

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST JOHN BOSCO CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Maghull

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104941

Headteacher: Mrs R McNeill

Reporting inspector: Mr F. Carruthers
21285

Dates of inspection: 26 – 27 February 2002

Inspection number: 198163

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Green Lane
Maghull
Merseyside

Postcode: L31 8BW

Telephone number: 0151 520 2628

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A Southworth

Date of previous inspection: September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This voluntary aided primary school is situated in Maghull, a dormitory town on Merseyside, and serves an estate of mainly privately owned houses. It has 171 pupils on roll aged 4 to 11, with a balance of boys and girls. Almost all pupils are from a white ethnic heritage. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none is at the early stages of learning in English as an additional language. The socio-economic circumstances of the majority of the pupils' families are above average. Few families, for example, are eligible for free school meals (six per cent of the total). Children enter the reception class in the September of the school year in which they are five years old. Most children have attended nursery classes in local schools while a few have attended various privately run playgroups. The range of their attainment on entry varies from year to year. It is average for their age but slightly below the average of other schools in the local education authority. There is one class for each age group in the school. Thirteen per cent of pupils are on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs and this is below the average of schools nationally. Most have specific or moderate learning difficulties and a few have other difficulties, such as hearing impairment. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational need. Religious education and collective worship are the subject of a separate inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school that continually strives to do well. Its effectiveness is excellent. By the quality of its leadership and management, and by the teaching and learning experiences it offers, it successfully promotes very high standards of attainment and behaviour. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is above the average of schools nationally but more in line with the average for smaller schools. The school therefore gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The high quality of provision, especially teaching, leads to high standards of attainment.
- There is a very rich range of learning experiences for pupils.
- The school provides excellent support for pupils' welfare and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and this means that the pupils grow in confidence.
- Parents provide much excellent support for their children, helping them to achieve very well.
- The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors are excellent.

What could be improved

- Links with pre-school nurseries and playgroups.

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 September 1997. Since then improvement has been excellent. High standards have been maintained and there have been significant improvements to the provision. The school was awarded a *School Achievement Award* in 2001 for the standards it achieves. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and standards of behaviour are now excellent. The school has built upon its existing quality, and the range of learning experiences is now better than ever. For instance, there is better provision for the higher attaining pupils and there are now residential visits for older pupils. Aspects such as how well the school supports the pupils' personal and academic development, links with parents, leadership and management of the school, are now excellent. Staff, governors and parents have all contributed to improvements in the quality of the school's environment. All of the key issues identified at the last inspection have been resolved well.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A*	A*	A	A
Mathematics	A*	A*	A	A
Science	A*	A	B	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The table above illustrates the high achievement of pupils in recent years. Children enter school with levels of attainment slightly below the average of other schools in the local education authority and make very good progress so that they are achieving high standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2. This very good progress is maintained in the junior years. As a result, although there are variations between year groups, the school's results in tests at the end of Year 6 are frequently in the top five per cent of schools nationally (those above which are indicated with an asterisk). Pupils read fluently and write well at length. Their mathematical skills are excellent. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the higher attaining, achieve very well. Standards across a range of subjects such as information and communication technology (ICT), geography and history are above those found in most schools. The school sets very high targets for the pupils, for example for 97 per cent to achieve the level expected of pupils in Year 6 in English and mathematics, and is successful in achieving them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. The pupils are very well motivated and curious to know more.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Behaviour in lessons is of a consistently high standard and this is significant in helping the pupils to achieve very well. Behaviour around school is similarly excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils have excellent relationships with staff and other pupils. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
Attendance	Good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	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.

The consistently high quality of teaching and learning is the most significant factor in the very good progress that all pupils make. Teaching across all subjects is only rarely ever less than good. Teaching in the reception class is good and the teacher has good expertise to teach the appropriate curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage. Teachers have very high expectations of what the pupils can achieve and they plan and organise lessons very well. They make very good use of time and spend a few minutes each day consolidating pupils' skills of reading, spelling and mental arithmetic. As a result, pupils are made fully aware of the importance of these skills. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good and teachers use other subjects of the curriculum very well to promote skills in both areas. Classroom assistants support the teaching well and make an important contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs. The higher attaining pupils are challenged very well and the teachers provide very good opportunities for them to research further work themselves. A particularly effective factor is how well the staff use homework to further the pupils' learning. Homework assignments are very well planned and pupils are given strategies and support in how best to complete them. Because of the high quality of the provision, pupils' learning is very good. Pupils concentrate very well in class and work hard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is an excellent range of learning opportunities for pupils. This includes the content of the curriculum, out-of-school activities, the teaching of modern foreign languages and musical instruments, as well as visitors to school, visits and residential experiences. The school also provides very good opportunities for the higher attaining pupils through excellent links with the associated high school. Links with pre-school nursery classes are sound and support the children's transfer into school well. However, there are few curricular links to help the continuity of the children's learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. All aspects of the provision are very well managed and pupils make very good progress as a result.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The school has a highly supportive atmosphere, which is based on its mission statement and which underpins the excellent level of support available for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. Pupils' welfare and personal development are high priorities for staff. For example, all staff have received training as <i>Rainbow facilitators</i> , supporting children during time of loss, separation or bereavement. Parents speak very highly of the levels of care that staff show.

Links with parents are excellent and the contribution that parents make to support their children's progress is a strength of the school. For example, they help with homework, support activities and

attend meetings in school. They help in class, and through the friends' association, which funds resources very well, they provide expertise and labour for grounds and other types of improvements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and key staff lead the school through a clear, shared vision of its purpose, and through close teamwork, which values the contribution of all.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Governors have close links with school and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. Governors and senior staff consult with relevant agencies, compare the effectiveness of services and resources, and monitor the school's achievements very well.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. All aspects of funding are clearly used for the benefit of the pupils' education.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is very strong support from parents for all aspects of the school's provision. • Parents believe that their children make very good progress, achieve well and learn how to become mature and responsible. • They think the school is very well led and managed and that staff are easy to approach if they have a concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing significant emerged from the parents' meeting or the questionnaires.

Inspectors fully support the positive views of parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The high quality of provision, especially teaching, leads to high standards of attainment

- 1 Children enter the reception class with a range of attainment that varies from year to year and is average for their age. It is slightly below the average of other schools in the local education authority, as measured by an assessment of their early skills in personal and social development, communication and literacy, and mathematics. Almost all have had some pre-school experience in local nursery classes or privately run playgroups. Nevertheless, boys often score particularly low in many of these assessments and it is noticeable that the children lack confidence in some important respects, for instance in early skills of writing. The children make good progress in the reception class and almost all achieve the early learning goals in all areas of development. A good number achieve beyond that in their personal, social and emotional development, in most aspects of communication, language and literacy, in mathematics, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- 2 This good achievement is the result of good provision. The process of settling the children into the routines of school provides them with a very secure start. By the time of the inspection, the children had been in school for a term and a half, and their levels of concentration and involvement in class activities were very good. The children are calm and confident moving around the school and they show just as much respect and interest in school assemblies as pupils much older. Teaching is good and the class teacher is well supported by classroom assistants. All lessons have good purpose and are well planned to promote the children's development. For instance, topic work during the inspection made very effective use of the popular television personality, Bob the Builder. The role-play, construction and listening centre activities made very good links with the topic and the character.
- 3 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 build on this good foundation and make very good progress so that by the end of Year 2, they are achieving high standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science and a range of other subjects. Teaching is consistently very good in the current Year 2. In both age groups, teachers have high expectations of what can be achieved and encourage the pupils, for instance in written work, to improve on their first attempts. There is a bright, lively manner about the teaching and lessons have very good pace. Classroom displays promote the pupils' familiarity with words and numbers very well and classroom assistants make a good contribution to the work of groups and individuals.
- 4 Pupils' learning continues to develop very well in junior-aged classes, so that by the end of Year 6, despite slight variations in the nature of different year groups, their attainment in English, mathematics and science is well above the average of most schools nationally. Often results are in the top five per cent of schools. This very good achievement is primarily the result of consistently high standards in teaching, which is especially evident in the current Years 5 and 6. As the pupils get older, so their awareness of what they need to do to improve gets better. Pupils spoke to inspectors in a mature manner about their own targets and what they were doing to achieve them. They know that teachers have high expectations of them and they respond very well.

- 5 All the strong features of teaching found in younger classes continue in the junior age groups. For instance, in a Year 4 design and technology lesson, the teacher's good subject knowledge meant the focus on evaluating *Pop-Up Books* challenged the pupils' thinking very well. In a Year 5 science lesson investigating the absorption of sound, the teacher's very high expectations resulted in pupils improving their understanding of how to make a test fair, and they produced written work that showed thoughtful analysis. They also used number skills well in drawing clear block graphs of the results.
- 6 Particularly effective is how the teachers use homework assignments to consolidate learning and to promote new skills. Pupils' homework books are well presented with evidence of increasing amounts of work being set. Parents expressed their full support for the levels of homework, commenting that they prepared the children well for life in secondary school. Teachers spend valuable time discussing with pupils strategies for getting the most from homework assignments, and often pupils are asked to carry out their own research at home to support topic work in class. This means that homework has purpose and is highly valued. One teacher commented to inspectors that homework done well is almost as beneficial as an extra term at school in the life of a junior-aged pupil.

There is a very rich range of learning experiences for pupils

- 7 The taught curriculum has excellent coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study and is enriched very well by meaningful visits out of school. For example, teachers make full use of amenities that are close at hand, such as the school grounds and a local footpath across open countryside. They visit the nearby coastline to further their studies in geography and the museum at Wigan Pier for history. Year 5 pupils have visited a restaurant to pursue a study of bread making in design and technology. There is a regular residential experience for Year 6 pupils, which includes outdoor activities and opportunities to further skills in information and communication technology (ICT). The school makes good use of visitors. For instance, during the inspection a member of the local community talked to pupils in Year 6 about her experiences as an evacuee in World War II. Later she played piano in a music lesson, as the pupils learnt relevant songs from the period, such as '*We'll Meet Again*'.
- 8 As well as the subjects of the National Curriculum, there is a full programme of work in personal, social and health education, and teachers use their knowledge of various modern foreign languages to promote the pupils' early skills of conversation and their interest in French, German and Spanish. An illustration of how the school strives to improve its provision is the plan to seek special funding from the British Council for a teacher from the European Union to teach the pupils in a group of local schools from next September.
- 9 There is a very wide range of out-of-school activities that cover sport, music, drama, dance and special interests, such as ornithology and playing the card game, *Bridge*. These appeal to a wide variety of pupils, and are designed to include everyone in the infant and junior age range and to build on the particular talents of pupils. There are good opportunities to learn a musical instrument. The school has developed excellent links with other primary and secondary schools, as well as the local college of further education, to promote opportunities for pupils, especially the higher achieving pupils and those showing particular talents. For example, pupils attend *Master classes* at the local high school in subjects such as mathematics and design and technology. There are very good links to promote science. The school also encourages

interested and talented pupils to get involved with local cricket, tennis, football and rugby clubs to improve their skills.

The school provides excellent support for pupils' welfare and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and this means that the pupils grow in confidence

- 10 Everyone involved with the school has a strong commitment to support the pupils' personal development. This is fundamental to the school's mission statements and aims. Throughout the school day, pupils are encouraged to look after and take an interest in one another. There is a very successful *Chummy* system to encourage the personal development of the youngest children by older pupils. The school has made many improvements to the environment so that playtimes and lunch breaks are pleasurable experiences with opportunities to enjoy the hard and soft play areas that have been developed. Most significantly, staff are willing to go further than most to achieve the best for their pupils. For instance, as well as knowing the pupils very well and keeping a close eye on how they are doing academically and personally, they have all trained to support them during times of loss, separation or bereavement. Parents express their sincere appreciation for this and gave inspectors examples of how the actions of staff had benefited individual children in times of great stress.
- 11 There is excellent provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies provide very good opportunities for pupils to hear about and discuss religious and moral stories. There are moments of reflection and the chance to show appreciation for the work of others, including the pupils themselves. Clear moral principles underscore the work of the school and in lessons pupils have very good opportunities to explore the wider significance of daily events, to consider their own values and make choices about their behaviour. For example, older pupils debate the arguments for and against plans for a nearby road extension, and how they might affect the lives of local people. Staff provide excellent role models because of their commitment and the quality of relationships among staff and with pupils. There is a very wide range of cultural experiences, including opportunities to learn about other cultures, through both the taught curriculum and out-of-school activities.
- 12 The results of this high-quality provision are evident in the pupils' attitudes to school and their work, in standards of behaviour in class and around school, and their relationships with one another and with staff, all of which are excellent.

Parents provide excellent support for their children, helping them to achieve very well

- 13 Links with parents are excellent and the very high levels of parental satisfaction expressed in the meeting for parents and the questionnaires returned confirm this judgement. Parents are very well motivated to take full part in the pupils' learning. They make a very good contribution to the pupils' work at home by supporting the school in its call for homework to be completed regularly and to a high standard. They help in class and take part in out-of-school activities such as cycling proficiency. A number have made a significant contribution in time and effort to support the purchase of resources for school by helping the friends' association to organise events for pupils and parents. Many have helped the staff with planning, equipping and providing the physical labour to shift tons of earth, to create landscaped features and soft play areas in the school grounds. This level of support is warmly appreciated by staff and is an acknowledged factor in the very good achievement of pupils.

The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors are excellent

- 14 The school benefits significantly from the accomplished leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. It is their drive and shared vision of the school that has enabled the school to make excellent improvement in all aspects of provision since the time of the last inspection. They are highly respected by colleagues, parents and pupils. Their support is very professional and at the same time personal, and this is valued by all.
- 15 Governors also show an excellent level of expertise and commitment. Leadership by the chairperson is excellent and governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have very good awareness of the school's strengths because they have linked themselves closely to subjects of the curriculum and to subject managers. They meet regularly with staff and make visits to classrooms to watch how subjects are taught. They report to the governing body on their findings. Because relationships are constructive, this close involvement of the governors is not viewed as threatening by staff and their evaluations are accepted in the 'right' manner.
- 16 All aspects of the management of the school, including checking on the quality of teaching, analysing data about the school's performance and the committee work of the governing body, are completed to a high standard of efficiency and effectiveness. Senior managers and governors have, through careful saving, amassed a good reserve of funds to provide their contribution to extensions to the buildings, without jeopardising resources for learning or staffing levels. Plans to provide more space for teaching have recently been accepted and work is due to start in the summer of 2002, which, it is anticipated, will improve the learning environment for pupils and provide space for an ICT suite.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Links with pre-school nurseries and playgroups

- 17 Existing links with pre-school providers, such as nursery classes in local schools and some privately run playgroups, are sound. The arrangements they make enable the staff to settle the children well into the routines of school when they start in the reception class, and mean that both parents and children find the change is a smooth one. However, there is scope for developing links further so that staff have a better understanding of the children's earlier learning experiences and their developmental needs. For instance, it is reported that the quality of records passed on from pre-school providers varies significantly and some are very limited. It is also evident that children start in the reception class lacking confidence in their ability to write. Teachers recount examples of children declaring, *I can't*, when writing is suggested. Limitations to the children's early development of play writing hinder their progress during the reception year. This was evident in a scrutiny of the children's work as well as a literacy lesson, in which a group of children depended too much on the assistant supervising them to scribe their news for them to copy. They were not sufficiently confident to attempt to write a sentence themselves. A better understanding of the children's earlier learning would provide a firmer foundation on which the reception teacher can plan future work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 18 The school should:

Develop further the existing links with pre-school nurseries and playgroups, in order to increase the staff's knowledge of the children's earlier learning experiences and promote better continuity of learning. (Paragraph 17)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	16
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	4	7	3	0	0	0
Percentage	12	25	44	19	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 six 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)	-	171
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	-	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	-	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	-	26

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.6
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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.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	15	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (95)	97 (100)	97 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (95)	97 (100)	97 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	15	15	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	15	15
	Girls	15	14	15
	Total	29	29	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	95 (94)	97 (100)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	14	15	15
	Total	29	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	97 (94)	100 (100)	100 (94)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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	143
Any other minority ethnic group	4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.4
Average class size	24.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	123

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
	£
Total income	356,168
Total expenditure	338,437
Expenditure per pupil	2,103
Balance brought forward from previous year	30,550

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	171
Number of questionnaires returned	139

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	15	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	29	1	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	81	18	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	55	34	9	0	3
The teaching is good.	80	19	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	46	9	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	18	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	84	15	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	53	39	7	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	85	12	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	18	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	32	11	4	7

Other issues raised by parents

There is a high level of support for the achievements of the school. Several parents were particularly appreciative of the level of care shown to them and their children during times of personal or family difficulty.