

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST AIDAN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**

POULTON-LE-FYLDE

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119789

Headteacher: Rev Dr B A Leeson

Reporting inspector: Mr I D Thompson  
12271

Dates of inspection: 9-11 October 2000

Inspection number: 223786

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cartgate Preesall Poulton-le-Fylde Lancashire
Postcode:	FY6 ONP
Telephone number:	01253 810504
Fax number:	01253 810244
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Wilkinson
Date of previous inspection:	5 February 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Aidan's Church of England Technology College is a voluntary aided, mixed comprehensive school, with specialist technology college status, for pupils in the 11-16 age range. The school is smaller than most other secondary schools and has 854 pupils on roll. It serves a wide rural catchment area close to the Fylde coast, in which social and economic circumstances are broadly average. Although not at an early stage of language acquisition, the school has one pupil with a home language other than English.

The intake is broadly comprehensive with a slightly higher than average proportion of pupils with higher levels of attainment. A below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. There are 107 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, which is broadly average. An above average number of pupils have statements of special educational needs.

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

St Aidan's is a popular and effective school. The school has many strengths, few weaknesses and is oversubscribed. It has made good improvement since the last inspection. The very good standard of teaching has a positive effect on learning and the development of very good attitudes. Progress is very good between the ages of 11 and 14. The majority of pupils make good progress through the school and achieve high standards but a substantial minority, particularly boys, do not do as well as they should between the ages of 14 and 16. Leadership provides clear direction. An effective process of development planning contributes to the school's improvement. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Teaching is very good throughout the school and promotes high standards and very good attitudes to learning.
- Behaviour, social and personal development and relationships are excellent.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Resources, particularly information and communication technology, are used very effectively.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

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

- Achievement between the ages of 14 and 16, particularly of boys.
- Use of data to monitor performance and to promote progress.
- The involvement of parents in their children's education.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in February 1996. The quality of teaching has improved and is a key factor in the progress that pupils make between the ages of 11 and 14. The school has responded positively to the key issues identified in the last inspection, although further improvement is needed in the use made of data to monitor progress. With this exception, all the key issues have been dealt with fully.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In 1999, results in National Curriculum tests at age 14 were well above the national average in English and science; they were above average in mathematics. In comparison with schools in similar social circumstances, standards were well above average in all three subjects. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above average in all three core subjects.

In the 1999 GCSE examinations, pupils' results were above average in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the last six years, the trend of improvement has been below the national trend but above average standards have been maintained. At grades A\*-C results were above average in art, drama, French and geography. Results were close to average in English, design and technology, mathematics and physical education. They were below average in German, history and science. Pupils' best overall results compared to their achievements in other subjects were in art and French. Poorest results were in English, history and science. Over the last three years, girls' results have been well above average and boys' above average. However, the gap between boys' performance and that of girls is greater than that found nationally. In relation to performance at age 14, results in science were further below the standards that might be expected than those in English and mathematics. Overall, performance has been improving but has been consistently slightly below the challenging targets set by governors and not as good as it should be in relation to attainment at age 14. Results in 2000 were closer to the target.

Pupils achieve good standards at the school compared with their attainment on entry and many achieve very good standards. Progress is particularly good between the ages of 11 and 14. Progress in lessons and in work seen during the inspection is better between the ages of 14 and 16 than it has been in the past. However, the impact of changes in teaching and learning styles and grouping of pupils in the earlier years has not had time to affect results.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good attitudes support learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent behaviour contributes to the positive learning atmosphere throughout the school. There are very few fixed term exclusions and no permanent exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent.
Attendance	Good.

Pupils' personal and social development is a strength of the school. They respond very well to the Christian values which underpin the work of the school. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect, care and consideration.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	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.*

There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The overall quality of teaching is very good at both key stages. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons. It is very good or better in almost 40 per cent of lessons, with a high proportion of outstanding teaching. In English, teaching is very good. It is good overall in mathematics, with a high proportion of very good teaching, and good in science.

There are many strengths in teaching which contribute to pupils' high quality of learning. Some aspects are particularly outstanding. Teachers build on very good relationships with pupils to manage classes effectively so that no time is wasted. Lessons are presented in ways that enthuse pupils so that they are keen to learn. Work is well matched to pupils' needs; this challenges them, enables them to succeed and builds their confidence. Teachers make very good provision for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy throughout the school. The needs of lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are particularly well met. Teachers make imaginative use of information and communication technology to capture pupils' interest and to support learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that is enriched by good extra-curricular provision. The organisation of time between history and geography at Key Stage 3 is adversely affecting standards in history at Key Stage 4.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and make very good progress throughout the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for moral and social development is excellent and is a strength of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Standards of care are high. This is a caring school where staff know their pupils well.

Geography and history are provided on an alternating pattern between the ages of 11 and 14. This affects the continuity of pupils' learning and does not provide a sufficiently secure foundation for examination work at Key Stage 4.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership and direction for the school. There is a stimulating learning environment underpinned by Christian values.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play a full role in shaping its direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance realistically. The use made of data to track and promote progress is not as effective as it should be.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of the resources that are available, particularly information and communication technology.

The headteacher and senior staff have been very successful in creating a learning atmosphere of mutual respect that reflects the Christian values that support all the school's work. This results in pupils' exceptionally good personal development. Although overall standards of attainment are above average, the performance of average attainers should be better at Key Stage 4. A wealth of data is available but it is not used effectively enough to monitor progress and set targets for improvement. There are very good procedures for securing best value throughout the school.

## 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>The good progress pupils make through the school.</li> <li>The attitudes and values that the school develops.</li> <li>Pupils are expected to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>The school is approachable and provides good support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The information provided about pupils' progress.</li> <li>The school should involve parents more closely in their children's education.</li> <li>The amount of homework and its timing.</li> </ul>

Some parents feel that there is too much homework and some too little. A common concern is that the homework timetable is not followed, resulting in occasions when pupils are overloaded. The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents in response to the questionnaire, which were supported by parents at the meeting. During the inspection the amount and quality of homework set were satisfactory. However, inspectors agree that better information about progress could be provided. In letters to the Registered Inspector, a very few parents expressed concern about the style of management in the school. Inspectors found nothing to support such concerns.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**Teaching is very good throughout the school and promotes high standards and very good attitudes to learning**

1. Most of the teaching is of high quality. Teachers create a purposeful learning environment. They use a wide range of resources and techniques to engage and maintain pupils' interest. In an outstanding Year 8 French lesson, skilled use of the target language encouraged pupils to use words confidently. Progress was ensured by using the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing to reinforce learning. The homework activity, based on an Internet text, was meaningful and exciting. It also gave pupils an opportunity to use their initiative. Overall, the lesson contributed to pupils' cultural development and general knowledge.

2. Teachers build well on established good relationships to provide lively and stimulating lessons, in which pupils enjoy learning. In an outstanding Year 11 English lesson, the teacher maintained a rigorous pace by frequent changes in activity. Interest was maintained by humorous interludes that had been carefully prepared to add point to learning about phonetics. The teacher's subject knowledge supported a confident approach to enable the class to explore difficult concepts in poetry. A variety of techniques were used to provoke thought and involvement in learning. The teaching style was particularly helpful in promoting the progress of boys.

3. Teachers manage their classes well. A common and effective approach is to state objectives at the beginning of lessons and to review the success in meeting targets at the end. This gives a purpose to activities; pupils are clear as to what is expected of them and respond well. In an outstanding design and technology lesson, objectives were clearly stated. Very good links were made to previous lessons to reinforce learning. The end of lesson review ensured that pupils felt that they had made progress and enabled the teacher to check their understanding through skilful questioning. The way in which pupils were expected to work, and displays of useful words, helped to increase their writing and note-taking skills, making a contribution to their literacy development and independence.

4. Planning is a key factor in the success of the great majority of lessons. In an outstanding Year 9 mathematics lesson, a range of activities was prepared that were directed at promoting learning in specific skills. Activities were organised so that the teacher had immediate feedback on pupils' understanding and was able to provide clear explanations when problems arose. The approach promoted very good progress.

5. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported throughout the school both in mainstream and withdrawal classes. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of pupils' needs and how to meet them. Subjects across the school make a good, planned contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy. The school has been very successful in supporting a pupil with English as an additional language to make similar progress to others in the same class.

6. Teachers work hard to promote progress. Occasionally this leads to them providing too many answers and too much information rather than insisting that pupils find things out for themselves. Although independent learning is a strong feature in many lessons across the school, in a few lessons pupils' independence is limited and, because teachers are working harder than their pupils, learning is not consolidated as well as it might be.

7. Work is marked conscientiously. However, although teachers are generous in their praise, not all provide the guidance which pupils need to improve the quality of their work. In this respect, marking is inconsistent both within and between departments.

**Behaviour, social and personal development and relationships are excellent.**

8. The school is particularly successful in promoting pupils' personal development. Christian values underpin the work of the school and are evident in all aspects of school life. This creates a climate of care and mutual respect in which pupils thrive. Relationships are excellent both between pupils and with their teachers. Pupils work very well together. They support each other strongly, for example in discussions and the preparation of joint presentations in English. They respect each other's opinions and a feature of many lessons is the way in which teachers build upon pupils' responses to extend learning. Standards of behaviour, both in and out of lessons, are excellent overall. This enables teachers to make effective use of lesson time and to work at a brisk pace. It means that teachers are able to manage their classes very well to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. The school provides a well-developed range of opportunities for pupils to take increasing responsibility as they move through the school. For example, they can be form representatives in early years and proctors (prefects) in Years 10 and 11. The system for appointing proctors is rigorous and requires pupils to demonstrate their suitability to take on additional responsibility. Pupils are very good at taking responsibility; for example, the contribution made by senior pupils to the smooth running of the school and the help they give to younger pupils. Pupils continue to work hard when not directly supervised. A good example is the way in which tools and machinery are used in workshops. Pupils can be trusted to work safely and responsibly. They respond admirably to the trust placed in them.

**Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good.**

9. The school's aims make a clear commitment to the development of decency, respect and tolerance. It is very successful in meeting those aims. Parents appreciate the values that their children acquire in the school. Teachers provide good role models and lead by example. They produce a caring environment in which the difference between right and wrong is made clear and is well understood. There is a strong sense of community in the school. This is reflected in lessons and around the school outside lesson times. The great majority of pupils like being at the school. A small but significant example of the trust between pupils, and the expectations of them, is the way in which coats are left in open cloakrooms throughout the day. This is an open school; pupils are allowed to be in classrooms with the minimum of supervision when lessons are not in progress. Pupils consider this a safe school and are aware that they are valued. Subjects across the school contribute strongly to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are given considerable opportunity for reflection and for the expression of thoughts and feelings, for example in a self-portraiture exercise in art that encourages them to explore their own experience. In personal and social education, their self-esteem and confidence are developed through demanding topics that help them to recognise their own positive qualities.

**Leadership and management are very good.**

10. The headteacher and key staff provide clear direction for the work of the school. The school's Christian aims and values are central to its work. There is a strong commitment to involving all staff in decision making and this has resulted in a common sense of purpose. There is wide consultation. The contributions of all staff are valued. Strengths and weaknesses are well understood because the process of self-review is well developed. The long-term effects of decisions are evaluated and action is taken to secure improvement.

Development planning is well organised and focused on raising standards. However, there are still areas that require attention. For example, the use of data to manage performance at Key Stage 4 is not as effective as it should be.

11. Leadership and management of departments are good. Monitoring and support of teaching have been effective in raising the standard of teaching across the school. Planning for improvement reflects and is linked to the overall school plan. This is helping to raise standards of attainment at Key Stage 3, particularly the efforts to find ways of improving the performance of boys. Much of this has yet to have an impact on standards at Key Stage 4.

12. The governing body participates fully in shaping the direction of the school. Governors are well informed and their strong links with the community enable them to provide an effective sounding board for opinion. Realistic and challenging targets are set and the school is held properly to account. Strategic planning is well developed and has secured improvement in many areas of school life with a consequent effect on standards. This is particularly notable in the overall quality of accommodation and in developments such as the new art room.

13. The school has made good progress in tackling the weaknesses identified at the last inspection although there is still work to be done in improving the performance of boys overall and attainment at Key Stage 4.

**Resources, particularly information and communication technology, are used very effectively.**

14. The school makes very effective use of available resources. Teaching and support staff are deployed effectively. Efficient use is made of accommodation, particularly in the use of rooms outside lesson time to encourage pupils to follow their own interests or to develop their work. Teachers give generously of their time to support this extra-curricular activity. Very good use has been made of the opportunities offered by specialist college status. A particularly good feature is the innovative way in which departments have embraced developments in information and communication technology resources to support learning across the school. The use of interactive whiteboards, in subjects such as English, mathematics and modern foreign languages, is effective in maintaining interest, enabling impressive presentations, and is particularly useful in helping to promote boys' progress.

**Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.**

15. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported both in mainstream classes and in smaller withdrawal groups. They make very good progress through the school and the high proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-G in GCSE examinations represents significant achievement by many. An atmosphere is created in the withdrawal groups which gives pupils confidence. They are keen to learn and aware of their progress. In mainstream classes teachers are well aware of pupils' individual needs and adapt methods and materials to support them. For example, in geography at Key Stage 3, homework tasks are carefully matched to pupils' abilities. In practical subjects, teachers provide a high level of individual support, giving effective demonstrations to help understanding.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Achievement between the ages of 14 and 16, particularly of boys.**

16. Overall, the majority of pupils make good progress through the school. They make very good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. Progress between the ages of 14 and 16 is only satisfactory. Within this overall picture, pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils make very good progress; higher attaining pupils make at least reasonable progress and many make good progress. However, the progress of many average attaining pupils, although satisfactory, is not as good as it should be. Although results in GCSE examinations are above average overall, they are not as good as they should be when taking attainment at the age of 14 into account. This is particularly true of boys' performance. The gap between boys' performance and that of girls is greater than is found nationally, although there is a reasonably close match between their attainments at age 14. Above average standards have been maintained but the overall trend of improvement in the school's results has been below the trend of improvement nationally.

### **Use of data to monitor performance and to promote progress.**

17. The school has a wealth of data on attainment – on entry to the school and gathered subsequently. However, the analysis of data lacks the detail and focus required to identify individual under-achievement at an early stage, to set targets for improvement and to monitor progress towards them. The school is aware of this and is beginning to develop systems that would support the drive to improve attainment at age 16. There is insufficient involvement of pastoral support staff in monitoring academic progress. Pastoral staff know pupils well and provide good support overall. However, their potential to help support pupils in improving their performance is limited because they do not always have the information they need early enough, or in sufficient detail to be effective. The school is aware that there are gaps in the system for communicating information on attainment and progress to pastoral staff, which would enable them to play a stronger role in supporting achievement, and there are plans for improvement.

### **The involvement of parents in their children's education.**

18. In response to the questionnaire and in letters, some parents indicated that they were not sufficiently informed of their children's attainment or what they need to do to improve. Many feel that the school does not work closely enough with them. From the school's point of view, teachers have difficulty in ensuring that homework is completed on time. This causes difficulties because preparation that should have been done at home occupies lesson time, so that there is less time for new learning. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 4 where the completion of coursework is affected. There is a need for closer co-operation between home and school.

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

19. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:

- (1) Improve achievement at Key Stage 4, particularly that of boys, by:
  - developing more effective methods of managing pupils' performance, including the use of data to monitor progress and to set targets for improvement;
  - closer involvement of pastoral support staff in monitoring and supporting academic progress;
  - improving the consistency of marking to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work;
  - involving parents more closely in their children's education.  
(See paragraphs 7, 16, 17, 18)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	28	42	21	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	854
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	64

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	107

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	64	90	154

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	49	46
	Girls	64	69	60
	Total	113	118	106
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (86)	77 (79)	69 (70)
	National	63 (64)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (63)	44 (42)	29 (35)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	46	50
	Girls	71	68	64
	Total	122	114	114
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (64)	75 (65)	74 (69)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62 )
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (32)	52 (42)	35 (34)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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



### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	60	77	137

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	23	57	60
	Girls	46	76	76
	Total	69	133	136
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50(50)	97 (99)	99 (100)
	National	46.6 (43.3)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.2 (40.7)
	National	38 (36.8)

*Figures 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	854
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***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	6	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	45.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	273

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.2
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	23.2

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1837502
Total expenditure	1815555
Expenditure per pupil	2149
Balance brought forward from previous year	25345
Balance carried forward to next year	47292

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	854
Number of questionnaires returned	335

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	51	7	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	51	3	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	49	2	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	54	13	3	2
The teaching is good.	33	59	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	51	14	3	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	43	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	50	17	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	36	51	7	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	48	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	47	5	1	7