

INSPECTION REPORT

WOODSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Oswestry, Shropshire.

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123387

Headteacher: Mr R McDevitt

Reporting inspector: David Carrington
15414

Dates of inspection: 27th – 28th November 2000

Inspection number: 224110

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: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Gittin Street
Oswestry
Shropshire

Postcode: SY11 1DT

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Ms Alison Moses

Date of previous inspection: 17th June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Woodside Primary School is located on the northern edge of Oswestry and is the largest primary school in Shropshire. It draws its pupils from the town and surrounding district. There are 231 boys and 239 girls at the school with another 60 who attend the nursery part time. Children start in reception in the term in which they reach the age of five. The attainment of children when they start in the nursery is below average. Just over a fifth of the pupils have special educational needs, including eight with statements. This is close to the national average. Less than one per cent speak English as an additional language, this is slightly above the level found in most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is nineteen per cent, which is above average. The school aims to develop the full potential of every child by holding high expectations of all its pupils. Earlier in 2000 it became part of the North West Shropshire Education Action Zone with the specific aims of raising standards by involving the whole community in the development of life-long education.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Woodside Primary is a very effective school. It clearly puts the interests of pupils first. Standards have risen well over the last few years, and whilst there are still one or two things to do to make sure they are always as good as they can be, everyone in school understands its strengths and weaknesses and works hard for success. The quality of teaching is very good and this enables pupils to build knowledge and skills at a very good rate. The school is very welcoming and warm, and there is a real family atmosphere. School management is very good and the headteacher's leadership is excellent. The school gives very good value for the money spent on each pupil.

What the school does well

- The quality of leadership and management is first rate.
- The curriculum gives very good focus to both the academic and all-round development of all pupils.
- Teaching quality is very good and pupils make very good progress in their learning.
- Standards are improving at a much quicker rate than in most schools and are above average in most subjects by the age of eleven.
- All pupils develop as thoroughly pleasant young people who are a joy to be with.

What could be improved

There are no major weaknesses in the school but managers intend to continue the improvements made to:

- English, where standards, particularly in speaking, listening and writing are getting better but are not yet at the good level found in other subjects.
- Annual written reports to parents, which do not consistently show clearly enough how pupils can improve their work.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There were four key issues at the school's last inspection in 1996:

1. Raise standards in art and information technology.
2. Lift standards of problem-solving in mathematics, science and design and technology.
3. Improve teaching quality by raising expectations, matching work more closely to the attainment of pupils and increasing teachers' subject knowledge, especially in art, science, design and technology and information technology.
4. Continue to boost pupils' personal and social development.

The school has made excellent progress with improvements to these things and has also raised standards across the board. It is judged to be in a very strong position to maintain this level of improvement in the future.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	D	A	D	D
Mathematics	D	A	B	B
Science	C	A	B	B

Key

very high A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

very low E*

Similar schools are those schools with between 8% and 20% of the pupils entitled to free school meals.

Attainment in the 2000 Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs) for eleven year-old pupils were not as high as in 1999. Nonetheless, assessment data shows that pupils have made very good gains in skills and knowledge since they started school. The Year 6 class achieved standards in English in 2000 that were below those found in most primary schools and also those schools where there is a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In mathematics and science standards were above the averages found in all and similar schools. These pupils scored above the targets for attainment set for them last year and the current Year 6 pupils are well on target to meet the increased targets set for them this year. Standards achieved by seven year-old pupils in 2000 were also close to the average found in all and similar schools. The school has outstripped most other schools in improving standards since 1996.

Inspectors judge that current standards are average in English, and better than average in mathematics and science by the end of school. Standards are also good in information and communication technology and the other subjects studied in school. Overall, pupils are making good progress and achieving well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy their work and play and they put in good effort. They like coming to school and know that they will be well cared for.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The school is an orderly place and pupils are exceptionally polite and considerate. Learning takes place in very settled conditions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils are a major strength of the school. They get on well with each other and the staff and develop into thoroughly good young people.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Levels of attendance are similar to those found in most primary schools and are improving at a good rate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	good	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.

Teaching is very good overall at Woodside Primary School. Of the 44 lessons observed during the two days of the inspection, teaching quality was never less than satisfactory and was good or better in over 80 per cent of the lessons seen. A small proportion of lessons showed excellent teaching quality overall. Numeracy and literacy are taught very well and pupils build basic skills and knowledge very effectively in all subjects.

Pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds and attainment ranges from very high to comparatively low. All staff expect the pupils to do really well in their work and this motivates the pupils to develop good learning habits. All pupils are taught well and their individual needs are met very effectively. Because this is the case, pupils quickly learn to work independently, concentrate very well and pay close attention to the teacher. They work hard, produce results of good quality and make very good progress overall.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is very well planned and basic skills of numeracy and literacy are developed very effectively in all subjects. The range of activities outside lessons is good and the programme of visits and visitors gives pupils additional chances to learn successfully.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with special educational needs have work that is very well matched to their individual requirements and support for these pupils is very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language are taught very well and they make very good progress in learning English. This helps them to keep up well with the other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils know what is special in life, they know right from wrong and mix well together. They have many opportunities to study the works of poets, authors, artists and musicians from their own and other cultures. These are aspects of education where there are considerable strengths.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils are very well taken care of and their health and safety is of prime concern. Ways to check that attendance, behaviour, personal development and standards are as good as possible are very effective.
Partnership with parents	Very good. The school works hard to draw parents into its life and work, and is very successful in this. Parents have good information about progress made and targets for improvement, though the school wants to make this even better. Parents support their children's work very well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher gives outstanding leadership to the school and is supported totally in this by the excellent deputy headteacher and sterling team of senior managers. There is a very keen sense of purpose in school and all staff form a strong team committed to best standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are increasingly asking the necessary questions to ensure that the school is doing as well as, or better than, others. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The collection of information about how well pupils are doing is thorough and data is interpreted very carefully in order to set targets for learning. Senior staff have very good understanding of the effectiveness of the school and targets set in lessons are based squarely on what is right for the pupils.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is very well staffed, and has very good quality buildings and learning resources. All resources, including finance, are managed very well and are used to benefit the pupils. Finance to support particular aspects of the school's work, such as for pupils with special educational needs, is very well targeted. Managers give very good attention to the principles of best value in their work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school. • Teaching is good and this ensures pupils make good progress. • Teachers have good expectations. • Behaviour is good and pupils develop into mature and responsible learners. • Management is good and parents feel comfortable approaching staff when they have a concern or query. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number have concerns about the information they are given about their children's progress.

The inspection team agrees with the very positive views of the parents. The school is determined to improve the already good quality of information it gives parents so they can support their children's learning even more successfully. The team agrees that this would be useful.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The quality of leadership and management is first rate.

Since the last inspection in 1996, there has been a total turn-around in school. Most of the staff have joined in the last four years, the curriculum has been overhauled, expectations of everyone raised, teaching kick-started and standards boosted. All of this is due to the excellent leadership in school, and particularly, the outstanding qualities of the headteacher. His vision for the school and tireless efforts in making it a reality have had singular success in taking the school to new heights of effectiveness.

The headteacher quickly built a systematic approach to school management where all staff and the governors became fully involved in the process of checking that things are done for the right reason, at the right time and in a consistently good way. The appointment of a highly effective deputy headteacher became of paramount importance in fixing these building blocks for success in place. Since her appointment, the deputy headteacher has shown sterling qualities of teaching and management and in every sense is a key manager of the school.

An important part of the headteacher's vision for the school was the welding together of a very effective senior management team. He has achieved this with notable success. These key managers have a level of practical knowledge, understanding and commitment to best practice and high standards that is second to none. They carry out their duties and responsibilities conscientiously and because they are fully up to date with knowledge about their areas of management, all play a pivotal role in setting down priorities and targets, checking that these are achieved and evaluating what is next for the agenda.

A key factor is the way in which the headteacher has made sure that every member of staff, teaching and non-teaching alike, are fully part of the school. Teachers carry out their management duties very well, including the co-ordination of subjects, special educational needs and personal aspects of pupils' development. Learning support staff work in the best interests of the pupils they assist and school administrators keep everything running smoothly. Caterers and lunchtime assistants ensure that mealtimes are settled and sociable times and the site manager and his staff keep the place safe and looking good for all those in school.

The governors maintain a good overview of the school and, more and more, are asking questions to identify how well the school is achieving. Many governors spend time in school during the day and they give good support to help the staff go forward.

The fact that there are highly effective procedures for school management and that there is excellent educational direction has resulted in an excellent rate of improvement since the 1996 inspection. Standards have come from the bottom of the pile to above average overall at the age of eleven. Other aspects of the school have shown similar leaps forward.

The curriculum gives very good focus to both the academic and all-round development of all pupils.

In 1996 it was judged that several subjects were not well planned and that some failed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. This is no longer the case and each subject has a richness that makes learning a pleasurable and profitable affair.

Curriculum planning is meticulous and is firmly focused on specific targets for learning for

classes, groups and individuals. Pupils study from a broad and balanced programme that helps them build knowledge, skills and understanding in a systematic way as they progress from the beginning of the Foundation Stage to the end of Year 6. This ensures that all pupils are kept on their toes and that they achieve standards that are right for them. Pupils with special educational needs, for example, have very good individual programmes of work and they make rapid strides because the calibre of learning support is very good.

The curriculum does not just boost pupils' intellectual attainment, it is planned to ensure they develop all-round qualities as human beings. Woodside Primary School is not an exam factory, it is driven by the intention to equip each and every child with all the tools necessary for success in Oswestry and beyond in the twenty-first century. The personal development of pupils is paramount and this frames managers' expectation of the quality of teaching.

Teaching quality is very good and pupils make very good progress in their learning.

The headteacher was adamant after the 1996 inspection that teaching quality was to improve. He instituted a rigorous programme of staff development, weeded out poor practice, pushed expectations up and ensured that newcomers to the teaching staff had the qualities to deliver very good education for the pupils. The statistics for the present inspection testify to his great success. Teaching is very good today and this means that pupils get a good deal from their learning.

Inspectors made many comments about the sheer high quality of teaching in school as well as the formal judgements they had to make. Teachers at Woodside Primary School clearly have what it takes to teach very well. More than this, they have the thirst to teach even better than they do and are undaunted by the prospect that one or two things could be even stronger. There is a firm commitment to build on strengths and to ensure that teaching quality is consistently the best it can be in every classroom. Teachers share their knowledge, techniques and insights very effectively with each other and there is a climate of self-improvement that has a positive influence on the pupils.

Teachers and learning support staff enjoy being with their pupils. This is reciprocated very well. Pupils are polite, patient and very well behaved in lessons. Thus, the conditions for very good learning are there from the outset. Pupils want to learn, they want to learn actively and they want to learn successfully. They show much pleasure at their own and other's successes and are quick to congratulate teachers, assistants and other pupils when something has gone well. This pleasure in learning drives knowledge and skill levels along with it at a very brisk rate.

Teachers focus very firmly on the teaching of basic skills and knowledge in all subjects. This is nowhere more obvious than in literacy and numeracy where teachers have quickly made sensible adaptations to the national strategies to ensure that teaching and learning is well focused on the needs of the pupils that they know so well. Pupils work hard in all sessions and the very good progress they make is easily measurable.

Standards are improving at a much quicker rate than in most schools and are above average in most subjects by the age of eleven.

The drive for best standards and the commitment to success is nowhere more evident than in Woodside Primary School. The school has left most other schools standing in overturning poor achievement levels and in showing others just what Woodside pupils are capable of doing.

The 1999 Standardised Assessment Test (SATs) results were the best the school has ever achieved and were A grade throughout at the age of eleven. In 2000, the results were not as high. In the main they were B grade, though in English they were D. This is no surprise to anyone who knows the school well. In 2000, a high proportion of the pupils taking the SATs had special educational needs, many of them with learning difficulties. The Year 6 age group did very well to reach the standards they did. In English, attainment was just one per cent below the national proportion of pupils getting the expected level. This marks very good progress for the age group during their time at school and indicates just how well their targets had been focused in earlier years as well as in Year 6 itself. Results in mathematics and science were above average last year and show that expectations are high in school, as limitations of language and literacy are not allowed to stand in the way of good results in other subjects.

This year, the prospects for above average attainment are looking good. Inspectors judge that overall standards are B grade, though again, in English they are not quite as strong, being C grade. The current Year 6 have made very good strides in their learning, especially in recent years and the 2001 SATs results look to be better than for last year. The school will certainly meet its targets for the year 2000-1. These in themselves are much higher than those for last year and reflect the value already added, enabling pupils to reach high standards in Year 6.

It is also evident that standards have improved right through the school. Pupils start their education in the nursery with below average skills and knowledge, they are given good opportunities to succeed in the nursery and in reception and by the time they leave the Foundation Stage they are working at the expected level for five-year-old children. In the two infant years, pupils move on again. By the age of seven, standards are moving upward still, in some subjects they are at the expected level, in others they are better than this. In total, pupils progress well in Years 1 and 2. This good progress is maintained and boosted in junior classes and the oldest pupils give good account of themselves by the age of eleven.

All pupils develop as thoroughly pleasant young people who are a joy to be with.

The high expectations of everyone extend to the personal and social development of the pupils as well as their academic development. All pupils are affable, polite and hard working. They know when to concentrate, when to apply themselves and when to relax and enjoy what they are doing. They do these things at the right time. It is not difficult to talk to the pupils in school, they are eager to share their knowledge and experiences and they converse in good fashion. They welcome visitors, get on very well with each other and they enjoy the company of the staff.

The visitor to school is immediately impressed by the high standards of behaviour about the place. Lessons are very orderly sessions because the expectation of conduct is high. Staff manage the pupils well. Discipline is firm and fair, but because there is a partnership in learning between adults and children, teachers rarely have to exert their authority. Outside lessons, pupils are just as well behaved and they show great care and consideration for each other. Whilst there were two exclusions for poor behaviour in the last school year, the need for these was carefully evaluated, and the decision to exclude complied fully with the

requirements of the school's behaviour and discipline policy. A particular strength is the way that older pupils help the younger ones and the sense of social responsibility that pervades the school.

Pupils show a mature, sensible and responsible approach to their learning. They develop very good skills of independent working and can be relied upon to work hard even when no adult is nearby. Skills of investigation, research and study are promoted very well and pupils become self-reliant and self-motivated by the age of eleven. This stands them in good stead for secondary education.

Their maturity as learners shows up well at times when pupils reflect on what is special about life, what is enjoyable, what is to be relished and what is to be given the greatest care. Assemblies are used very well to promote this sense of spiritual well-being. Inspectors saw some excellent input into pupils' social and moral education in assemblies as well.

The cultural traditions of Britain and other countries, near and far, similar and different, are promoted very well too. The high quality of display makes the school a lively, welcoming place where poetry, music, art and drama is enjoyed and shared. A walk around school shows how pupils' horizons are extended and how well they are prepared to take their full part in society in and beyond Oswestry.

In all, the school lives up to its mission of being *A good place to be*. More than this, *The pupils are good people to be with*.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

There are no major weaknesses in the school but managers intend to continue the improvements made to English and the annual written reports to parents.

The rate of improvement in school has been excellent over the last four years. Nonetheless, the timescale for improvement has been rather short for every improvement to take complete hold. Even where things could be better still, the need for improvement is relative. So, in English, standards are now at the expected level by the age of eleven, though they could be better in speaking and listening and in writing especially. As part of continued improvement to English, attention to the consistent promotion of good spelling and presentation of work will not go amiss.

Parents are given good information overall about the work and life of the school. Some of this is of very good quality indeed. However, a few parents shared with inspectors their desire for more specific information about how well their children are doing and the team judges that the annual written report to parents could be re-aligned to show what skills, knowledge and understanding have been achieved and what remains for improvement.

No one in school disputes the need for improvement to these things. Indeed, continued improvement to standards in English is a central plank of the school improvement plan. School managers also see the sense in honing the level of detail in annual written reports in order to target future improvements.

Thus, inspectors judge that there are no significant issues for the school to improve, but draw attention to two aspects for enhancement, aspects of English and the written reports.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Because Woodside Primary School is so effective, it does most things very well. Nonetheless, there are still one or two things that managers are resolved to improve even more. The inspection team has no hesitation in judging that there are no major issues for the school to tackle but draws attention to the following aspects that the governors should include in an action plan for future improvement.

1. Continue to raise standards in English, particularly by:

- maintaining the firm focus on standards of speaking and listening through the school;
- continuing the effort to improve writing across the curriculum in all classes;
- consistently developing good standards of spelling and the presentation of work, especially in infant classes.

2. Revising the detailed annual written reports for parents so that they show clearly ways for the pupils to improve their work.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	32	48	18	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30	470
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		89

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	107

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.07
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	33	39	72

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	29	32
	Girls	37	37	38
	Total	64	66	70
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (82)	92 (90)	97 (93)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	33	32
	Girls	38	38	39
	Total	68	71	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (86)	99 (93)	99 (90)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	42	30	72

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	28	31	38
	Girls	25	26	27
	Total	53	57	65
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (86)	79 (87)	89 (93)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	31	37
	Girls	24	27	27
	Total	49	58	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (80)	80 (86)	89 (92)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	435
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.4
Average class size	27.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	19.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	311

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	3.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	83

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	841,728
Total expenditure	806,592
Expenditure per pupil	1,573
Balance brought forward from previous year	94,750
Balance carried forward to next year	129,886

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	530
Number of questionnaires returned	188

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	40	2	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	58	35	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	46	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	53	12	2	2
The teaching is good.	59	38	1	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	43	12	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	28	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	35	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	39	48	10	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	32	4	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	38	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	44	9	2	8