INSPECTION REPORT

SKELTON COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

York

LEA area: City of York

Unique reference number: 121335

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Herbert

Reporting inspector: Dr Brian Male 14906

Dates of inspection: 21 - 22 May 2001

Inspection number: 194628

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Brecksfield

Skelton

York

Postcode: YO30 1YB

Telephone number: 01904 470344

Fax number: 01904 470344

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr David Coutts

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school How good the school is What the school does well What could be improved How the school has improved since its last inspection Standards Pupils' attitudes and values Teaching and learning Other aspects of the school How well the school is led and managed Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	13
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	14
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	15

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This community primary school takes pupils from four to 11 years old and is maintained by the City of York Local Education Authority. It is set in extensive grounds and serves the village of Skelton just to the north of York. At the time of the inspection there were 122 pupils on roll in five classes. Most pupils start school with standards of attainment above those usually expected. Eight per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals which is well below the national average. Eighteen per cent of the pupils are on the special educational needs register which is below the national average.

At the time of the inspection, the school was led by its deputy headteacher because the usual headteacher had been seconded to run another school. Immediately before the inspection the deputy had just been appointed as headteacher. He is therefore referred to in the report as 'the new headteacher' and his name appears above as the headteacher.

In the last two years, the school has received several national awards: the Basic Skills Agency 'Quality Mark', the Investors in People Award, and the School Achievement Award for Excellence.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school where pupils attain high standards, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils make very good progress across the school. There is a very positive ethos and very good standards of behaviour. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and are confident learners. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The new headteacher provides very good leadership and management and a clear educational direction. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils attain high standards, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- The quality of teaching is very good across the school.
- Standards of behaviour are very good and pupils have very good attitudes to work.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good, there are excellent systems for evaluation, and the new headteacher provides a very clear educational direction.

What could be improved

• The school needs to draw up a plan of how to use the very large budget surplus that it has held over the last few years.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1997, and has made very good progress since then. The school's scores in national tests for 11 year olds remain well above the national average, and the average of similar schools. The quality of teaching has improved and is now very good overall. Pupils' standards of behaviour and attitudes to their work are still very good. The new headteacher provides a very good level of leadership and management. The school has fully addressed all of the key issues raised by the last report: there is equal access to the curriculum for all Year 2 pupils, there are job descriptions for curriculum co-ordinators who now manage their subjects very effectively, and information

technology is now well used and standards have risen significantly. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, the school is very well placed to continue its trend of improvement and high standards.

STANDARDS

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

	compared with					
Performance in:	á	similar schools				
	1998	1999	2000	2000		
English	Α	Α	Α	А		
Mathematics	А	А	Α	А		
Science	Α	A*	A*	A*		

Key	
very high well above average above average average below average well below average	A* A B C D E

The school's scores in national tests for 11 year olds in 2000 were well above the national average in English and mathematics, and in the top five per cent of schools in science. These standards have been consistently high over the last four years. Inspection findings show that standards are likely to be even higher this year in all three subjects. Standards at Key Stage 1 are also well above the national average. Standards in information technology have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now also well above the national average. Pupils make very good progress through the school and the standards they attain represent very good achievement. This very good progress results from the very good quality of the teaching, the school's thorough systems of targeting, the pupils' very good attitudes to school, and the support they receive from their parents.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They take an interest in their work, are keen to learn, and sustain their concentration well. They are confident learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	There is a very good standard of behaviour across the school. Pupils have a very good sense of responsibility for the school and are proud of it. They move sensibly around the building and have a very good sense of the standards of behaviour expected.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good across the school. Pupils are friendly and open in their approach, and get on very well with each other. They have a genuine concern for others and a very caring approach.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is well above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 4-5	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very 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.

In the school as a whole, the quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Of the lessons seen, 60 per cent were very good, 25 per cent good and 15 per cent satisfactory. This is a very high standard indeed.

Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and work very hard to ensure a good quality of education for all pupils. Lessons are very well focused on the learning objectives and provide a high level of challenge for pupils. There are good systems for dealing with the mixed age ranges in each class. There is a brisk pace to lessons that promotes the very good rate of progress that pupils make. Teachers have very good questioning skills that promote thought and understanding. Pupils respond very well to the teaching and are confident in their learning.

There is very good teaching of literacy and numeracy and the school is particularly effective at meeting the needs of all its pupils. There is good support from teaching assistants.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very rich curriculum for its pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basic subjects of English, mathematics and science that ensures high standards, but there is also good provision for the other subjects with practical and investigative activities. The use of information technology has been very well developed.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for these pupils. There are good systems for identifying needs and for providing extra support. The individual education plans are helpful in identifying targets, and the Code of Practice is followed appropriately.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is very good provision for pupils' personal development. Social development is very well promoted from the reception class where children learn to consider others and co-operate well. There is wide provision for cultural development and clear moral guidance. Pupils develop a very good sense of ownership of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a very positive ethos for learning and a caring environment where pupils are well known as individuals. There are good arrangements for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. The arrangements for assessment and tracking pupils' progress are outstanding.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new headteacher provides very good leadership and management for the school, and sets a particularly good tone for caring relationships. He has already set a very clear educational direction and has developed a very good overview of the school's work. The acting deputy headteacher provides very effective support, and is a very good role model as a teacher. Other teachers provide very good subject management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a good overview of the life and work of the school and are very active in their support. Many visit the school on a regular basis and make a significant contribution.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is outstanding in its evaluation of its performance. There are extensive systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets. These are analysed and reviewed rigorously and steps are taken to amend provision accordingly. There is a very reflective approach that underpins the school's success.
The strategic use of resources	The school has a very large budget surplus (over 20 per cent of its income) that it has held for some years. The governors have no clear plan for using this money, although there are several projects in mind. The new headteacher is already developing such a plan. In its expenditure, the school applies the principles of best value appropriately. The school's income per pupil is slightly above average, but pupils make very good progress, so the school gives good value for money.

The school building provides spacious and well developed accommodation, and the grounds are extensive, although the designated play area for children under five is somewhat restricted. There is a good level of staffing and of resources across the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved		
 The teaching is good. Pupils make good progress. Expectations are high. The school is very approachable. There are good leadership and management. 	There is no area where a significant number of parents would like to see improvement, although some are concerned that the school focuses too narrowly on test scores.		

Parents were very supportive of the school in the questionnaires and the meeting with inspectors. The inspection agrees with all their positive feelings about the school. The school's emphasis on success in national tests has not narrowed its approach to the curriculum, which is wide. The approach of the new headteacher places less pressure on pupils, and this has been rewarded by even higher scores this year.

Many parents help in school and attend open days and meetings. The new headteacher is intending to extend parental participation through the creation of a formal parent/teacher association.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils attain high standards, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

- 1. The school's scores in national tests for 11 year olds in 2000, were well above the national average in English and mathematics, and in the top five per cent of schools in science. These standards have been consistently high over the last four years. Inspection findings show that standards are likely to be even higher this year in all three subjects. Standards at Key Stage 1 are also well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Reading and writing standards have been consistently high over the last four years, and standards in mathematics have shown a strong trend of improvement.
- 2. Standards of reading are high across the school. Reception class pupils are already able to recognise a wide range of words, such as car, bus and helicopter in their transport topic, and use their knowledge of letter sounds to read new words. By the age of seven, most pupils read fluently and with understanding. They are keen to talk about what they have read and understand the main points. By the age of 11, many pupils have developed a sophisticated approach to literature and some are able to read with interest such books as Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte. Many have already acquired the higher order skills to look for meanings beyond the literal. For example, a Year 6 pupil reading "You'll never walk alone" by Gareth Owen was able to explain why Arthur says "I was looking the other way" when asked to take a penalty kick, even though this is not made explicit in the text.
- 3. Standards of writing are also high across the school. Even the youngest children are already able to write fairly complex sentences; for example, after a history lesson visit, a reception class pupil was able to write "Florence Nightingale was so special because she helped the poorly soldiers. She gave medicine and a drink to the men". Pupils are very aware of the importance of punctuation; for example, a Year 1 pupil was making up a sentence with word cards and found she did not have a full stop, so she immediately drew one on a piece of paper and added it to her sentence. By the age of seven, all pupils attain the expected level, and many attain the higher level where writing is organised, imaginative and clear. Some have already picked up a distinctive style; for example one Year 2 pupil started a story, "Last month, well I think it was last month, we went to visit our Grandma.". Others have begun to use words to create effect; for example the word 'paced' in "He paced into the temple with a nasty grin on his face". By the age of 11, some pupils have attained very high standards indeed. Writing is often sophisticated and mature with rhythms and literary devices used to support meaning. For example a Year 6 pupil started a story.

"Isn't it amazing how a small child could turn round the fears of a whole village? Some would find it untrue. Some would call it impossible. But this is exactly what a small boy called Ivan did".

4. There are also high standards in mathematics across the school and pupils have a very good facility to handle numbers. Pupils follow a broad mathematical curriculum that moves beyond number work, and involves an understanding of processes. Reception class children are already able to list different ways of making ten by adding two numbers, and some show their full understanding of the process by

listing the options in logical pattern (1+9, 2+8 etc). This understanding develops very well through Key Stage 1 and by the age of seven, pupils are able to recognise and explain complex patterns. For example, a Year 2 pupil working on ways of making 19 with three odd numbers recognised that there is a logical sequence to varying the three numbers that increases the options. By the age of 11, mathematical understanding is very well developed. In data handling, pupils understand the median and mode of a range of values, and can interpret a variety of charts and graphs. Very good understanding of number was shown by one Year 6 pupil who was able to sequence correctly the fractions 3/8, 9/16, 5/6 and 6/7 by arguing that 1/7 must be smaller than 1/6 as it is divided into seven pieces, therefore 6/7 is larger than 5/6 as it is only 1/7 less than a whole. She also confidently noted that 3/8 is less than a half whilst 9/16 is more!

- 5. Standards in information technology have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now well above the national average. Pupils are involved in a wide range of activities involving, word processing, desktop publishing, simulations, data handling and control procedures. They use the computers and other equipment with confidence, competence and enthusiasm. This starts with the youngest pupils using the computer to list words and write stories, and using the 'roamer' to programme movement functions. Older children can use sophisticated programs to design a classroom layout and can devise and add their own keys.
- 6. Pupils make very good progress through the school and the standards represent very good achievement. This very good progress results from the good quality of the teaching, the school's thorough systems of targeting, the pupils' very good attitudes to school, and the support they receive from their parents.

The quality of teaching is very good across the school.

- 7. In the school as a whole, the quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Of the lessons seen, 60 per cent were very good, 25 per cent good and 15 per cent satisfactory. This is a very high standard indeed.
- 8. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and these underpin the pupils' good attitudes to their work. Teachers listen well and value their pupils' answers and contributions. The very good relationships are used to ensure good discipline and to encourage pupils to reflect openly, as in a Year 6 'circle time' lesson where pupils shared thoughts and fears about bullying in the context of moving to secondary school. The teacher's sensitive handling of this made the lesson particularly valuable.
- 9. Teachers work very hard in planning their lessons and the curriculum, and are always very well prepared. Clear learning objectives are set and the lessons focus very well on these objectives; for example, in a Year 3/4 mathematics lesson, all discussion and activities focused very precisely on the objective of learning the compass points and this was well achieved by the end.
- 10. There is a high level of challenge in lessons, in terms of the work set, the learning objectives and the teachers' questions. This high challenge ensures that pupils make good progress. For example, a Year 1/2 English lesson required pupils to compare and contrast the structure of two stories by the same author, and a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson challenged pupils to work out the values of fractions by calculating the decimal equivalents.

- 11. There are good systems across the school for coping with the mixed age ranges in each class. The curriculum has been carefully planned to ensure that topics are not repeated or missed and teachers target work within lessons to the different groups within the class. For example, the simple technique of giving reception and Year 1 pupils different coloured 'number fans' enables the teacher to ask different questions of each year group ("1 more than 6" and "4 less than 19") and immediately check the responses. In a Year 4/5 mathematics lesson, the teacher set different tasks to each year group within a data-handling exercise to ensure an appropriate level of challenge. This successful approach takes much hard work and dedication on the part of the teachers.
- 12. There is a good structure to the best lessons that takes the pupils through a sequence of thought processes that develops their understanding. For example, the Year 5/6 mathematics lesson on fractions gave three sets of fractions to sequence. The first set had the same denominators, the second set the same numerators. In the third set, both were different, so sequencing was virtually impossible without converting them to decimals and so the need for such conversion became apparent. Of course, the sequencing was only 'virtually' impossible because it was in this lesson that one pupil's particularly good understanding of fractions enabled her to sequence the fractions anyway, but the point (decimal and otherwise!) was not lost.
- 13. Much of teaching seen during the inspection was of a similar style that centred around the teacher. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 2. There are good techniques such as the use of whiteboards to vary the pupils' response but the range of learning strategies and opportunities for independence in learning, where pupils plan their own investigations and methods of recording (requirements of the National Curriculum) are relatively limited.
- 14. The targeting of work to different groups makes very good use of the extensive assessment information that the school collects. The school is particularly effective at arranging extra support for identified groups for specific purposes. This works very effectively for pupils with special educational needs, and for those pupils capable of high attainment. There is some very effective support from teaching assistants in these groups, and in the teaching of information technology.

Standards of behaviour are very good and pupils have very good attitudes to work.

- 15. Standards of behaviour are very good across the school. Pupils are open, friendly and polite, they move sensibly around the building and have a very good sense of the standards of behaviour expected. They have a good sense of responsibility for each other and for the school. Their sense of responsibility to the school was beautifully illustrated when a group of children was talking informally to an inspector in the warm sunshine of the playground, telling her how much they enjoyed school. When one of the younger pupils started to recount incidents that might not have shown the school in the very best light, older pupils gently led the pupil away to play elsewhere!
- 16. Pupils work and play very well together in class and at breaks. Even the youngest pupils co-operate well in games and in their role-play area, sharing equipment sensibly. They are friendly and open in their approach, and have a genuine concern for others. There was a very pleasant and relaxed atmosphere at breaks

- and lunchtimes with pupils playing sensibly on the field. The co-operation was still evident with some pupils forming daisy-chain production lines with some collecting and others threading.
- 17. Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They take an interest in their work, are keen to learn and sustain their concentration well. They are confident learners, and this was illustrated by the young pupil with the resourcefulness to create her own full stop card. They develop a good sense of ownership of the school and use its resources well; for example, older pupils came to use the photocopier themselves and did so sensibly and confidently.

The quality of leadership and management is very good, there are excellent systems for evaluation, and the new headteacher provides a very clear educational direction.

- 18. The new headteacher provides very good leadership and management for the school, and sets a particularly good tone for caring relationships. He has already set a very clear educational direction and has developed a very good overview of the school's work. He has a particularly good overview of the curriculum and the systems for ensuring that pupils in the mixed age-range classes access the appropriate curriculum. Although only recently appointed, he brings not only enthusiasm but confidence and a sense of authority to the role. The acting deputy headteacher provides very effective support, and is a very good role model as a teacher.
- 19. The role of subject managers has been developed significantly since the last inspection. Teachers have worked very hard indeed to build up an overview of progress through their subject areas and to ensure that the curriculum is well planned. The structure of planning, from the four year cycle to individual lesson plan, is very thorough and underpins the very good teaching and the progress pupils make. The school has responded particularly well to the many new initiatives that schools are expected to undertake, such as the new Foundation Curriculum. The amount of work put in by subject managers, and the quality of their overview is impressive.
- 20. There are excellent systems for evaluating the school's work and a very reflective ethos that underpins the school's success. There are extensive systems for tracking pupils' progress through tests and assessments, lessons are evaluated and targets are set for groups and individuals. The school analyses these data rigorously and makes very good use of the analysis to focus resources on areas of identified need. For example, groups of pupils are identified with particular learning needs such as extra support to learn a new concept, or to be extended. Extra support is then arranged through teaching assistants or volunteers so that these needs can be met. This is very good practice indeed.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school needs to draw up a plan of how to use the very large budget surplus that it has held over the last few years.

21. The school holds a budget surplus of over 20 per cent of its annual income. The normal practice is for schools to hold up to a five per cent surplus and only hold beyond that proportion for a specified project. The surplus was originally accrued to

maintain staffing in the event of a fall in the school's roll. However, numbers are now much steadier. The governors have several projects in mind, such as creating a permanent classroom to replace the 'mobile' classroom, and creating a computer suite. Both of these would be worthwhile projects, but the budget surplus, although large, will not stretch to both. The new headteacher is already costing out these projects and looking for ways to raise extra funding and to prioritise within the funds available.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

22. In order to make best use of the funding available, the school needs to draw up a plan of how to use its budget surplus to the best advantage of the pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	57	26	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	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	122
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	22

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	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total	
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	11	6	17	

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
	Boys	10	11	10
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	16	17	16
Percentage of pupils	School	94 (91)	100 (91)	94 (95)
at NC level 2 or above	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	10	10	10
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	16	16	16
Percentage of pupils	School	94 (91)	94 (95)	94 (100)
at NC level 2 or above	National	84 (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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	9	11	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	7	9	8
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	10	10	11
	Total	17	19	19
Percentage of pupils	School	85 (88)	95 (76)	95 (94)
at NC level 4 or above	National	75 (70)	72 (68)	85 (78)

Teachers' Asse	essments	English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	8	9	9
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	9	10	11
	Total	17	19	20
Percentage of pupils	School	85 (82)	95 (82)	100 (94)
at NC level 4 or above	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	107
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.6
Average class size	24.2

Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	42

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a

Total aggregate hours worked per week n/a	Total number of education support staff	n/a
	Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a

Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000	
	£	
Total income	240,617	
Total expenditure	1,989	
Expenditure per pupil	242,505	
Balance brought forward from previous year	48,374	
Balance carried forward to next year	46,486	

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	122
Number of questionnaires returned	41

Percentage of responses in each category

My child likes school.

My child is making good progress in school.

Behaviour in the school is good.

My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.

The teaching is good.

I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.

I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
44	49	7	0	0
63	32	5	0	0
44	54	2	0	0
39	46	12	2	0
73	24	2	0	0
46	41	12	0	0
83	15	0	0	2
76	24	0	0	0
46	49	5	0	0
71	29	0	0	0
44	54	2	0	0
49	49	2	0	0