons led to consideration of ways to improve pupils' speed of recall and ability to work out problems. These parts of numeracy lessons are now usually well presented and challenging. Another example is the way information from tests and assessments is carefully analysed to see what can be learned and how this can be used to improve teaching and the standards that pupils reach. These measures have ensured that pupils have maintained good results in the national tests and assessments.
- 13. The governors play an active role in management and have made some strong commitments to the school, for example in managing and monitoring the school's budget. Governors understand very well that they must secure the best value for money when it comes to spending. They have consulted with parents and pupils on a variety of issues taking their views into consideration.
- 14. The headteacher actively seeks to make as much use as possible of other funding to improve provision in the school. An example of this is the ICT suite which was built using community funding and benefits both the school and the community. She has further ideas for developing closer links if appropriate funding can be found which will continue to make the school an essential part of the village. For example bringing the village library into the school would extend provision for the children and ensure a facility for the village is maintained.

The school benefits from a lot of volunteer support and uses the expertise of these helpers very well to promote children's learning.

15. A good number of parents, relatives and friends help during 'workshops' and lessons. Each class runs a workshop each week covering several curriculum areas. Typically, a class might have science, design and technology, art and geography work all running at the same time. This works because the teachers and helpers work very closely and support is of a high quality. Almost all of the activities contain demanding tasks and are planned to make use of any special expertise or interests that the helpers might have. For example, in the two oldest classes, helpers take on one group in each class for science and that group of children benefits from a concentrated session which stretches their understanding of the topic being covered and extends their learning very well. As these sessions are in addition to the teachers' science lessons, they clearly contribute to the high standards that children are reaching in science by Year 6. At the same time other helpers support groups on activities which are equally demanding, for example in creative work. Teachers are then able to work with one or two groups with greater concentration because they have confidence in the

quality of support offered. In addition to the workshops, volunteers regularly help in classrooms, for example during mathematics lessons ensuring that children and teachers benefit from the help that another person can give in lessons.

There is a caring environment with very good provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

- 16. The school has a warm and friendly ethos. Staff, pupils and the families of pupils work together to create a caring environment in which the pupils grow in confidence. There are many opportunities for children to develop their social skills in lessons and in the other activities that the school provides. During the inspection, the school made its first video conference with another school in Penrith, one of a series of different types of communication skills that are being developed. Pupils become aware of their moral responsibilities to each other through involvement in making decisions and to the wider world through lessons and through activities such as fund raising.
- 17. The school is pleasantly situated on the north west coast and close to the Lake District. Photographs show that good use is made of outdoor pursuits which take advantage of the local countryside. For example, children wade across streams, scramble up small waterfalls and climb rock faces. The photographs reflect the range of feelings and emotions which the children are exposed to during these activities. What is most evident though is the delight that they show.
- 18. Many of the displays reflect how the school helps children to look at people from other times and cultures. They have learned about the different ways that people worship and the different types of special books and artefacts that are used in religions. Although the area does not have a diverse mix of people, where possible, the school does invite those available to talk about their cultures and beliefs at appropriate times. For example, a Chinese student from the local public school helped the children to learn about the Chinese New Year. Pupils' own paintings, drawings and three dimensional work show that they have studied different types of art from those that are more primitive such as the rock painting of the Aborigines to the more sophisticated European art of the Impressionists.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The building has limited space and is currently short of one classroom

18. Governors are working hard to improve the school's accommodation. Classrooms and corridors have been redesigned to make maximum use of space. However some classrooms are quite small and have unusual shapes which are difficult to manage. At present, the reception class has no room but uses a mixture of classrooms, hall and the scout hut whilst waiting for a new room to be completed. Every effort is made to minimise the effects on the children and to ensure that a full curriculum is offered within the week. These arrangements do affect the way that the curriculum is organised but are of a temporary nature until the new classroom is built. A new computer suite and library room have been built and furnished with special grants. This gives excellent resources for ICT but there are limitations for library use since it is a shared facility. The library section is quite small and does not offer good facilities for research as the room is used extensively for ICT purposes. Storage space in the school is very limited as is space for administration with the headteacher and secretaries sharing one small room.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

19. The school successfully identifies what it needs to do within its school development plan. In relation to the one issue identified, governors are aware of the school's short comings but should continue to keep improvement of accommodation as a consideration especially in relation to storage, office space and any possibility of improving the library.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	15
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	5

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	53	34	13	0	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	
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	156
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	17

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.42
National comparative data	5.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.1

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	14	9	23

National Curriculum T	est/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
	Boys	14	13	14
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	23	22	23
Percentage of pupils	School	100	96	100
at NC level 2 or above	National	84	85	90

Teachers' Ass	Teachers' Assessments		Mathematics	Science
	Boys	14	14	14
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	23	23	23
Percentage of pupils	School	100	100	100
at NC level 2 or above	National	84	88	88

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	11	10	21

National Curriculum T	National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Mathematics	Science
	Boys	9	9	11
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	19	19	21
Percentage of pupils	School	90	90	100
at NC level 4 or above	National	75	72	85

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	8	8	11
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	18	18	21

Percentage of pupils	School	90	90	100
at NC level 4 or above	National	70	72	80

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	156	
Any other minority ethnic group	156	

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)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	223
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	94

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanen t
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	2000

	£
Total income	322216
Total expenditure	317787
Expenditure per pupil	2037
Balance brought forward from previous year	5819
Balance carried forward to next year	10248

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	316
Number of questionnaires returned	83

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	43	7	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	48	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	45	1	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	55	13	2	0
The teaching is good.	53	39	1	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	48	13	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	35	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	34	1	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	29	51	13	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	41	42	10	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	51	1	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	18	34	23	12