

INSPECTION REPORT

St JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Waltham Cross

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117429

Acting Headteacher: Mr A Rafferty

Reporting inspector: Michael J Pipes
17651

Dates of inspection: 8 – 9 October 2001

Inspection number: 195836

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 and Nursery
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Royal Avenue, Waltham Cross Hertfordshire
Postcode:	EN8 7EN
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr. Dermot O'Neil
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6 - 9
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 - 12
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	12 - 13
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	13
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	14 - 17

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school with a nursery. There are 242 pupils (108 boys; 134 girls) in the main school and 41 part-time pupils (23 boys; 18 girls) in the nursery. It is bigger than the average primary school. It serves a mixed catchment area and is over-subscribed. Appeals for admission have been allowed, taking the intake above 30 and creating considerable organisational problems in view of the expected limit of 30 on infant class sizes. Attainment of the pupils on entry is similar to the national average but with weaknesses in English: about a third of the pupils have bi-lingual parents and, although English is their first language, some of the pupils lack oral fluency. Forty-six pupils, above the national average, need support in developing their English as an additional language. There are 34 other pupils with a background in a different heritage. The percentage of pupils (six per cent) known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Twenty-eight pupils, below the national average, are on the register of special educational needs; three of them, similar to the national average, have statements.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. The children make very good progress in the nursery. Standards are above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and well above average by the end of Key Stage 2. There is no difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils who have special educational needs, or speak English as an additional language, make good progress. They are included fully and successfully in all aspects of the life of the school. All the pupils achieve well. The trend in performance over the past four years has been in line with national improvements. Teaching is very good in the nursery and good in the main school. The leadership and management by governors, the acting head, acting deputy and the subject leaders are very good. The school manages on a below-average income per pupil and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- achieves above average standards with an average intake and below-average funding
- has an ethos in which attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are very good
- gives very good learning opportunities, including those for spiritual, moral and social development
- there is a very strong sense of teamwork and mutual support between governors and staff

What could be improved

- improve standards overall by ensuring the pupils' achievement and progress in all year groups is up to the standard of the best in the school
- extend the range of teaching strategies, using the experience of the literacy and numeracy initiatives and using monitoring and evaluation to spread good practice in the school

*The strengths outweigh significantly the areas where improvement will move the school forward.
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 June 1997. High standards of attainment and behaviour have been maintained. The four key issues: developing the role of subject co-ordinators; better assessment to match tasks to the pupils' needs; increasing the information in reports to parents; and improving design and technology have all been tackled successfully. The school has made good progress in the last four years and has the capacity and will to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	B	A*	A	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A	A*	A	A	
science	A	A	C	D	

The comparison with similar schools is based on the percentage of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal. The A* grades show the school's performance to have been in the top five per cent nationally. In 2000, standards by the end of Key Stage 1 were: A in reading; A in writing; B in mathematics and one grade lower (B,B,C) compared with similar schools. Over the last four years the school has maintained above-average standards, improving in line with the national trend. The school's targets for 2001 were that in English 89 per cent should achieve at least Level 4 (actual: 94 per cent) and, in mathematics, 94 per cent (actual: 97 per cent). Standards in English and mathematics are well above the national average and in music are very high. There are no significant weaknesses. The disappointing results in science, in 2000, have been analysed and appropriate action taken.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Clear expectations. Pupils are enthusiastic and positive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Strong moral and social framework. Pupils understand the need for mutual respect and good behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Based on strong Christian principles, the pupils develop as rounded personalities and are sensitive in developing good relationships.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Extended visits to families overseas increase the absence rate, spoiling otherwise good figures.

The chairman of the governing body, the local priest, is in the school frequently. He brings a strong sense of 'family' and unity. The moral framework is based on clear Christian and spiritual values.

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	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.

Teaching is good overall and very good in the nursery and in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. Learning and the progress made by the pupils match this pattern. All pupils achieve well and make significant progress compared with the national average. Forty-five per cent of the teaching seen was very good and 86 per cent at least good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Both English and mathematics are taught well. Valuable lessons are being learnt from the variety and pace of the lessons planned for the literacy and numeracy initiatives. These good practices are filtering into teaching in other subjects. Particular strengths include: the management of pupils and their learning; the very good use of, and consultation with, support and specialist staff; how well the teachers know their pupils. The school meets the wide range of needs of its pupils very well; all are fully and sensitively included. Slight weaknesses include: the lack of sufficient progress in some of the year groups; insufficient use of monitoring and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of teaching; the restricted range of teaching styles employed by some teachers. In some classes there is too little evidence of independent learning and investigation, particularly appropriate for the higher-attaining pupils. A minor but remarkable strength is the very high quality of blackboard writing and presentation throughout the school, a very good role model for pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The school recognises the broad educational needs of the whole child in the very good range of learning opportunities it provides.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school works hard with pupils and parents to reduce the need for special educational provision.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good arrangements for pupils learning English as an additional language raise their standards to at least the national average by the time they leave school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Provision for social development is excellent; for spiritual and moral growth very good and for awareness of, and sensitivity to, cultural and multicultural issues good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. The school makes very good provision for personal development, but there are some minor health and safety issues and some procedures need updating.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and gives good emphasis to the enriching subjects such as art and music. Standards in music are very high and there has been very good progress in developing information and communication technology facilities and teaching. The pupils and their families are well known and the chairman of governors brings a very strong family feeling to the school. The school works closely and very well with parents. The school needs a 'risk analysis' regime for matters like health and safety.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Satisfactory interim arrangements have brought to the school an acting headteacher who is giving very good leadership. All the adults who work in the school are close-knit and highly mutually supportive. The school is very well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors know their school in considerable detail, and the parents and the pupils very well. They are taking proper care over the appointment of the next headteacher and have a good appreciation of the school's needs.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school is a thinking community, based on strong Christian principles. There is a high degree of openness in talking about performance, strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school manages very well on below-average funding and spends specific grant monies appropriately.

The school is fully staffed but there have been recruitment difficulties: of a headteacher and a Year 4 teacher. The community is coping very well with interim arrangements. The management of the school is overseen perceptively and wisely by the governors. The school secretary contributes extremely effectively to the smooth running of the school. The school is very conscious of the need to use its resources in such a way as to obtain best value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their child likes school • The teaching is good • Their child is expected to work hard • Their child makes good progress • Behaviour in the school is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their child gets the right amount of homework • Closeness of working with parents • An interesting range of activities outside lessons

The support of parents is overwhelmingly positive, reinforced at the pre-inspection meeting and in conversations in the playground at the end of the day. Inspectors agree that a more regular and consistent programme of homework would be helpful and that parents, in wanting the school to work more closely with them, might have information about progress and targets even more frequently. Some parents wondered if the school might make more use of the main alternative heritage (Italian; Sicilian) for cultural enrichment. The range of activities outside lessons compares favourably with what is seen in other schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- **achieves above-average standards with an average intake and below-average funding**
1. Baseline assessments of the children's development and attainment are taken a few weeks after they enter the nursery and then again before they enter the National Curriculum years starting in Year 1. These show that the entry is similar to the Hertfordshire average and has been improving marginally over the four years since the last inspection. Children progress very well in the very good nursery. They are well on target to achieve the specified early learning goals by the time they transfer to Year R, still a foundation curriculum year group, in the main school. The second baseline assessment verifies this good progress and that there has been a proper balance in their curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 1, when the pupils take national tests at the end of Year 2, standards are above the national average. Further good progress through Key Stage 2 leads to well above average standards in English and mathematics by the time the pupils take national tests at the end of Year 6.
 2. The school is very careful with its money. Accumulated reserves have been set aside because the governors wisely foresaw financial demands looming. First, they have had difficulty finding a new headteacher but they are being patient and careful to make the right appointment. Secondly, they see a possible need for recruitment and retention incentives to maintain a high quality teaching staff. Thirdly, they have an intake number of 35 but a national requirement to keep infant class sizes below 30. They are working on a medium-term strategy but, for the time being, are affording two teachers with the Year 2 cohort and putting some of the older Year R pupils with some of the younger Year 1. Lastly, the school is one of the larger primary schools in Hertfordshire and the formula funding gives it less per pupil than nearly all the other schools.
- **has an ethos in which attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are very good**
3. Parents support the school strongly. They say that their children like coming to the school, that teaching is good, that behaviour is good and that the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. Based on clear Christian principles, the mission is for all in the school community to 'travel with hope, joyfully and peacefully, on a journey of spiritual and academic growth'. It does this very well. A very positive attitude to life, loving and learning enthuses the whole school including: the caretaker, who keeps a spotlessly clean school; the cooks, who know all the pupils by name; the support staff, who work closely and very effectively with the teachers; the secretary, who knows just about everything. The chairman of the governing body gives a lot of time and pastoral support, as friend and priest. He is particularly watchful and caring while the school has interim management and leadership arrangements. Though academic attainment is very important, the school conveys the conviction that attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships underpin all that it is trying to do.

4. There are several reasons for this very good feature of the school. The parents are well known through a succession of children passing through the school, strong family connections and the common commitment to the Roman Catholic church. There is relatively little pupil mobility; most of the pupils start at the school and take eight years to pass right through it. The school is over-subscribed; parents feel very fortunate to have gained a place and are very co-operative. All staff are concerned and caring for all the pupils whatever their capability or needs, thus applying effectively the principles of inclusion. This transmits to the pupils who are very caring of each other. The pupils are socially aware and polite. They initiate and sustain sensible conversations. They have an early and well-developed capacity to see the other person's point of view. All this translates into very good attitudes and behaviour.
- **gives very good learning opportunities, including those for spiritual, moral and social development**
5. The curriculum is designed to achieve balance, to meet statutory requirements and to provide a complete, rounded, high quality education for the pupils. The school does this very well. The governors have a very good understanding of their responsibilities. Their policies, for instance for sex education, are clear and well communicated. Governors set the tone for the ethos of the school and are careful in discharging their responsibilities to provide good resources and high quality staff. The school's mission places great emphasis on the development of the whole child. All staff take for granted, and as a starting point for planning, the school's philosophy regarding spiritual, moral and social development. Because these aspects are so embedded in the school's culture, provision is unobtrusive but very effective.
 6. Good attention has been given to maintaining balance and a good sense of proportion in the developing curriculum demands placed upon the school. The literacy and numeracy initiatives have been introduced successfully. The consequent adjustment to timetables and time allocations has been managed well. The need to keep infant class sizes below 30 with a full intake of 35 pupils in each year group has been handled well, for the time being. The pupils in the split Year R/Year 1 class are not disadvantaged. Though there is some common teaching, as in the initial literacy hour sessions, there is good recognition of different needs when the pupils work in their age-related groups. There is proper provision for discovery learning for the foundation stage pupils and a more rigorous academic approach for the pupils following the National Curriculum. Music continues to be a strong feature in the school: evidence was seen of Year 4 pupils writing background music to strict specifications for a school video. Though only a small room could be made available, the school has introduced information and communication technology very successfully: it is taught well. Standards in art remain high and there is evidence of good work in a broad range of subjects. In all teaching there is recognition of, and attention to, moral, social and spiritual issues.
- **there is a very strong sense of teamwork and mutual support between governors and staff**
7. At the time of this inspection there are interim leadership arrangements. The governors have been unable to make a new substantive appointment and an experienced headteacher is in the school on secondment. The deputy head has also left and one of the teachers is temporarily promoted to acting deputy. The arrangements are working well.

8. The acting headteacher is bringing experience and maturity; the deputy is contributing very effectively and developing a broad range of management skills. The governors, staff and parents are supporting them very well. The governors have a clear view of the needs of the school and are showing patience and persistence in finding the right person to be the next headteacher. In the meantime they are giving a lot of support, by their regular presence and by their encouragement, to the temporary team. The chairman, in particular, is spending a lot of time in the school giving pastoral support.
9. The temporary arrangements, satisfactory as such, are working very well because of the strong team spirit and high degree of mutual support. Consistent with the clear Christian ethos in the school, there is a will to see the best in each other and to offer praise, encouragement and support wherever possible. There is no 'waiting to see what develops' with regard to the appointment of the Headteacher. The school is making firm plans and getting on with the job of raising standards and providing a secure and happy environment. The acting headteacher is accepted fully. This strong team spirit is having a positive impact on the education provided.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- **Improve standards overall by ensuring the pupils' achievement and progress in all year groups is up to the standard of the best in the school**
10. Overall, the pupils' progress is good and, over the time that they are in the school, they achieve well. Progress is, however, uneven. It is best in the nursery and in the year groups where national tests are being taken: Years 2 and 6. With good teaching, progress is also good in Years 4 and 5. The school now faces the challenge of bringing all the teaching up to the very high standards seen in some of the classes and improving the learning and progress of pupils in the other classes.
 11. The school is already monitoring teaching standards. However, except in Music and ICT, subject co-ordinators do not have the opportunity to work alongside colleagues, sharing expertise and offering constructive criticism. There is no formal system for monitoring the learning and progress of different groups of pupils, except for those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language. However, in the better lessons all pupils, though at different levels of attainment and with varying degrees of understanding, make good progress. In the less successful lessons one or more groups of pupils are less well-attended to than the focus group. It is too often the higher-attaining pupils who are slightly neglected.
- **extend the range of teaching strategies, using the experience of the literacy and numeracy initiatives and using monitoring and evaluation to spread good practice in the school**
12. The literacy initiative has been introduced successfully and the school has recently added the numeracy equivalent. There is considerable enthusiasm amongst the pupils and their teachers for the range of activities and varied approaches to learning. The 'rapid fire' mental arithmetic session, where taken in the intended manner, is proving exciting and challenging. Pupils enjoy the mild element of competition and see the need for speed and accuracy. However, the opportunity for teachers to give intensive support to one of the groups during the middle part of the lesson is not being widely enough recognised and used. The plenary session is used, in the best instances, to test recall and understanding through selective questioning based on the

teacher's knowledge of the pupils. In the weaker sessions, however, it is used more for 'show and tell', which is good for developing the pupils' listening and speaking skills but less good for developing their understanding.

13. There is now a need to spread the good practice that exists in some areas of the school, by arranging for teachers to observe each other and to discuss the effectiveness of different teaching strategies. The range recommended in the literacy and numeracy initiatives is already being used in some other subjects, and most teachers are confident enough to try different approaches to meet their pupils' learning needs. Other teachers are more constrained, with too much reliance on direct instruction and worksheets. The school has the capacity to improve these aspects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

14. To improve the attainment of the pupils and the quality of education provided by the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

(1) Improve standards overall by:-

- monitoring and evaluating how different groups learn and make progress in each class
- sharing best practice to bring pupils' achievement in all classes up to the standard of the best in the school.
(Paragraphs 10, 11, 12)

(2) Extend the range of teaching strategies employed by:-

- using the literacy and numeracy lesson planning model more widely and in other subjects
- ensuring that all teachers vary and match their teaching strategies to the needs of all pupils in their classes
- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of different teaching strategies to bring the pupils' learning in all classes up to the standard of the best in the school,
(Paragraphs 10, 12, 13)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	9	3	0	0	0
Percentage	0	45	41	14	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents nearly five percentage points.

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)	20.5	242
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	28

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	64

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.05
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	17	16	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	16
	Girls	16	16	15
	Total	32	32	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (97)	97 (100)	94 (97)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	16
	Girls	16	15	16
	Total	32	31	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (100)	94 (100)	97 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. Care should be taken when interpreting these tables as the performance of each child is represented by a movement of 3 per cent up or down in the school's statistics.

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	19	14	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	19	19
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	32	32	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	97 (97)	97 (97)	97 (97)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	18	19
	Girls	11	13	13
	Total	28	31	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (80)	94 (90)	97 (90)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. Care should be taken when interpreting these tables as the performance of each child is represented by a movement of 3 per cent up or down in the school's statistics.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	6
Indian	6
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	182
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)	9.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.7
Average class size	34.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	150

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.5

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.25
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	523 784
Total expenditure	488 687
Expenditure per pupil	1810
Balance brought forward from previous year	31 216
Balance carried forward to next year	66 313

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	243
Number of questionnaires returned	91

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78	21	1	nil	nil
My child is making good progress in school.	68	30	1	nil	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	76	22	1	nil	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	43	9	1	3
The teaching is good.	76	22	1	nil	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	40	8	nil	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	34	6	1	nil
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	84	16	nil	nil	nil
The school works closely with parents.	44	43	5	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	62	33	2	nil	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	25	nil	nil	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	34	16	6	11

Other issues raised by parents

Concern about the time being taken to find and appoint a new headteacher, though they recognise the need to find the right person for the school. Also some slight concern that the music and special needs specialist teacher has been drafted to cover a vacancy for a Year 4 teacher.