

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WILDEN VA LOWER SCHOOL**

Wilden

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109627

Headteacher: Mrs M Coomes

Reporting inspector: Mr J Donnelly  
23637

Dates of inspection: 20 – 22 March 2002

Inspection number: 197516

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Lower
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	High Street Wilden Bedfordshire
Postcode:	MK44 2PB
Telephone number:	01234 - 771313
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E-mail address	wilden1@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Louise Mardlin
Date of previous inspection:	15/09/1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Wilden is a small Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School and caters for 24 pupils, 17 boys and seven girls aged four to nine years. There are two classes; one for 17 pupils aged four to six and the other for seven pupils aged seven to nine who are currently all boys. Pupils attend the school from a variety of rural villages within an approximate six miles radius, in an area of mixed social and economic advantage. The two-storey building dates from 1850 and the village is close to the outskirts of Bedford. No pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well below the national average and the number of pupils with special educational needs at 16% is also below average. Four per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational need, which is well above the national average. The pupils are all from a white UK heritage and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average.

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

This is a very successful school with many very good features. The school's good ethos for learning, high expectation of pupils and commitment to improvement reflect the good leadership by the headteacher. Overall, the teaching observed during the inspection was good. Pupils are happy and enjoy the work they do as a result of the teachers' very good knowledge of the pupils. This, together with pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning, ensures that pupils of all abilities make good progress throughout the school. As a result levels of attainment are well above those found nationally by the time pupils leave at nine years of age. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils of all ages and abilities make consistently good progress. By the age of seven, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average.
- Pupils' good attitudes to learning, behaviour and relationships with each other and the staff make a significant contribution to their learning and achievement.
- Teaching is good and ensures that effective learning takes place throughout the school.
- The headteacher, supported by the governing body provides good leadership and management.
- The headteacher and governors have a clear awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, based on evidence gained through careful evaluation of its performance. This leads to effective action to secure improvement.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

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

- The accommodation provision for ensuring children's physical development in the reception class.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in September 1997, the school has made significant improvements in addressing the weaknesses and key issues. Standards have improved. The good quality of teaching has been maintained. Teachers' planning, in all subjects has the necessary elements to ensure that pupils' prior learning is built upon in a systematic way. The school's improvement plan clearly identifies what has been achieved and what needs to be done. The information gathered about the pupils is used effectively to ensure work is matched well to the needs of all. The capacity of the school to improve further is good.

## STANDARDS

The numbers in each year group are very small. This makes comparisons of the school's results in national tests for seven year olds with national data, of little value for any single year. Hence this report contains no year-by-year data or comparisons with the results of other schools.

Children make good progress overall in the early years and reception class. The overall attainment of pupils entering Year 1 is generally in line with that found nationally. Pupils make good progress and attain standards well above those expected for their age by the time they are seven and nine. Overall, the standards attained in national tests by a very small group of pupils aged seven have remained well above the national average in English, mathematics and science and the school is in the top 5% nationally. Compared with the performance of similar schools, pupils' performance is well above average. In the latest national tests (2001) pupils aged seven attained standards well above average in English, mathematics and science. In comparison to similar schools standards were also well above average. Standards of work seen during the inspection were always above average and often well above average. The skills of literacy and numeracy are developed well as pupils move through the school. The standards in reading and writing are above average. The good progress made by both boys and girls of all abilities as they move through the school reflects not only their good behaviour and attitudes but also the good teaching they enjoy in small classes. The rate of progress is often very good for the older pupils aged seven to nine as a result of very good teaching.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are good. Older pupils bring a particularly mature approach to their learning. Pupils are keen to learn and succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good reflecting the expectations of the staff. Pupils are courteous, friendly and helpful. Their behaviour contributes to their rate of learning. There are no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good. Pupils happily accept responsibility for their learning and make a good contribution to school life. They work well together and display a confidence that equips them well for the next stage in their learning.



Attendance	Attendance is good. Punctuality is very good.
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Pupils' good attitudes and enthusiasm for learning are major reasons for the high standards pupils achieve.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception and Years 1 - 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	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.*

The inspectors visited the school over two days and observed 13 lessons. All class teachers were observed teaching at least once. Teaching is good overall. Good teaching of English and mathematics was observed in both key stages. Although, teaching was observed in only some of the other subjects of the curriculum, of the few lessons seen, the standard of teaching reached an equivalent standard. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen. Teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils will achieve and as a result, pupils learn well in lessons.

This good teaching promotes effective learning and as a result, pupils achieve levels of performance well above the national average. The teaching of literacy skills is good overall with pupils improving their spelling and punctuation effectively. The teaching of mathematics and especially of numeracy skills is of similarly good quality. During the teaching of other subjects of the school's curriculum, teachers effectively develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Pupils also enjoy their learning as a result of interesting activities and they settle down to work enthusiastically and with determination. Teachers challenge pupils' thinking, so that they learn well. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is also good. The school is effective in meeting the needs of all pupils including the higher attainers. An occasional weakness in teachers' subject knowledge slows the pace and learning in a few otherwise satisfactory lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The learning opportunities provided by the school are good. The links with the community and other small schools are good and enhance pupils' learning. The school meets statutory requirements. The clubs during lunchtime and after school are of a high quality.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The systems and provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. Pupils have full access to the rich curriculum provided.

<b>Aspect (continued)</b>	<b>Comment (continued)</b>
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' opportunities to make decisions and evaluate their own work are very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school gives high priority to pupils' welfare and maintains very good procedures and practices in relation to meeting statutory requirements and health and safety issues. It is a safe and secure environment. Teachers know their pupils well and as a result, provide individual and appropriate support and challenge. Assessment is good.

The breadth of learning experiences the school provides and its effective use of the local community contributes to the good progress pupils make.

#### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership. The school's continuing success is based on a clear knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and how these can be built upon. The headteacher is well supported by a hard-working and committed staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors provide good support for the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They are very committed and provide a good balance of challenge and support to the work of the school. As a result, they are effective in helping to improve provision and maintain high standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher and governors knows its strengths and weaknesses. This work is supported by effective targets, set for the pupils in order to raise standards further.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its available resources.

The school seeks best value for money when taking decisions over spending. The teamwork of the school staff are key features in its success.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils like school.</li><li>• Teachers expect pupils to work hard and achieve their best.</li><li>• Teaching is good.</li><li>• Pupils make good progress.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some parents feel that there is not an interesting range of extra-curricular activities provided.</li><li>• The school does not provide sufficient homework for older pupils.</li></ul>

The inspection team endorses the positive views of parents. Inspectors consider that the school is committed to working closely with parents and has a very good range of procedures in place to facilitate this. Information on pupils' progress is good. The arrangements for homework are satisfactory and the range of extracurricular activities is very good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

*Pupils of all ages and abilities make consistently good progress. By the age of seven and nine, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average.*

1. The school has very few pupils in each year group. Standards in the national tests have been well above average over the last four years. However, these results are statistically unreliable due to the small numbers involved. Despite this, there has been a consistent trend of sustaining the very good performances.
2. Children in the early years and reception class make good progress overall. Pupils make good progress in their learning during the next couple of years, with a particularly good rate in the final year, due to the high standard of teaching which pupils experience. This has a significant impact on the standards they attain. Over the last four years, standards in English, mathematics and science in national assessments of pupils aged seven have remained very high and are in the top 5% of schools nationally. In 2001, for pupils aged seven, results in English, mathematics and science were well above the national average. All pupils gained at least the level expected nationally (Level 2) in each subject. Of the few pupils who take the national tests each year, results are well above average due to the proportion achieving the higher levels. Compared with the performance of similar schools, the school's standards were well above average in English, mathematics and science. The work of the current Year 4 pupils indicates that these high standards are being maintained across the school.
3. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress towards the targets set for them, some achieving standards similar to pupils of average ability.
4. Learning is a priority within a fully supportive atmosphere in classrooms. Staff know the pupils well as individuals and as a result, the pupils learn well and make progress at a good rate towards attaining the high standards the school maintains. There is a climate of mutual respect; pupils collaborate well together on tasks; for example, in researching the major characteristics of an African country using the Internet. On such occasions, they listen carefully to each other and are sensitive in the way they suggest improvements. Most work hard for teachers whom they know are working equally hard for them. Pupils grasp readily the opportunities given them to take on additional responsibilities within the school, such as preparing the hall for assemblies and providing a musical accompaniment should this be needed. The links with other schools to provide further breadth to the curriculum, for example in art and physical education, is good and makes a positive contribution to the good progress overall. Personal and social education provides an appropriate forum for pupils to demonstrate their understanding of citizenship and debate, for example, the merits or otherwise of endangered species kept in the wild or in captivity. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, they have all made at least good progress, are confident, articulate, self-assured young people, well prepared for the next stage in their learning

***Pupils' good attitudes to learning, behaviour and relationships with each other and the staff make a significant contribution to their learning and achievement.***

5. Pupils have a positive attitude to their work. They work well, showing maturity and confidence. When they find tasks difficult they remain on task and keep trying. The revised "Reward System" has a positive impact on pupils in that they value the use of merits to support positive achievement and effort.
6. Behaviour in and around school is good with teaching and learning time being maximised as pupils move efficiently between classrooms and activities. Pupils work co-operatively, for example, in the junior class, pupils were set tasks to do in pairs during geography and they needed no reminders to finish their work. At the end of the lesson pupils took it in turns to tell their classmates the learning outcomes from their research. At playtime behaviour is orderly with no instances of inappropriate behaviour. Ball games are allowed and those playing them take account of the needs of others and so these do not dominate the use of the area. Although staff expect good behaviour, they do not take it for granted and give praise readily to support these expectations. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good and make a positive contribution to the high standards achieved.

***Good teaching ensures that throughout the school effective learning takes place.***

7. Teaching and learning in the lessons observed were good and sometimes very good. The good quality of teaching and learning is directly responsible for much of the good practice in the school, such as high quality learning and good progress. In the limited time available, inspectors focused on the teaching of English and mathematics and of the skills of literacy and numeracy. Although teaching was observed in only some of the other subjects of the curriculum, the sample did provide a clear picture of the overall quality of teaching in the school. The examination of pupils' work and teachers' records provided evidence of the longer-term impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievements.
8. No teaching seen was judged to be unsatisfactory and the high standards have been maintained and built upon since the last inspection. The school has given priority to improving the quality of teaching by providing training for staff on what represents good teaching and learning. The headteacher monitors teaching throughout the school to ensure that it is effective in developing a common understanding of what makes effective teaching. All teachers have high expectations of what pupils might achieve. Most of the very good teaching of pupils occurred in the later years. Teachers also have a very good knowledge of every individual pupil's learning needs and plan accordingly. This quality teaching promotes very effective learning and as a result, pupils achieve levels of performance well above the national average.
9. The examples seen of teaching English and literacy skills were good overall. The teaching of mathematics and especially of numeracy skills was of similarly good quality. During the teaching of other subjects of the curriculum, teachers effectively develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching in Years 2, 3 and 4 gives particular attention to speaking and

listening skills. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and ability to offer pupils a range of good strategies for learning. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and ensures that some achieve nationally expected levels of performance. The challenges offered to pupils of average and higher ability, enables many of them to attain standards that are well above average. The school is effective in meeting the needs of all pupils.

10. Teachers plan their lessons to a common format. This includes a set of clear aims for each lesson so that pupils know what they are learning and why. For example, the teacher made good use of the final ten minutes in a Year 1 literacy lesson, when pupils explained to each other what they had been doing and what they had learned as a result. Through their skilled use of questions, teachers challenge pupils' thinking. The subject knowledge of the part-time teacher for music, for example, helped pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding at a level normally expected of older pupils. Teachers regularly referred to work done in other subjects and linked pupils' learning experiences in a way that gave extra meaning to what pupils do. The teaching of information and communication technology was good and an improvement since the school was previously inspected. On a few occasions the pace of learning slowed as a result of teachers' weaknesses in subject knowledge, in otherwise satisfactory lessons.

***The headteacher, supported by the governing body, provides good leadership and management.***

11. The headteacher provides good leadership and management. Aims and values of the school are put into practice by her effective yet supportive approach, which focuses on improving the quality of education for all pupils. The school's development plan is effective and the appropriate use of staff training to raise standards further, together with clear monitoring, leads to precise self-evaluation and targets for further improvement.
12. The headteacher's vision for the school's continuing success is based on a thorough knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and how these can be built on. She is a source of ideas and initiatives intended to promote effective learning and to maintain high standards. She provides clear educational direction for the development of the school, successfully combining the demands made by national and local initiatives with the school's own identified priorities.
13. The headteacher is particularly effective in developing a strong sense of teamwork and a commitment to improvement. Her knowledge of the particular talents of each member of staff enables her to make best use of the expertise within the school, to the benefit of the pupils.
14. The governors provide good support for the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. Established systems of communication ensure that they have an appropriately up to date overview of the school's work and achievements. This information, together with their successful employment of the principles of best value, enables them to make informed decisions on the school's behalf. Within the governing body, there is a good breadth of

expertise and experience that places governors in a strong position to support the headteacher and staff in improving provision and maintaining standards. Governors respect the headteacher's professional knowledge and integrity, coupled with her flair for leadership. They recognise that she and the staff are crucial factors in the school's achievements.

15. There is good use of the school's budget and specific grants to support pupils' attainment and personal development; for example, the employment of part-time teaching staff for the teaching of music and the multi-cultural and physical education days planned with other schools.
16. Money from good budgeting has been provided to improve the building: a new library has been established and additional teaching spaces set up for group work have helped to raise standards through focused teaching.

***The school has a very clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, based on evidence gained through evaluation of its performance. This leads to effective action taken to secure improvement.***

17. This is a school that knows its strengths and weaknesses well. It has effective arrangements for getting a detailed and accurate picture of its performance and for analysing the information. Challenging but realistic targets for individual pupils, based on this evaluation, are supported by well-designed plans for action to ensure these targets are met.
18. The school has focused on developing whole-school procedures for the analysis of performance data collected at the end of each term and year and the regular examination of pupils' work. The evidence gained is put to good use in evaluating how well the school is performing in relation to the national picture, the performance of similar schools and most importantly, its own previous achievement.
19. Alongside this process, the school has successfully established a programme for the regular observation of teaching. The headteacher ensures that staff have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's teaching. This open climate reflects mutual professional respect and confidence in the school's leadership. All staff feel a keen sense of ownership of what is achieved and a shared commitment to improvement.
20. There is a clear sense of purpose in the school: teachers, pupils, non-teaching staff, governors and parents take pride in the school. Although results in national tests compare very favourably with other schools, staff are not complacent and there is a clear commitment to continued improvement.
21. The views of parents, staff and pupils are sought regularly. These are then evaluated and all involved feel that their views are being recognised.
22. Data analysis is very thorough and is used to inform target setting. Pupils' performance over time is carefully tracked and there is a clear focus on pupils achieving their potential. Data analysis is undertaken so the school can make a comparison with similar schools and all

schools nationally. In this way the school is beginning to use the principle of “best value” in self-review and school management.

23. There is clear acknowledgement of areas of strength but also targets for development. Pupils’ work is regularly monitored and pupils are beginning to be involved in setting their own targets for development with their teachers.

***Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.***

24. There is very good provision for spiritual education. Opportunities for reflection on pertinent issues are provided during acts of worship. Teachers plan work in art and design and music to give opportunities for pupils to consider their response and reflect on a wide variety of works produced by artists and musicians.
25. Provision for moral education is very good. There are very high expectations of good behaviour and teachers provide very good role models. The introduction of work on citizenship into the curriculum is enabling pupils to have good opportunities to discuss issues such as ‘choices and consequences’
26. Provision for social education is very good. Pupils understand the need for school rules and treat each other well. Many lessons provide opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs or in groups to share ideas and solve problems. The personal, social and health education programme, which includes drugs awareness education, provides good opportunities for pupils to consider a range of relevant issues about taking responsibility in society. All pupils’ views are taken into consideration. This helps them to understand how decisions can be made and change effected. The first formal meeting of the school council will take place early next term. The school’s very good programme of self-evaluation seeks out pupils’ and parents’ views on a range of issues and is an extremely effective way of raising pupils’ self-esteem.
27. Provision for cultural education is very good. Pupils find out about their own tradition and culture when considering life in Wilden. Other cultures are considered when pupils undertake comparisons between England and life in an African village in Ghana. Older pupils have pen pals in Zimbabwe, which helps them understand some of the situations facing children in different parts of the world. This work is very well supported by a multi-cultural day, involving all local small schools to develop pupils’ knowledge and understanding of other cultures through music, dance, art and design and technology.

**WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

***The accommodation for children in the early years and reception class.***

28. The school is aware of the need to improve aspects of its accommodation, particularly the cramped provision for children in the reception class, who share a classroom with Year 1 pupils. There is insufficient space for children to explore freely without disturbing the older



Year 1 pupils. There is no enclosed covered play area outside to further improve children's physical development.

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

29 In order to raise standards further the headteacher and governing body should:

(1) Improve the accommodation for children in the early years and reception class by:

- Providing an outdoor fenced safe covered play area;
- In partnership with the Diocese and the local education authority, investigate ways of teaching Year 1 and the early years and reception class in different areas.

*(paragraph 28)*

## 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	20

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	9	10	2	0	0	0
Percentage	5	41	45	9	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 more than four percentage point[s].*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	22
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		3

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	3.0

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.2
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete 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	15
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 – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.9
Average class size	9.5

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	109948
Total expenditure	106141
Expenditure per pupil	4825
Balance brought forward from previous year	3599

Balance carried forward to next year	7406
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***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	22
Number of questionnaires returned	16

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	10	5	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	8	6	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	8	6	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	10	4	2	0	0
The teaching is good.	9	5	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	6	10	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	12	3	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	9	5	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	8	7	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	10	4	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	11	5	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	10	4	2	0	0