

INSPECTION REPORT

LANGDALE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ambleside

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112321

Headteacher: Mr M Squires

Reporting inspector: Mr D Byrne
28076

Dates of inspection: 18th-19th September 2000

Inspection number: 197193

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:	Chapel Stile Ambleside
Postcode:	LA22 9JE
Telephone number:	01539 437204
E-mail address:	head@langdale.cumbria.sch.uk
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. Andrew Folks
Date of previous inspection:	July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team Members	
Mr D Byrne (28076)	Registered Inspector
Mr S Hussain (9981)	Lay Inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Lynrose Marketing Limited
Bungalow Farmhouse
Six Mile Bottom
Newmarket
Suffolk
CB8 0TU

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

PART A: SUMMARY OF CONTENTS	Page
Information about the school	6
How good the school is	6
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since the last inspection	7
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	8
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	9
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	10
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	13
WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER	14
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	15

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the remote Lake District valley of Langdale near Ambleside, in the county of Cumbria. It is smaller than other primary schools with thirty-eight pupils on roll between the ages of four and eleven. Most children have pre-school experience and begin school with average standards. The percentage of pupils who are identified as needing support for learning is close to the national average with 6 pupils (16%). No pupil requires a statement of special educational need. All pupils are white and none are from a minority ethnic background and none require support for learning English as an Additional Language. Although the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, the socio-economic background of pupils is mixed. A significant proportion of families are employed in the tourist industry with another significant group working in agriculture.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. The overall quality of teaching is good which makes sure that pupils make good progress in most aspects of their education. By the age of eleven, pupils do particularly well in reading, speaking and listening, mathematics, aspects of information technology, art and swimming. They also do well in history, geography and music. Good leadership is responsible for maintaining good teamwork amongst staff. All teachers have a shared commitment to caring for both the academic and emotional development of pupils. The school provides pupils with a good quality of education in which pupils enjoy learning and treat others with respect and courtesy. The school gives good value for money

What the school does well

- Reading, speaking and listening are all taught well and by the time pupils leave school at the age of eleven, standards are particularly high.
- Good teaching in mathematics and information communication technology in Key Stage 2 and in art and swimming across the school, results in pupils achieving particularly well in these subjects.
- Outdoor environmental resources are used very well to support and extend pupils' learning and very good links exist with the local community.
- The school promotes very good standards of behaviour, very good relationships and impeccable levels of courtesy amongst pupils.

What could be improved

- The quality of handwriting, the presentation of pupils' written work and the opportunities for pupils to practise and apply independent writing skills.
- Communication to parents about the school's homework policy and the expectations of the school.
- The school's personal, social and health education programme that needs to be more carefully planned and systematically taught across the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in July 1996 despite major changes in staffing. The quality of teaching is good overall and good leadership and management have maintained the positive direction of the school. Pupils continue to make good progress in most subjects although the standard of writing is not as good as it was. Improvements have been made in the use of information technology supported by much better equipment and training for staff. Staffing has been re-organised and the decision to split the Key Stage 2 class benefits pupils because they receive individual support when required. Good use is made of part-time teachers with subject specialisms. Schemes of work for each subject have been evaluated and adapted to match national recommendations and the curriculum for children in the foundation stage is being revised to meet the needs of children in Reception. The head teacher has introduced a new policy for involving staff and governors in checking on the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. An improved school development plan now has targets that are precise and carefully costed. The governing body is now much more involved in the management of the school. A governor for special educational needs has been appointed who works closely to support and develop the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator.

STANDARDS

The number of pupils taking the end of key stage standard assessment tests is fewer than 10 so the school's results at the end of Key Stage 2 are not published. Pupils make good progress in most subjects and by the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average in reading, speaking and listening and mathematics. In science and writing, pupils' performance closely matches national expectations for eleven year olds but in writing pupils' attainment could be better. There is a particular strength in the use of information and communication technology to communicate with others and also in art where pupils have a good appreciation of other artists and have a good range of skills. Good work also occurs in geography and history. Pupils make good progress in swimming and they develop a good awareness of the natural environment. Pupils reach satisfactory standards by the end of the foundation stage. Pupils make steady progress in Key Stage 1 and reach the standards expected of seven year olds.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	All pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to learn. They thrive on being challenged in their work. They are tolerant of each other regardless of age or ability.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are polite and courteous at all times. They are respectful of adults and learn and play together sensibly. Pupils have impeccable levels of courtesy.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond well to expectations to use their initiative and take responsibilities for many aspects of their learning and day-to-day routines in school.
Attendance	Attendance figures are well above the national average and lessons begin promptly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
14 lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection, teaching was very good in 21% of lessons, good in 58% and satisfactory in the remaining 21%. The teaching of basic skills of numeracy, reading, grammar and spelling is good. Hard work is being put in to improve the pupils' independent writing skills. The teaching of information technology has improved since the last inspection enabling pupils to reach standards of communication that are better than normally found. Teaching and support staff work together to effectively provide work that meets the needs of all pupils including those with learning difficulties. Good quality teaching by part-time staff teaching literacy, art, history, and music makes a positive contribution to the achievement of pupils in these subjects. Two teachers job-share the responsibility for under-fives and Key Stage 1. Their skills complement each other and together they set high standards. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils are provided with a rich, exciting and relevant curriculum that motivates and inspire pupils to learn. The curriculum for children in the foundation stage is in the process of being reviewed to meet the children's needs. Subjects are satisfactorily planned but not enough thought is given to developing pupils' skills of writing, across the curriculum. The natural environment is used very well to provide activities that are relevant and interesting. The local community is also very effectively used to support learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are supported well during lessons by class-teachers and efficiently organised class groups The school is currently improving the quality of individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good opportunities exist for the spiritual development of pupils through work in art and music as well as experiencing the beauty of nature. Social skills are promoted very well through the integration of older and younger pupils in lessons. Cultural development is strong in developing a good knowledge and understanding of local culture and good links exist with schools abroad, but there is too little emphasis given to raising the pupils' appreciation of the multi-cultural society in which they live. Moral development is well provided for.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school offers pupils a very calm and caring environment. All pupils are treated as individuals and made to feel valued. High levels of self-esteem exist as a result and this contributes to the good progress most pupils make by the age of eleven. Pupils' personal and academic progress is carefully tracked and known by teachers.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher successfully combines a heavy teaching commitment with managerial duties so that the school is developing well. Staffing has been stabilised and a strong team spirit exists between all staff, both teaching and non-teaching. The head teacher accurately identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the school and uses this knowledge to give a clear vision for its development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils all statutory requirements. Governors keep themselves well informed about the standards in the school and work hard to make standards even better. They effectively monitor the financial management of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Available data from assessment tests is analysed and combined with the results of the monitoring of teaching and learning to find ways of improving the school. The school development plan includes sensible and well-costed targets for achieving improvement.
The strategic use of resources	All available space is used well and supplemented by using community resources when necessary. Staff are wisely deployed so that pupils benefit from a range of skills and subject specialisms. The governing body keeps a close check to see whether or not spending benefits the pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong family feel of the school • The commitment and care shown by teachers • The involvement of pupils in the local community • The warm, friendly and welcoming manner of staff that makes parents feel that they can approach the school. • The way in which the school prepares pupils before they start school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of information about expectations for homework and the quantity that is provided for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made by parents. The quality of information provided for parents could be better so that parents are clear about homework and the way in which they can support their child at home. The level of homework is satisfactory for pupils in Years 1,2,3 and 4, but more work would be appropriate for pupils in upper Years 5 and 6 so that these pupils are better prepared for homework expectations at secondary school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Reading, speaking and listening are all taught well and by the time pupils leave school at the age of eleven, their standards are high.

1. Good standards are achieved by pupils in reading because of the skill and commitment of teachers and the support of parents. From the age of four, when children begin school, teachers place a high value upon developing pupils' ability to read. The literacy hour is adapted effectively so that children develop a love of books and reading. The curriculum is carefully planned so that pupils have daily opportunities to read and explore books. A very good strategy is employed whereby pupils in Key Stage 1 work in pairs, with older pupils helping younger or less confident ones. In Key Stage 1, teachers and support staff teach pupils to recognise basic sounds and to use this knowledge to read new and challenging words. The classroom is well organised so that books are easy for children to find. Language is promoted very successfully through well-planned wall displays that include many words and sentences to reinforce the pupils' class-work. Homework is particularly well used and daily reading supported by parents at home is a vital factor in the good progress pupils make.
2. Good progress is maintained in reading in Key Stage 2 because pupils benefit from regular reading as part of each day. All pupils read fluently and with good levels of expression. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to use books to support research activities. In order to find detailed information, they are capable of selecting appropriate books and correctly locating the relevant pages and sections by using the index, contents and glossary. Pupils in Year 6 enthusiastically and knowledgeably talk about the main characters of favourite books such as the "Min-Pins" and "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory".
3. When children begin school, many do not speak confidently and often have a narrow vocabulary that restricts their ability to say what they mean. Between the ages of four and seven, however, speaking skills improve rapidly. This is firstly because teachers create a warm and caring atmosphere in the classroom that gives pupils a sense of security and encourages them to speak. Secondly, lessons are planned so that opportunities are made for pupils to speak in front of others by sharing their thoughts and discussing the tasks they have done. The third important factor in promoting rapid progress is the insistence of teachers on good standards of behaviour. This results in pupils knowing that their thoughts will be valued and that they can speak without fear of ridicule. Pupils always listen with respect and tolerance to each other that gives confidence to those pupils who are otherwise shy.
4. Teachers provide good role models for pupils by speaking with good diction and using appropriate vocabulary. This is particularly the case in both science and mathematics lessons for pupils in Key Stage 2. Pupils are encouraged to use suitable phrases and words to describe what they are thinking and what they are doing. For example whilst doing work involving multiplication and division of hundreds, tens and units, pupils in Year 5 explained the different ways of solving the problems using terms such as 'inverse operations' and 'partitioning' very well.

Good teaching in mathematics and information communication technology in Key Stage 2 and in art and swimming across the school, results in pupils achieving particularly well in these subjects.

5. In mathematics, pupils in Key Stage 2 extend the good basic foundation built in Key Stage 1 so that by the age of eleven, standards are high. Teachers plan carefully so that the needs of pupils across the wide age range in the Key Stage 2 class are catered for. The support of an additional teacher each morning means that pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 are taught separately from those in Year 5 and Year 6. The small group size benefits pupils enormously because work is planned closely to fit individual needs. Lessons are very well planned and organised and high expectations are made for pupils to use a variety of methods in solving problems. The good quality of teaching and appropriateness of tasks, results in pupils working with good levels of concentration for sustained periods of time. They confidently use mathematical language such as partitioning, halving, doubling and dividing to explain how they arrive at answers to problems. In so doing, pupils demonstrate a very secure understanding of number. Their high level of thinking is also demonstrated by the work completed in their books and reflects the benefits of being given tasks that match their ability.
6. Pupils use information and communication technology very well. The computer is used for real purposes, for example, pupils regularly send letters via E-mail to pupils in other schools in Newcastle and the Scilly Isles and to pupils in a school in New Zealand. During the residential field visit to Fellside, pupils combined photographs taken with a digital camera with text and slides that were sent directly to the school website so that parents and pupils in school could see what was actually happening from day-to-day. After the visit, pupils extended their information and communication technology skills by preparing a Powerpoint presentation for parents about their residential visit. Good use of the computer by the head teacher extends communication with parents in other ways. The school posts relevant newsletters and other relevant information on the school's website so that parents can access it if necessary.
7. A specialist teacher teaches art, and the level of commitment and preparation is such that by the age of eleven, pupils achieve good standards. Pupils have a good understanding of a range of contemporary and classic artists including Hockney, Picasso, Van Gogh and Turner. Seascapes of a high standard in the style of these artists demonstrated the pupils' good ability in using brushes and mixing colours to represent the different styles. Pupils appreciate a good range of styles of art and techniques. Teachers value pupils' work by displaying it very well in and around the school. Sketches of soft toys demonstrate that pupils use a pencil well to create shade and texture to represent three-dimensional images. Discussion with pupils indicates that they have a good understanding of the difference between abstract, semi-abstract and realistic designs. The standard of work is better than normally found and pupils demonstrate confidence and good levels of independence in performing art activities. During an art lesson during the inspection, pupils in Key Stage 2 worked very well, using good quality skills of printing to create a repeating pattern using a leaf.
8. Although the school's accommodation lacks a large hall which restricts opportunities for teaching some aspects of physical education, such as gymnastics, pupils still have a wide and varied physical education programme. A particular strength is the progress made by pupils in swimming. By the age of seven, each pupil is a confident swimmer. This is because all pupils in the school go swimming regularly from their first year of education.

Outdoor environmental resources are used very well to support and extend pupils' learning and very good links exist with the local community.

9. Pupils throughout the school benefit in many ways from very good links with the local community. The local environment is not taken for granted by staff and governors, and great efforts are made to involve pupils in exploring and using the environment. The pupils benefit from this by building good social skills as well as learning about the world around them.
10. The head teacher, staff and governing body work very hard to involve parents and members of the local villages in the life and work of the school. The National Trust has been regularly involved in providing pupils with exciting and relevant activities which have enabled pupils to develop a good knowledge and understanding of the local environment. Through the Guardianship Project, led by the National Trust, pupils have experienced dressing in period costumes to develop an appreciation of the way life in the area has altered and developed over the centuries. The school grounds are exceptionally rich in opportunities for outdoor education. Pupils are given many opportunities for using them to support work in science and geography as well as in physical education. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have explored the woodland and learned about different plants and animals and the places where they live. Residential educational visits for pupils in Key Stage 2 have enabled them to develop a range of study skills. Pupils have had the opportunity to measure the flow of a river, to canoe, experience cycling in Grizedale and to build shelters thereby building up their self-confidence and team-work. Members of the Langdale and Ambleside Mountain Rescue Team regularly work with pupils in Key Stage 2 on basic first-aid skills.

The school promotes very good standards of behaviour, very good relationships and impeccable levels of courtesy amongst pupils.

11. The head teacher, teachers and support staff work very hard to successfully create a warm, friendly and welcoming atmosphere. There is a strong family feeling in the life and work of the school and this is the major factor in the good progress that pupils make. Pupils are valued as individuals. Their views are listened to, and this gives pupils the confidence to say when they need help, and to try out new and challenging ideas and activities. Teachers talk with respect to each other and to pupils and take time to consider both their academic and emotional needs. Everyone moves around the school quietly and with due regard for others. During playtimes, behaviour is excellent; pupils play sensibly and enjoy playing simple games such as skipping. At all times pupils show impeccable levels of courtesy.
12. Pupils feel secure in the well-organised day-to-day routines and they make good progress as a result. The classroom organisation is good and the difficulties presented by a wide range of ages in each class are negated by skillfully grouping pupils. Older and younger pupils learn to work together and at times help each other, for example, pupils in Year 2 were observed sitting with Reception children to share books and talk about the story. Throughout the school pupils enjoy learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The quality of handwriting, the presentation of pupils' written work and the opportunities for pupils to practise and apply independent writing skills could be better.

13. Although the standard of pupils' writing is average by the age of eleven, pupils in the school are capable of much better. Opportunities for pupils to improve their extended writing are limited and there is no policy for handwriting and presentation that is consistently applied. There is also an overemphasis on pupils completing worksheets rather than writing independently in books or organised folders. In Key Stage 1, pupils are not expected to write with a cursive style by the age of seven and handwriting in Key Stage 2 varies considerably and depends upon the expectations and quality of marking of teachers. Some excellently presented written work does exist, for example, in Key Stage 2 history projects and the school has enjoyed considerable recognition for some of its writing work. In 2000, thirteen pupils wrote poems which were included in the young writers publication "Up, Up and Away" and two pupils gained an award for stories entered in the Young Writers competition organised by Cambridge University Press. These examples of success, however, are not consistently reflected in the standard of writing produced by pupils in their day-to-day work.
14. The comparative weakness in writing is recognised by the school and the co-ordinator is working hard to rectify the situation. The literacy hour is being adapted to provide more regular opportunities for extended independent writing skills to be practised. The school needs to develop a more consistent approach to handwriting and presentation. Staff in Key Stage 1 are planning to raise expectations for independent writing and the quality of its presentation.

Communication to parents about the school's homework policy and the expectations of the school.

15. Parents are unsure of the school's homework policy. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are given work each weekend which alternates between English, mathematics and research based work. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to read at home. Discussion with pupils and parents indicates that their views are that more homework could be provided in Years 5 and 6. Parents would also appreciate being given more support and advice about how they could help and support their child at home. At the moment the school does not evaluate the impact that homework has upon the progress pupils make. Opportunities to use homework to improve standards in writing and the presentation of work are not taken.

The school's personal, social and health education programme needs to be more carefully planned and systematically taught across the school.

16. Although the school provides pupils with a good curriculum overall, supported by strong links with the local community and the natural environment, the pupils' development of issues related to personal, social and health education are not consistently planned or taught. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their thoughts and ideas and to share their feelings have been recently introduced through 'circle-time'. Arrangements for raising pupils' awareness of other issues such as sex education, drugs education and general health issues etc. are not, however, planned carefully and tend to be taught incidentally alongside other subjects such as science and physical education. This reduces opportunities for pupils to gain a broad and balanced view of themselves and their own

personal development. The increasing importance of preparing pupils for dealing with the pressures of life as a citizen in the modern world is not yet consistently planned for or taught.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

17. In order to improve further the good quality of education provided by the school, the governing body, head teacher and staff should:

1) improve writing across the school by:

- making sure that it is school policy for pupils to use cursive writing which is always presented as neatly as possible
- *increasing planned opportunities for pupils to practise and apply extended writing skills in English and in other subjects
- making sure that standards of writing and presentation in all subjects are carefully monitored so that areas for improvement are identified and corrected.

2) improve the quality of the school's homework policy by:

- evaluating the impact of the current homework provision upon the progress of pupils.
- consulting with all interested groups i.e. pupils, parents, carers, staff and governors so that a coherent and manageable policy is devised
- sending all parents and carers simple and clear guidance about the policy and how support could be given at home.

3) improve the pupils' personal, social and health education programme by:

- auditing the current provision across the curriculum and creating a coherent policy and scheme for the school which maps out the experiences which pupils receive as they move through the school.
- creating a way of checking that the policy is consistently implemented.

* This is already planned for as a point of action in the school's current school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	14
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	21	58	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	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		38
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		6

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	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	38
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.61
Average class size	19

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	10

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	118062
Total expenditure	120885
Expenditure per pupil	3181.18
Balance brought forward from previous year	6098
Balance carried forward to next year	3275

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	38
Number of questionnaires returned	22

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	23	9	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	55	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	45	0	10	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	27	18	18	10
The teaching is good.	73	14	0	4	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	36	14	0	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	91	9	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	23	10	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	59	27	5	9	0
The school is well led and managed.	54	34	4	4	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	46	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	55	0	0	13

Other issues raised by parents