

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WHARF NURSERY SCHOOL

Godalming

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 124913

Headteacher: Mrs. M. Heslop

Reporting inspector: Mrs. J. Catlin
21685

Dates of inspection: 5th – 6th February 2002

Inspection number: 230605

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 5
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Wharf Godalming Surrey
Postcode:	GU7 1JG
Telephone number:	01483 415220
Fax number:	01483 417193
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. K. Syson
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	15
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	15
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	16

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Wharf Nursery School admits children from three to five years old. It is maintained by Surrey education authority and occupies a small site situated on a busy road junction in the town centre. At the time of inspection there were 75 children on roll, attending either full or part-time. There are 3 children with English as an additional language, although none are at an early stage of learning English. Five of the children who attend full-time are entitled to free school meals. There are 16 children with special educational needs, one of whom has a statement of special educational need. Most children start school with standards of attainment in line with those usually expected for children of this age.

The school was awarded the Charter Mark in recognition of its excellence in providing helpful information and courteous service to parents and the community. It was also one of only five schools in the county awarded the local education authority's Parent Friendly Award.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an excellent school where children make very good progress and attain high standards. The headteacher gives excellent leadership and has created a very positive ethos. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The school provides a very stimulating and caring environment and a rich curriculum. The very good progress is promoted by the very good quality of teaching, the very good curriculum and the children's excellent attitudes to learning. This is underpinned by the very good support the school receives from parents. The school provides a very good start to the children's education and gives excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- There is excellent leadership and management by the headteacher who is very well supported by the governing body.
- The very good teaching enables children to learn very effectively, achieve very well and attain above average standards.
- Children's excellent attitudes, behaviour and personal development are a result of the excellent provision for children's social and emotional development.
- There is excellent care and support for all children, which provides a very secure learning environment.
- The excellent partnership with parents is due to the school's friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

What could be improved

- Targets on the individual education plans for children with special educational needs could be better defined.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1998. The school had no significant weaknesses and there were only two minor points for improvement. These related to the provision for information and communication technology and the continued promotion of children's cultural development. Both these issues have been fully and successfully addressed. In addition, many new developments have been put in place. For example, there have been significant improvements in the school's physical environment with the extension of soft-play apparatus and the upgrading of outdoor resources. Parents are now even more involved in the work of the school with the introduction of an under-threes playgroup and an expanded toy library. The new Foundation Stage curriculum has been put into place and curriculum and lesson planning improved to match. The nursery has maintained its previously high standards and school development has been very good.

STANDARDS

Children achieve very well. Those with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans and often exceed them. Children with English as an additional language are given very good support and achieve as well as their peers. All children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development and this is recognised by parents as a significant strength of the school. Very good progress is made in their communication, language and literacy, mathematical and physical development and at least good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative development. Overall, the children make very good progress towards the early learning goals and are on line to attain beyond the expected standard by the time they leave the nursery. For example, the majority of children:

- can maintain attention, concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate,
- have excellent relationships with friends and adults and work very well as part of a group,
- can undress and manage their personal hygiene independently,
- listen very well, with enjoyment,
- use a pencil and hold it effectively,
- count reliably up to 10 and use number names in their daily work and play,
- build and construct with a very wide range of resources,
- use computers and a variety of programs at an early level,
- are beginning to know about their own and other cultures,
- show awareness of space, themselves and others,
- handle tools and materials safely and with increasing control and
- explore colour, shape, texture and space in art work.

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have excellent attitudes to school. They separate easily from their parents and are eager to come to school.
Behaviour	Excellent: they are very polite and courteous for their age and caring in their approach to others.
Personal development and relationships	Children enjoy excellent relationships with all staff who treat them with care, sensitivity and respect. They are eager to assume responsibility for their own learning.
Attendance	There are no comparable figures for nursery school and attendance is not statutory. However, the rate of attendance is excellent.

The school successfully achieves its aim for pupils' personal and social development. Children form very constructive relationships with each other and their relationships with staff and those between staff create a very effective learning environment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery
Quality of teaching	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.

Overall, teaching is very good. In literacy, 8 per cent of teaching was excellent. In over 54 per cent of lessons teaching was very good and this includes all numeracy lessons. In a further 38 per cent it was good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and, as a result, children make very good progress in their learning. Significant strengths in teaching are:

- very high expectations of children in all areas, to which they respond enthusiastically;
- excellent team work amongst the adults, which results in the creation of a very smooth organisation;
- a very calm and purposeful atmosphere during structured activities and the encouragement of fun and investigation during creative play activities;
- very good use of resources and the classroom environment to enhance topics, such as that created around the celebration of birthdays;
- the consideration for children's personal, social and emotional development which underpins the everyday work of the nursery;
- the careful support given to children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language, which ensures that they are fully included in all activities and achieve as well as their peers and
- the challenge offered to high attaining children.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The provision, organisation and management of the curriculum across all areas of learning are very good. All children have equal access to the curriculum offered.
Provision for children with special educational needs	The levels of care and support and the very good teaching enable children to make very good progress in all aspects of their learning.
Provision for children with English as an additional language	Children's individual needs are met very well and their own backgrounds and cultures are celebrated and given genuine status.
Provision for children's personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The school makes very good provision for the children's spiritual, moral and cultural development. Provision for social development is excellent and this helps to raise children's self-esteem and encourage very good behaviour.
How well the school cares for its children	The school's arrangements for the care of the children are excellent. Their personal development, attainment and progress are very effectively monitored and assessed.

The school provides a very safe environment. The school has excellent links with its parents and they provide very good support for the school. They receive very good, detailed information about school events, the curriculum and their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the school is excellent. The headteacher has a strong and committed team of staff who work together successfully to maintain and improve the achievement of all children in their care.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	This is done very well. The governors work very effectively, have an excellent overview of the school and a very clear vision for its future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	All who work in the school are well aware of the nursery's strengths and areas for development. These are outlined in a detailed and well-constructed development plan.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is generously funded and full and effective use is made of available grants, funds and resources. There is a large underspend in the school's budget due to planned building improvements, which have yet to take place.

The headteacher and staff provide very strong leadership and a very clear commitment to the continuous improvement of the school's provision for these very young children. Levels of staffing are good and the headteacher ensures that all staff are valued and their contributions recognised. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, due to the very good administration in the school office. The school's accommodation is good and there is a wide range of learning resources. They are particularly good for literacy, numeracy, special educational needs and physical development. There are excellent systems in place to ensure that the school applies the principles of best value to very good effect.

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 like school. • The school works closely with them. • The teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major concerns.

The inspection team agrees with the very positive views of the parents. There is a very happy, caring ethos which is appreciated by parents and the wider community. All connected with the school share a commitment to providing a high quality education, which allows every child the opportunity to attain the highest standards of which they are capable. The parents are very happy with the school and appreciate its achievements.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

There is excellent leadership and management by the headteacher who is very well supported by the governing body.

1. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and this has been maintained since the last inspection when a different headteacher was in post. The current headteacher provides very clear educational direction and ensures that the school's aims and values are reflected in its everyday work. She is an excellent role model and makes significant contributions to the teaching and learning in the school. Through her daily discussions with staff, the headteacher maintains a very good overview of the quality of education offered and the pupils' academic performance and personal development. She also creates time for other staff to carry out their monitoring and evaluation role. Consequently, the headteacher has a very thorough knowledge and understanding of the aptitudes and needs of both the pupils and the staff. She leads the school with skill and compassion, showing a very caring attitude to staff, pupils and parents alike. Nevertheless, she also makes no secret of her very high expectations of everybody in the school community. There is a shared vision among all who are involved with the school, which is very clearly seen in practice on a day-to-day basis.
2. The staff support the headteacher most effectively. One of their greatest strengths is the cheerful, productive way in which they work as a team. They openly and honestly assess their own performance and identify strengths and areas in need of development. All staff are very well qualified and their expertise is effectively deployed to meet the demands of all the children in their care. Those with management responsibilities have a very clear understanding of their role in developing even higher standards.
3. Governors take an active part in the day-to-day life of the school and the governing body has an excellent understanding of the context of the school and the needs of the children. The governing body is provided with much helpful information through the headteacher's reports, focused school visits and regular contact with the staff. The information is very carefully considered before strategic plans are made and decisions taken. The development plan contains clearly identified priorities and relevant information about implementation. Furthermore, excellent procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate progress against the targets. The overall effect is that the governing body very effectively fulfils its statutory duties as it supports the school's aims and the shaping of its future direction.
4. The school's budget is allocated according to the clearly identified development priorities, taking account of value for money principles. The school has a proven track record of procuring additional funding through specific grants and they are spent well. The available accommodation, both indoors and outdoors and the learning resources are of very good quality and are used effectively. When considering the effectiveness of the school, its context and the efficiency with which it is run, the school provides excellent value for money.

The very good teaching enables children to learn very effectively, achieve very well and make very good progress.

5. The quality of teaching is very good and has improved since the last inspection. In all lessons the teaching is at least good and there is a significant proportion of very good teaching, particularly in literacy and numeracy. There is a talented and experienced team of teachers who work extremely well together and who have complementary skills and styles. A major strength are the relationships built up with children. Routines are very clear. This gives the children confidence and security and encourages them to explore and take part in the full range of activities available to them. Teachers and support staff have a very good knowledge of the individual children and their needs. This is true of higher attaining children and those with English as an additional language as well as those with special educational needs. It is demonstrated by the interactions between children and staff on an individual basis and the way these extend learning in an effective way. For example, in one session a nursery nurse extended the work of a child who was painting a picture by making a very appropriate intervention about the effect of mixing paint to produce different colours. The teachers' questioning skills are very good and are effectively and appropriately targeted at children to extend their understanding. The teachers have high expectations of all children and this helps to ensure their very good progress.
6. The accommodation is very well used by staff. The various areas are used effectively to enable all children to experience all aspects of the resources available. Exciting and effective learning is created through a range of creative and role-play areas as well as quieter areas for reading or early writing or counting activities. The good use of displays of children's work, as well as displays to encourage reading and other skills, helps create a bright and enriched learning environment. Resources are very well prepared, appropriate and are used effectively to extend and support learning. The good use of resources also illustrates the creative and flexible way in which teachers plan work that leads from children's own interests. For example, an activity on birthdays in the home corner was extended into a mathematical activity with children making play-dough cakes on which to place candles. This was used very effectively by the teacher to encourage children to throw a dice and match the number thrown with the correct number of candles. High attaining children can also say what number is 'one more' or 'one less' than a given number.
7. The very good quality of the support provided to teachers by nursery nurses and special educational needs support staff is a very important factor in the children's learning. There is very good teamwork and excellent communication regarding children's progress. This is recorded on the spot and then communicated to the child's teacher to form part of their record of progress. The planning of activities is very clear and all staff have a very good understanding of their roles.
8. Standards are high and very good progress is made, especially in children's personal, social, emotional and physical development. The majority of children enter the school with good communication, social and physical skills. A few children have special educational needs and a significant minority has advanced skills and levels of maturity for their ages. The excellent provision, very good teaching and support for pupils help them to make very good progress very quickly. This was supported by the positive comments made by parents about the speed with which children settle and adapt to the new routines.
9. The teaching and non-teaching staff create a strong ethos that gives children security and confidence to explore their new surroundings and to take part in activities. Children

quickly build friendships and very strong relationships with the adults and these help their learning to progress rapidly. For example, a significant number of one-to-one interactions take place between staff and children. Expectations are made clear and reinforced in a firm but very supportive manner.

10. Standards in children's personal, social and emotional development are very good and they are on course to exceed the early learning goals for the end of the Foundation Stage. They quickly learn to interact with each other positively through the excellent role-play activities set up for them. In addition, the full inclusion of children with special educational needs provides children with the opportunity to support and be aware of the wide variety of diverse needs in the school. Their physical development is also very good and, again, most children are on course to exceed the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. Good use is made of outdoor activities to encourage children to move around with confidence and care. For example, in one lesson they practised moving either with very tiny quick steps or large slow steps with sufficient control to avoid others and without falling over. They use wheeled toys and the provision of a climbing frame and soft-play apparatus enables these activities also to be a regular part of each day. In addition, children have good skills in using smaller apparatus and equipment. Many can use paintbrushes with growing control. They learn to clap to a rhythm and use bricks to build and balance.
11. Very good progress is made in children's communication, language and literacy skills and their mathematical development. Good progress is made by all children in their knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative development. A high emphasis is placed on speaking and listening skills throughout all activities. Very good opportunities are created for children to develop their emerging writing skills through signing and reading their names and a significant number can quickly produce recognisable letter shapes. Story times are excellent vehicles for introducing children to books, stories and nursery rhymes. Counting and matching activities are used very effectively in the early assessment of children's abilities and their needs. Creative opportunities range from paint and printing to excellent imaginative role-play. In their scientific development, children look through binoculars and use magnifying glasses and mirrors to see various enlarged images. This arouses genuine awe and wonder in the children particularly when they realise they can see their eyes enlarged if they then put a mirror in front of the binoculars.

Children's excellent attitudes to school, their behaviour and personal development are a result of the excellent provision for children's social and emotional development.

12. Children are very enthusiastic about coming to the nursery. They are highly motivated to take part in all activities and apply themselves well. There is considerable support for children with special educational needs to overcome their difficulties and develop at their own pace, although for some this is a difficult challenge. All children are full of natural curiosity and enjoy all that they do which helps them to remain interested and so learn well. This was a noticeable feature at the time of the last inspection. In this inspection, They were observed working carefully for relatively long periods of time on a range of activities. For example, two boys sat companionably at the computer, both using the mouse and working on the program in turns, whilst also talking about their families. Children play very well together in the sandpit and, when using the role-play resources, they get involved in their own games for long periods.
13. The children's behaviour is excellent and contributes well to their advanced personal development. Whilst they are lively, happy individuals who enjoy the freedom of space

and motivating activities provided by the nursery, they are also very calm and compliant during more structured activities. During the inspection, it was rare to hear tears and no grabbing or pushing was observed whilst the children were playing outside. Inside, the children behaved very well and were quiet and calm. They sit well during group activities and show remarkable self-control. For example, each group is timetabled for a session in the soft-play area. When it is their turn, the children sit calmly on their chairs, remove their socks and shoes (mostly completely unaided) and climb onto the apparatus where they thoroughly enjoy themselves, exploring and experimenting with the equipment but remaining sensible.

14. Children are extremely independent for their age and take responsibility for themselves and their belongings. They are careful with toys and equipment and enjoy tidying up at the end of a session. The majority take care of their personal needs completely unaided and are sensible when in the toilets. The children are confident and try out new activities and experiences with enthusiasm. They are beginning to understand viewpoints different from their own and enjoy excellent relationships with staff and with each other, which are very well supported by the organisation of the nursery and the high quality work of all staff. The children work well together and collaborate spontaneously when at work and at play regardless of gender, ability or ethnicity. Children with special educational needs are included fully in all activities.

There is excellent care and support for all children, which provides a very secure learning environment.

15. There is a very caring and supportive environment where children are cared for as individuals. This is a significant factor in the very good progress children make and the high standards they achieve. The excellent relationships with teachers, and the way that teachers listen so carefully to what children have to say, ensure that children feel valued and grow in confidence. The school continues to be very successful in promoting high standards of behaviour. There is a high level of care and supervision, even where children are given considerable scope for independence. A good example is the use of the soft-play equipment where the supervision is vigilant. The standard of care extends to the outside facilities, where pupils are able to use the wide range of equipment in safety because rules are well understood and respected by pupils, and teachers are very careful in their supervision.
16. There is also a high standard of concern for children's feelings. Teachers are very aware of each pupil and ensure that steps are taken to reassure them when necessary and that the demands put upon them are not too great. There was a good example of this when a teacher noticed that a child was rather upset after leaving his mother and moved him to sit next to her.
17. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are very thorough. Staff have all had up-to-date training and are very conscious of their role and the responsibilities they have with regard to child protection. Children are taught appropriately about looking after themselves. The health and safety policy is very good and staff are very diligent about monitoring health and safety.

18. The school's arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. The initial assessment of each pupil is very thorough and, as it is partially carried out at home before the child starts school, provides a good initial link with parents. The continuing assessment is also very thorough, with notes being made daily about children's progress within the activities they undertake. There is very good practice in recording children's conversations and contributions to discussions. This involves a great deal of work by teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants, but the information it provides is very valuable in gaining insights into children's understanding.
19. Staff make very good use of assessment information and have a very good understanding of the stages of development of their pupils and what they need to learn next. This enables teachers to respond appropriately to different children and to ensure that the level of challenge is sufficiently high. The information gained is also used very effectively to monitor progress in the six areas of learning and to monitor and support behaviour.

The excellent partnership with parents is due to the school's friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

20. The parents who responded to the questionnaire, attended the pre-inspection meeting or were spoken to during the course of the inspection were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the provision being made for their children. Parents feel that very good progress is being made and that their children's personal, social and emotional development is actively fostered, both through the wide range of experiences being offered and in the way the staff value and care for each child. They feel that there is a very good level of information given to them by the nursery staff about each child and that the attractive wall displays help them to understand the curriculum being followed. The staff are seen as friendly and willing to listen to parents' ideas and concerns and any problems are quickly resolved.
21. The headteacher and staff work very hard to foster excellent links with the parents and carers. These very positive links have been maintained since the last inspection. A friendly and welcoming environment enables them to feel confident and comfortable within the nursery and to be closely involved in the day-to-day activities. The simple routines at the start and end of each session enable the parents to have regular contact with the staff and there is an easy and informal exchange of information between parents, children and staff.
22. In addition to the time spent in the classrooms by many parents as they deliver and collect their children, the nursery benefits in other ways from the support of parents. For example, help is given with the book and toy library and the presence of parents on school trips enables the nursery staff to offer the children a wide range of interesting and challenging experiences in addition to the normal timetable of activities. There is an active Parent Teacher Association, which has taken on a busy programme of fund-raising and social activities. This both provides additional equipment for the nursery and actively fosters good social links between the families in the area and with the nursery staff.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Targets on the individual education plans for children with special educational needs could be better defined.

23. The school's provision for children with special educational needs is very good and has been maintained since the last inspection. They are appropriately identified and the requirements of the code of practice are fully implemented. The staff places a strong and effective emphasis on ensuring that the curriculum provides equality of opportunity for these children. The very experienced special educational needs co-ordinator is very new to the school and has already identified that the targets on these children's individual education plans need to be broken down into smaller steps, which will then enable her to plan and monitor progress more effectively.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

24. A minor point for development, in order to strengthen further the very good quality of education offered to children, is that the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) ensure that all targets for development included on children's Individual Education Plans are more clearly defined. **
(Paragraph 23)

- ** This issue has already been identified by the school and prioritised by the special educational needs manager.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of sessions observed	13
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	5	0	0	0	0
Percentage	8	54	38	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of sessions observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each session represents just under 8 percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	49
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	16

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	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	N/a

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	N/a

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and support staff

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	12.6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
	£
Total income	240,514
Total expenditure	220,554
Expenditure per pupil	4,501
Balance brought forward from previous year	31,699
Balance carried forward to next year	51,659

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	75
Number of questionnaires returned	52

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	87	11	0	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	83	8	0	0	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	77	15	0	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	4	0	0	79
The teaching is good.	90	4	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	75	17	2	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	9	0	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	29	31	0	0	40
The school works closely with parents.	87	11	0	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	90	4	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	77	15	0	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	9	0	0	37