

INSPECTION REPORT

CONINGSBY PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Croydon, Surrey

LEA area: Croydon

Unique reference number: 101706

Headteacher: Ms. Sue Podd

Reporting inspector: Mark R. Evans
OIN 20999

Dates of inspection: 12th-14th February 2001

Inspection number: 232543

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	45 Coombe Road Croydon Surrey
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Appropriate authority:	Croydon Local Education Authority
Name of responsible officer	Mr. Alan Malarkey
Date of previous inspection:	29 th September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mark Evans #20999	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements
			Standards
			Teaching
			Leadership & management
Anne Longfield #09511	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values & personal development
			The care of pupils
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Greg Sorrell #21529	Team inspector		Curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils.
Kate Robinson #22178	Team inspector	Re-integration	
		English as an additional language	
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		Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

There are four distinctive parts to the Coningsby Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The largest site at Coombe Road provides for 11-16 year olds who have been excluded from one or more schools. The Cotelands Centre educates two groups of pupils. In the mornings, school-age mothers and mothers-to-be attend, whilst their babies are cared for in the nursery room next door. Attending the centre in the afternoon are those pupils who have emotional difficulties related to school. The fourth group of pupils are those who are "looked after" or in danger of being "looked after" by the local authority, and have a history of difficulties with education: they are educated on an individual or very small group basis at the "Get Connected" project. From each site, there are a small proportion of pupils who may also be registered at a school, as part of the process of re-integration.

There are 92 pupils in total, in the following groups:

	Pupils on roll at PRU only		Dual registered pupils	
	boys	girls	boys	girls
Full time	39	9	0	0
Part time	7	20	2	0
Attending school elsewhere			12	3

There are other pupils who receive home tuition at Coombe Road, sometimes in groups, but as they are staffed by home tutors, these pupils are not part of the PRU roll. Of the 77 pupils actually attending the unit at one site or another, 57 are from a white background, 8 from black-Caribbean, 2 from black-African and 8 from black-other heritage. One pupil speaks English as an additional language. All pupils are on at least Stage 3 of the DfEE's Code of Practice for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). There are 5 who are being assessed for a Statement of SEN and 11 who have already had a Statement agreed.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

The Coningsby PRU is a very effective institution, with some outstanding features. It provides very good value for money.

What the unit does well

- The partnership the PRU has created with the parents and carers of pupils is outstanding;
- The standard of care provided for pupils is of a very high standard;
- Assessment of pupils' personal and academic progress is of a very high standard;
- The PRU overall and each of the sites are very well led and managed;
- There is a clear educational direction created and pursued vigorously by the Headteacher, senior teachers, staff and designated Local Education Authority (LEA) officer;
- The shared commitment of all to continue to improve the PRU further is exemplary.

What could be improved

- The accommodation, especially at Cotelands;
- Provision of physical education opportunities;
- Direct involvement of the advisory committee;
- Access to full-time educational provision, including by extending reintegration and preventative work.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the local education authority.

HOW THE UNIT HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The PRU was last inspected by OFSTED in September 1997. Since then, the PRU and LEA have improved the education provided for pupils strongly in all areas except two. The match between the work set for pupils and the needs of each individual has been greatly enhanced. Pupils' social development is now a very central part of what the PRU provides. Both spiritual and cultural development are better, especially the latter. The provision of appraisal (through performance management) is well in advance of national requirements. However, the poor accommodation, especially at Cotelands, limits the curriculum that can be provided safely and the opportunities for physical education are still limited for some groups of pupils.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the unit.

Progress in:	by age 16	Key
English	B	very good A
Mathematics	B	Good B
Science	B	Satisfactory C
Personal, social and health education	A	Unsatisfactory D
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	Poor E

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs

Pupils make good progress overall. Those pupils who have child development lessons at the Cotelands Centre, achieve well. The improvements engendered for pupils in their behaviour and in their attitude to education are very good indeed at all three sites.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Pupils' attitudes to the PRU are good and for many, they are very positive about the education they receive. Most are enthusiastic about attending and speak with praise about the manner in which they are treated by the staff.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good throughout the PRU and often excellent at Cotelands. Pupils are respectful of one another, although there are occasional instances of unkind or troublesome behaviour. Where these occur, they are dealt with quickly and rarely last for long.
Personal development and relationships	Very good and for many, excellent. Pupils develop respect for one another's feelings and values, as well as becoming much more independent and self controlled.
Attendance	Given the sporadic and difficult attendance of nearly all the pupils prior to attending the PRU, attendance is very good.

One of the great strengths of the PRU is the positive attitude demonstrated by most of the pupils and the strong relationships they develop with staff. This encourages good learning

and promotes progress in all areas.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Good, with over 20% of lessons 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.

Over 90% of teaching seen was good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and over 20% of teaching was very good. The teaching of English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. There are particular strengths in the teaching of literacy, which pervades much of the teaching that goes on, and in the teaching of numeracy, which while it is less evident across the curriculum, is well taught as a specific subject. The PRU meet the needs of all the pupils through a variety of teaching styles and teaching methods – whole class teaching mixes with individual support, and paired work, to the benefit of the pupils concerned. Pupils learn well in all subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad and reasonably balanced, the curriculum provides many opportunities for the pupils. There are weaknesses however: there is no provision for physical education for girls at all three sites, or for the boys at Cotelands and the Get Connected project, and opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum are limited at Cotelands, in particular.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Only one pupil currently speaks English as an additional language, and the pupil speaks English fluently.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. The strong moral climate results in a well-established sense of community and purpose. Although provision for pupils' spiritual development is less obvious in terms of planning and monitoring, it has improved since the last inspection and is now sound. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to live in, and contribute to, a community.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Very good. Procedures for monitoring and supporting academic progress, behaviour and personal development of pupils are very well developed.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher offers outstanding leadership, both in terms of driving the PRU forward towards achieving even better standards, and in terms of day-to-day management. Ably supported by an energetic and diligent senior management team, the management of the PRU is a key strength.
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	The designated LEA officer provides cogent and enthusiastic support to the PRU. However, the overall effectiveness of the management committee is hindered by the varied levels of direct involvement of the individual members. Terms of reference are rather generalised and the committee relies heavily on input from the Headteacher to monitor the work of the PRU.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. Senior staff at the PRU and LEA officers work very hard to monitor, compare and evaluate the work and the success of the PRU.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The finance staff are well aware of the principles of best value and are diligent in pursuing value for money, well supported by LEA staff. Specific grants are very well targeted at their goals.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The standards of work achieved by their children; In particular, the standards of literacy and the progress made by pupils were almost universally held to be very good; Teachers' dedication and approachability; The relationships between staff and pupils, which are felt to be excellent; The emphasis placed on developing pupils' personal skills; The personal and academic support given to the pupils. The quality and amount of information sent or phoned through to parents and carers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents would like their children to be at the PRU for longer during the day, so that more curriculum subjects could be offered.

The parents who attended the parents' meeting and those who filled out the parents' questionnaires were almost completely complimentary about the PRU. They reported that the PRU has made a huge and positive difference to the standards of work achieved by their children. In particular, standards of literacy and the progress made by pupils were almost universally held to be very good. The parents felt that staff are dedicated, approachable and work extremely hard to support the pupils. Relationships between parents and the PRU were reported to be excellent. Parents stated that they were content with the curriculum offered at each site, but would like more time for their children, so that a wider range of subjects could be offered. Both academic and personal welfare were considered to be very well monitored and the support given to the pupils pronounced to be outstanding. Parents were very pleased with the information about their children's progress which they were sent from the PRU; similarly they were complimentary about the reports they get, both formal and informal. Many stated that to receive a phone call from a teacher "just" to say how well their child was doing, was wonderful. In addition to the 18 parents who attended the meeting, 27 questionnaires were returned and about a third of these also contained letters with declarations of support.

The inspection team concur with the very positive views of the parents. They also agree that the limited time available to the part time attending pupils does limit the number of subjects that can be covered and the amount of enrichment of the curriculum that can be achieved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The unit's results and achievements

1. As one would expect in a unit providing for pupils with special educational needs, pupils' examination results are below those achieved on average nationally. Nevertheless, some pupils do get very good examination results, getting GCSE A*-C grades in **four or five** subjects. Many of the best overall results come for pupils at the Cotelands, but all sites offer the opportunity to take the examinations. Inspectors saw work that was of a good standard in all sites.

2. At all the sites, pupils often have a history of interrupted education and taking this as the baseline, all pupils achieve well whilst at the PRU. Particularly good progress is made in improving behaviour (especially at Coombe Road and the Get Connected project) and in literacy and numeracy. Pupils make good progress in individual lessons and learn well. This supports the progress they make. The main factor enhancing this progress is the high quality of teaching and the strong personal relationships made with teachers and other staff. There is no difference in the progress being made by pupils of different age or attending the different sites. Similarly the only difference between the progress being made by boys and girls is caused by the lack of physical development opportunities for girls. Small groups and well focussed individual attention during lessons ensure that pupils of differing ability face realistic expectations and receive the support they need to achieve success in the work being set.

3. The only obvious factor that hinders progress is the limitations placed on pupils especially at the Cotelands Centre by the accommodation. With a longer teaching day and a curriculum as broad as the PRU would be able to provide, progress of the pupils would be even better.

4. In **English**, the level of achievement on entry to the PRU is well below the national average. Many pupils arrive at the Coombe Road site with very low levels of literacy. Initially, a comprehensive baseline assessment procedure ensures the clear identification of individual pupil targets in literacy. Standards in literacy are higher for the schoolgirl mothers group at Cotelands. Taking into account the underdeveloped skills pupils have on arrival at the PRU, their progress is good.

5. Since the last inspection, the PRU has successfully endeavoured to raise the standard of speaking and listening skills across both key stages. Oral assessment sheets are now used to target specific areas for pupil development. Motivating topics such as bullying are used to stimulate debate. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of skills and pupils are involved in the process. Literacy skills of speaking and listening are used well across all curriculum subjects. Some pupils are able to contribute well orally, using interesting vocabulary and well-structured sentences. Pupils listen fairly attentively to each other and develop new ideas through discussion or debate. For instance, during a Year 11 child development lesson pupils discuss the advantages and disadvantages of breast-feeding. In an information technology lesson Year 9 pupils talk with animation about the play script they have written and how they are using computers to help edit the video of the play. A Year 12 pupil at the Get Connected site reviews Hitler's anti-Semitic policy articulately.

6. Pupils' reading skills develop satisfactorily. The introduction of the "Units of Sound" individual literacy support programme has had a positive effect on pupils reading skills.

Through reading and hearing high quality texts including Shakespearean plays, poetry and biographies, pupils begin to understand that literature can help them explore relationships, and to appreciate personal qualities such as heroism.

7. During Key Stage 3, handwriting shows improvement over time and is usually legible, although not always joined. Pupils begin to write for a range of purposes. They are successfully encouraged to face up to previous difficulties by expressing their feelings in writing. For example, they examine childhood fears and use words such as “petrified” and “isolated” in their writing. Some pupils can write simple sentences with correct punctuation. Work is appropriately based on the national literacy strategy and follows the programme of study for the key stage.

8. During Key Stage 4, pupils’ literacy skills are extended. Pupils at Cotelands compare “The Black Veil” with “The Darkness Out There”. They are able to recognise similarities between characters and refer to the text to substantiate their answers. In some writing, they show an empathy with the situation of others. For instance, at Coombe Road pupils study the poetry of **Siegfried Sassoon** and write a letter to a bereaved mother reassuring her that her son died a hero. Spider diagrams help to focus pupils’ attention on appropriate vocabulary. Some pupils at the Cotelands site were observed drafting and redrafting their work on computers. Pupils write for a range of purposes and most make good progress when using ‘writing frames’ to structure their work. For example, pupils write letters, storyboards, newspaper articles and more personal accounts. Spelling and punctuation are generally weak, but efforts are made to redress this through the good use of assessment and planning. For instance, pupils work their way through a list of words beginning with “st-” and “wh-”.

9. In **mathematics**, pupils at both key stages work with numbers ranging from two digit to seven digit and many work confidently with decimal and vulgar fractions. Pupils understand graphs and use pie charts to record estimates and compare with actual results. Higher attaining pupils work with quadratic equations. They can estimate and predict, use money and time effectively. Some check their answers using calculators. Many use appropriate vocabulary such as “formulae”, “perpendicular” and “trapezium”. They perform simple division sums and most know at least some of their multiplication tables. Many pupils understand place value in numbers and can carry out routine calculations of addition and subtraction, although their knowledge and accuracy when recalling the higher order multiplication tables is weak, which slows down some of their calculations. All pupils are extending their numeracy skills, for example their understanding of place value and make gains in their ability to solve problems “in their heads”. All extend their ability to use and apply mathematics in everyday situations, such as with bus and train timetables.

10. In **science**, pupils at key stage 4 are studying radioactivity and are developing an understanding of the types and properties of radiation. They learn key words related to the subject during the lesson and demonstrate their growing comprehension by answering the teacher’s questions correctly at the end of the period. Pupils are beginning to understand the necessity of fair tests. Most recall work carried out previously and make links with current work, for example when talking about electrical circuits, but at the Cotelands Centre in particular, some of this work is dependent on practical work carried at their previous schools, as the accommodation does not allow much practical work. At Cotelands and Coombe Road, where science is a greater focus than at the Get Connected project, pupils make good progress in their understanding of the uses of science. Within the restrictions placed on teaching by the accommodation, they also make some gains in their individual research and experimentation skills, for example when researching individual pet projects. Pupils make limited progress in developing their understanding of and skill in the recording and presentation of experiments.

11. In **information and communications technology**, pupils know how to start up and shut down machines without supervision. They make selections from menus using a mouse or keyboard and save their work. Most can modify the appearance of text by changing the justification and font of previously entered text. They use “find” and “replace” commands in copied text. Some use desktop publishing software and simple design programmes for example to create a calendar or a logo. Nearly all pupils are confident in their use of computers and in accessing information from CD-ROMs and from the hard disk. Some have a good understanding of desktop publishing, use the spell-check facility and know how to import graphics and text. A few understand the rudiments of spreadsheets, for example as extension work in mathematics lessons.

12. In **art**, pupils are encouraged to explore a range of techniques and media within the limitations of the accommodation. They use different paints, pastilles and a variety of other media to create their work. They use most appropriate media and tools for their work, for example experimenting to find the best means of representing famous paintings.

13. In **child development** lessons at Cotelands, pupils show a satisfactory level of achievement by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils contribute well to discussions and can recognise the advantages and disadvantages of breastfeeding. Together they can correctly identify some of the nutrients in breast milk, such as calcium and lactose. Pupils make notes and are attentive and interested. They design and produce high quality toys and books as part of their coursework. They use a variety of mediums including computer design and needlework. Pupils make good progress, and contribute well to lessons.

14. In **geography** and **history**, pupils learn about the African heritage of black people from North America, examine aspects of trading relationships between different continents and find out about customs of a variety of peoples. They use Ordnance Survey maps and investigate tourism in the National Parks.

15. In **physical education**, the boys enjoy their football, compete with vigour and take the concomitant bumps in (mainly!) good heart. In **cooking**, pupils enjoy their making their recipes, for example the Valentine’s cakes, and explain why some methods of preparing food, are healthier than others.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils’ attitudes to the school are very positive. Most have a history of emotional and/or behavioural difficulties with school and some have been excluded from schools because of inappropriate behaviour or attitudes. Though not all pupils are keen to attend regularly, most do, and they are well supported by staff and encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils appreciate the care and concern shown by the staff and use them as role models. It is noticeable that they mirror the teachers’ enthusiasm and respond positively to a calm and firm approach. This has a positive impact on their learning and on their personal development throughout their stay in the school. Many grow in confidence and self-respect. Pupils clearly respect the environment they work in. Displays are undamaged and there is no graffiti in evidence. Pupils respond particularly well to the ethos of the PRU, whichever site they actually attend. They show mutual trust and respect, co-operate well and share appropriately. Many show good personal controls, raising their hands to answer or ask questions, but also participating well in general discussions. There is no evidence of racial disharmony or sexual inequality. Pupils treat visitors with a degree of confidence and well-mannered respect.

17. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school. Some pupils have continuing difficulties with behaviour but this is handled well and managed skilfully by the staff. Where there is oppressive behaviour, it is dealt with positively and quickly by the staff. Pupils understand the sanctions procedures that are in place and most try to abide by them. Teachers make effective use of the reward procedures and the pupils value these. There have been no recent exclusions of pupils. The good behaviour observed during the inspection contrasts with the views of a few parents who thought that behaviour was not good.

18. Pupils' personal development is good. They learn to react positively when asked to do something that is difficult. Pupils are helped by their involvement in the reviews of their behaviour targets on their individual education plans. There are many instances of very mature and responsible behaviour. They show awareness of others and assist or co-operate appropriately in lessons and activities. A good programme of personal, social and health education helps their learning experience and their personal and social development. All the pupils travel independently to their match.

19. Relationships are very good, both between the pupils themselves and with teachers and other adults in the PRU. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers and as they gain in confidence they feel able to seek help and assistance when needed. Not only do they ask teachers and other adults, but they also seek appropriate help from one another. Pupils co-operate well with one another in lesson, for example helping with spellings during an English lesson. They relate well to teachers and other adults in a consistently positive manner. In lessons and around the PRU, this helps provide a positive learning atmosphere in which all pupils can then make progress.

20. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and at over 80%, represents very good progress by many of the pupils. In the afternoons at Cotelands in particular, pupils have very high attendance levels compared to at their previous schools. Overall attendance at Coombe Road with only 9% unauthorised absence is also very good. This improvement and that of all pupils, reflects the efforts put in by the staff in the PRU to encourage parents to understand the importance of regular attendance. Registration takes place promptly at the beginning of the day and lessons start and finish on time. Nevertheless, a few pupils do not attend regularly, and this obviously affects the attainment of these individuals.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. Teaching is a strength of the PRU. Over 90% of teaching seen was good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and 22% of teaching was very good. The teaching of English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education is good. There are particular strengths in the teaching of literacy, which pervades much of the work that goes on in the PRU, and in the teaching of numeracy, which while it is less evident across the curriculum, is well taught as a specific subject. Teaching has a very positive impact on the standards achieved and on the progress made by pupils of all abilities.

22. The main strength of teaching is the very positive attitude that staff have to their pupils. Pupils are very well managed at all the sites. Very good working relationships and high standards of discipline are maintained in nearly every lesson. The lessons start promptly for those pupils attending and teachers use time purposefully throughout each session. Lessons are paced well with clear explanations provided at the beginning and many lessons finish with a short period that draws the learning together. In the very best lessons, teachers give pupils time deadlines within the session and ensure that work is evaluated before the lesson ends, to encourage and promote further improvement in the pupils' work. Teachers mark pupils' work quickly and regularly, for example in English and in art where the addition of helpful and detailed comments for future development, sometimes written,

sometimes verbal, is a regular feature.

23. Teachers are quick to encourage pupils, as well as to challenge when work could be further improved. This couples with all-pervading high expectations from staff, in terms of behaviour and academic and personal achievement. This was seen, for example, in a mathematics lesson where despite the attempts by one pupil to distract others or irritate the teacher, the teacher continued to press and challenge the pupils' understanding and knowledge. There are well established classroom routines that are understood by everyone. However, they are not pursued if there are sensible – usually emotional – reasons why pupils are behaving in a particular way. Thus one pupil who was upset during the week of the inspection, was dealt with sensitively and kindly taking a great deal of time, despite the extra pressure this added to the headteacher and senior staff. On the rare occasions of serious inappropriate behaviour, support from the senior staff or other teachers is quickly forthcoming and is effective in ensuring order is maintained.

24. The staff have well organised classrooms and ensure that the resources they need are easily accessible. There are clear objectives set for lessons and teachers often organise a wide range of activities to ensure good match to the needs of pupils, for example higher attaining pupils have activities that extend and challenge them further, like using spreadsheets in mathematics lessons. In most lessons, those pupils who have particular learning needs also have well targeted learning objectives, which demonstrate the teacher's understanding of the those needs. This good match between the level of the work and the ability of the pupil has a positive effect on their attitude to learning and to the standards they achieve.

25. Teachers assess pupils' attainment regularly. They know their pupils well, but not all are as effective in recording their observations systematically. Pupils' work is mainly marked regularly and quickly, but there is no sampling or building up of portfolios over time, which would promote consistency of marking across and between sites.

26. Based on lessons observed and from the scrutiny of pupils' work, the teaching of English is good. Teachers clearly understand the individual needs of pupils and adjust activities and levels of support accordingly. The assessment process is rigorous and this underpins the good progress pupils make. The marking of books is encouraging, indicates next steps in learning and involves pupils. Tasks are varied and appropriate. All pupils have individual targets for literacy, which are reviewed regularly. The encouragement and support they receive from staff is a motivational factor for all pupils. The recently appointed co-ordinator's infectious enthusiasm is inspiring and has had a positive impact upon the development of the subject. She has a clear vision for the future. Liaison between sites ensures consistency of approach. Meticulous planning, record keeping and assessment enable the teachers on all sites to know what pupils have achieved and to indicate the next stage of learning. Overall, teaching in English successfully promotes learning consistently and effectively. Good records of pupils' work and achievements are kept and lessons are well planned. Homework is used well to reinforce learning. The teacher has good subject knowledge and relationships with pupils are supportive and encouraging.

27. Teaching in mathematics and science is also good overall. Teachers extend pupils' understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts through the careful use of questions. Pupils are encouraged to make appropriate verbal contributions to the lessons and the teacher has a range of strategies to support pupils including encouraging them to help one another with answers. Whilst time and resources are generally well used, the organisation of some practical activities in science is less well planned and this results in some pupils beginning the activity without a complete understanding of the task. In mathematics, more use of practical materials and activities would deep the pupils' understanding of some

concepts, especially for the lower attaining pupils.

28. Teaching in other subjects is always at least satisfactory and often good. Pupils are encouraged to explore a range of techniques and media in art and to use their own knowledge and feelings in history and geography. The teachers in these subjects, and in information and communications technology, child development, cookery and personal and social education demonstrate very good subject knowledge. Staff have a real understanding of the needs of the pupils that ensures that each individual gains in confidence and competence as they work and learn. Often the teaching has effects beyond the boundaries of the subject. For example, in child development lessons at Cotelands, good records of pupils' work and achievements are kept and lessons are well planned. Homework is used well to reinforce learning. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and relationships with pupils are supportive and encouraging. The lessons work well in their own right, but also add to the general all-round development of the pupils. The teaching encourages learning and bolsters pupils' self-esteem. Similarly, teaching in history (and all other subjects) at the Get Connected project is good in its own right, but it also engenders a trust and respect in the staff that the pupils have not been able to express for some time within an educational establishment.

29. For those pupils who have special educational needs beyond the primary reason for being at the PRU, appropriate individual education plans are in place. Regular reviews of the targets set take place and involve staff, pupils and their parents or carers. These targets are used to inform teacher's day to day and longer term planning. These pupils make good progress and learn well, because of the good teaching.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

30. The curriculum is good overall and has many strengths, notably its relevance to the diverse needs of the pupils. The quality of the provision is, however, adversely affected by the accommodation that provides too little room for the storage of resources and restricts practical activities. The previous report stated that the curriculum was broad and "quite" balanced, with weaknesses in spirituality and cultural development, and in the total teaching time and physical education time for the schoolgirl mothers. These formed a main part of the key issues. Although there has been work done on both issues, they are not yet fully resolved.

31. The curriculum meets statutory and local authority requirements in providing alternative education for pupils who are out of the mainstream system. The curriculum offers breadth via lessons in English, mathematics and science as well as information and communications technology, art, personal, social and health education, humanities, careers, cookery, child development, and French, plus vocational courses in construction and motor vehicle maintenance. The balance of these subjects for individuals is regularly monitored by teachers and the senior management. This monitoring is especially effective for pupils who do not yet receive full-time education. Regular involvement of the pupils in the management and review of their own curricular provision also has a positive effect upon their achievement.

32. The quality of curriculum planning is good. It is suitably based on the appropriate syllabus for the General Certificate of Education or a Certificate of Achievement, including in English, mathematics, science, geography and child development. Additional accredited courses include communication skills, information technology and cookery unit awards. Off-site access to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) level 1 studies complements this provision very well.

33. The PRU's outdoor provision is minimal and does not offer any suitable area for large scale physical activity. In order to compensate for this weakness, good use is made of recreational facilities within the community, such as a bowling alley and a local football club.

34. The development of the work related curriculum has been an appropriate focus for development and has resulted in a strong provision that is another strength of the PRU. Opportunities for work experience are good as are links with local colleges and business partnerships. The provision for careers education and guidance is good, and takes suitable account of the multi-agency approach. This aspect of the PRU's work fully supports its overall curricular aims for the pupils' successful transition into further education and the world of work. Other curricular initiatives, such as the introduction of "key skills" are promising, but at an early stage of development.

35. The centre's curriculum places a high priority on being inclusive. Flexibility within the structured timetable ensures that pupils do get equality of access and opportunity. For example, the timetabled sessions for extra literacy via computer assisted literacy are well planned and monitored. An exception to this inclusion is the current absence of planned physical activity for girls. There are also few opportunities for social and recreational interaction, and limitations in the accommodation do not afford much privacy for individual tutorials. The part-time nature of the PRU for some pupils, reduces the possibility of extra-curricular activities, although some indoor activities such as table tennis are provided at lunch time. There is also a fundamental inequality in the provision of full time education for some pupils, but not others, although to address this in the current accommodation could be impracticable.

36. Procedures for assessing the pupils' progress are good, and are standardised across the curriculum. Within days of their admission, the pupils are examined in English and mathematics to gain a useful baseline assessment from which progress may be measured. Records of pupils' progress from referring schools are sometimes lacking in sufficient detail regarding prior attainment, but the PRU works to fill in the gaps as quickly and accurately as possible.

37. The procedures in place for setting individual targets for pupils ensure that the curriculum offered to pupils with special educational needs is appropriate. This is particularly apparent for pupils attending the Get Connected project where staff use a range of approaches to ensure that the curriculum offered to these pupils meets their very specific needs. Pupils with literacy difficulties are supported through a commercial scheme that addresses individual needs. This programme is managed with skill by the special needs co-ordinator and is delivered very effectively by a well-trained learning support assistant. Curriculum provision for pupils with special needs at all sites is strong.

38. Although provision for pupils' spiritual development is less obvious in terms of planning and monitoring, it has improved since the last inspection and is now sound. Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual development, are now given consideration when planning lessons. Assemblies are held about five times a term, following significant incidents or national events, such as Holocaust Day. Although the unit does not formally teach religious education, it has a strong ethos and promotes clear values through teaching. For example the good use of texts in English such as "The Diary of Anne Frank" and the poems of Siegfried Sassoon offer opportunities for reflection. The use of a digital camcorder to record a Year 9 play provides pleasure, stimulating in some cases a joyous response. There are increasingly more planned opportunities for discussion of different values and beliefs, for example tutorial periods and during break times. Because their work is valued, many pupils experience pride in their work for the first time in their school career.

39. The PRU's provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. The moral ethos of the unit supports discussions around the concepts of right and wrong. All staff provide very good role-models, and will often give explicit counselling. There is a strong moral climate in the PRU that results in a well-established sense of community and purpose. Targets to help individual pupils improve their behaviour are carefully drawn up by staff, in consultation with pupils, and success enables pupils to grow in confidence. When involved in sporting activities, such as football matches, pupils are encouraged to be sportsmanlike and have been complemented by referees for their behaviour. Social skills are taught well, pupils relate well with others and become valued members of the unit and the wider community. They are encouraged to express themselves and know that they are listened to. Much is done to build their confidence and self-esteem and to give them a greater understanding of themselves and of others. Achievements are always celebrated through prize giving, the publication of yearbooks or the presentation of certificates. Pupils gain a good insight into citizenship through discussing current news items and working in the community during work experience. Staff encourage pupils to consider those who are less fortunate. Pupils take part in fund raising activities for Comic Relief and the British Red Cross. The quality of relationships is very good. Pupils are valued and their successes are celebrated. Through tutorial lessons, Work Related Learning (WRL), PSHE studies, college taster course, and work experience, pupils develop a good understanding of how to live in, and contribute to, a community.

40. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils learn about different cultures, for example, when they learn about other countries in the world and through the music project. They are also given good opportunities to appreciate the natural world through art and literature. A very good range of visits and visitors help promote pupils' cultural development and broaden their horizons. This enables them to understand more about local and national identities. The good quality art provision encourages pupils to develop an interest in the subject beyond the PRU. They visit art galleries, such as the Tate Modern, and these provide good opportunities for pupils to appreciate art from around the world. There are good examples of planning to deepen pupils' understanding of other cultures and their own experiences. These include following recipes from other cultures in food technology and visiting the Globe Theatre to gain a greater understanding of performance at the time of Shakespeare. Touring theatre groups have performed at the PRU, portraying events leading up to and following exclusion. Staff at the Cotelands site are aware that pupils have limited experience of performance and have arranged visits to the opera.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The previous report stated that welfare was well monitored and a strength. Monitoring of academic progress was less well covered and this – along with the setting of individual targets for pupils' learning and the use thereof - was a key issue. Both are now very strong.

42. Overall, the PRU has very good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of the pupils. There is a designated member of staff for child protection and all the staff have had appropriate training and have a good understanding of the indications of child abuse and know how to report it if necessary. There are good links with the social services department. The provision for first aid is good. There is a satisfactory health and safety policy in place. Risk assessments takes place termly. The head teacher, senior staff and designated LEA officer are well aware of the few health and safety issues generally and those at the Cotelands Centre that were highlighted in the last report.

43. The monitoring of the pupils' personal development is very well managed. The individual education plans include various learning skills. The staff observe the pupils in

lessons and record positive attitudes, good work and any inappropriate behaviour. All the staff have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils. The personal, social and health education programme makes a significant contribution to raising the confidence of pupils by improving their awareness of themselves and helping them to relate to others in the classroom and the in the outside world.

44. The procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good. The policy is extensive and details the various awards and sanctions. The pupils appreciate the certificates that are awarded for good behaviour and effort. The PRU's approach to dealing with any bullying or other oppressive behaviour is very good and is effective.

45. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and punctuality are very good. The PRU has an excellent understanding of the importance of individual's family circumstances and the attitudes of the pupils: staff respond accordingly. For example, in some cases, pupils may be allowed to attend in the afternoon rather than in the morning. Parents are contacted in the case of unauthorised absence. Attendance may also feature as a target on the individual education plans. Certificates are presented for full attendance.

46. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance are excellent. Assessment is embedded in the culture of the PRU: systems are clearly understood and used consistently by all members of staff. There are procedures in place to ensure that new staff are well briefed on beginning their work in the PRU. All pupils participate in an interview before attending the PRU and baseline assessments are completed. The PRU makes every attempt to secure information from previous schools to inform and guide the development of individual programmes. However, this is often incomplete and arrives after the pupil is established at the PRU. Individual programmes are drawn up using the baseline assessment and this ensures that pupils learning opportunities are well matched to their needs. When pupils have attended the PRU for a few weeks a review of these plans is undertaken with parents and pupils to check that the programmes are appropriate. Subject teachers undertake termly reviews of progress and targets are reset and discussed with parents. Pupils are expected to involve themselves in the assessment of their progress and complete target sheets at the end of each lesson. This procedure is consistent across the PRU and provides a useful opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own learning and behaviour. Ongoing assessment in lessons and regular reviews are well used to inform teachers' planning.

47. Each pupil receives a weekly report, which relates both to learning and to behaviour in and out of the classroom. This report keeps parents and carers well informed of pupils' progress at the PRU. The overall progress of each pupil is reviewed termly by the whole staff team. This ensures that pupils' progress across all areas is tracked and staff have appropriate information which informs future planning.

48. The PRU carries out appropriate national end of key stage tests, wherever possible. The use of externally accredited awards for units of work for Key Stage 4 pupils helps to motivate pupils and raise self-esteem. Pupils are entered for GCSE in a range of subjects including English, maths, science and art and design. The PRU offers a range of other externally accredited awards. Pupils' achievements during work experience are recorded by employers both for those undertaking short periods on work experience and for older pupils who have longer placements.

49. Assessment procedures for pupils returning to school are well established and ongoing assessment feeds into a clear and comprehensive professional report for the receiving school. The PRU is beginning to be effective in the analysis of outcomes for different groups of pupils.

50. All pupils are considered to be at stage 3 and above of the Code of Practice. Currently five pupils are having their special educational needs assessed by the local education authority and eleven pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs. Individual education plans are in place. Targets are specific and are drawn from a range of information and assessments available to and undertaken by the PRU. All staff are involved in setting and reviewing targets. Pupils also contribute through regular reviews and through the self-assessment process that takes place at the end of each lesson. The specific targets ensure that pupils' progress can be tracked both in behaviour and in academic areas. Pupils in year 10 have a focused review to ensure that appropriate provision is made in year 11.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The partnership with parents is excellent. Parents' views of the PRU are extremely supportive and positive. The majority of parents who completed the questionnaire think that the PRU has high expectations for their children. They all agreed that they feel comfortable about approaching the PRU with problems or questions. They consider that the PRU works very closely with them.

52. Parents are appreciative of the way the PRU is led and managed and the caring ethos that promotes good learning and social and moral values. They are very satisfied that the PRU expects their children to work hard and that they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Though some parents expressed some worries about behaviour the inspectors concluded that the staff work hard to ensure that it is generally good.

53. The PRU has established excellent links with the parents and these contacts are extremely effective. The initial meeting with parents enables staff to provide details of how the PRU operates and what the expectations are. Parents receive a copy of the prospectus. There are regular opportunities for parents to meet the staff, at the review of the individual education plan each term, the annual parents meeting and prize giving. Staff will often telephone home both if a pupil has done well or if there is any concern.

54. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the PRU is excellent. The parents are interested in how well their children are progressing and the quality of the information provided for them about their children's progress is outstanding. The contribution by the parents to their children's learning at home and at PRU is excellent.

HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

54. The previous report stated that the headteacher and senior staff were effective in the running of the PRU and were well supported by the LEA. This remains the case. A previous key issue about appraisal of teachers has been overtaken by new legislation on performance management: the PRU and LEA have this well in hand. The monitoring and evaluation of the success of the PRU are now very well developed, both at unit level and within the LEA. Nevertheless, two problems that were current at the last inspection have not been addressed. First, although there has been a significant amount of work undertaken by staff at the PRU and by LEA officers to address the issue, the accommodation at all three sites remains unsatisfactory: at the Cotelands site, it is so poor that it is hindering the curriculum that can be offered. Secondly, there are still inequalities in the amount of time that is offered to pupils and in the amount of physical education that can be offered to some pupils.

56. The parents who attended the parents' meeting and those who filled out the parents' questionnaire report that the headteacher of the PRU (and where relevant, the teachers in

charge of the other sites) are approachable, very open to comments or questions and run each site effectively.

57. The PRU's aims, values and policies are reflected clearly in all areas of its work and are consistently applied by staff. This has a strong and positive impact on the progress that pupils make and on the ethos that pervades each of the sites. Teaching is monitored effectively, and support for the developing curriculum is very good.

58. The headteacher offers outstanding leadership, both in terms of driving the PRU forward towards achieving even better standards, and in terms of day-to-day management. Ably supported by an energetic and diligent senior management team, the management of the PRU is a key strength.

59. The role of special needs co-ordinator is undertaken by different individuals on each site. In each case, the work is effective and supports learning very well. The procedures in place guide the work of the PRU in addressing individual needs. Records are well kept. The register of special educational needs is detailed, comprehensive and regularly updated. Staff in the PRU work closely with LEA support staff in assessing and meeting the needs of pupils.

60. Governance for the PRU is provided by the LEA, in particular through the designated officer, who provides cogent and enthusiastic support. The management committee which oversees the work of the PRU meets regularly and many members also offer strong and enthusiastic support. A strength of the committee is the wide range of professionals represented by its members. Nevertheless, not all members have the time to be directly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the PRU and thus there is too great a reliance on the reports of the Headteacher. Whilst these reports are detailed and useful, there is little opportunity for the committee members to use their own observations, unless their own work has brought them to the unit on business. This weakens their ability to play a significant part in the evaluation of the work done at the PRU. Its terms of reference could be much more specific, which would clarify its role and further support the work of the unit.

61. The LEA sets out its rationale for the work of the PRU and other aspects of its ethos for EOTAS (education otherwise than at school) provision in helpful policy documents: statutory requirements are met. The LEA has a clear vision for the future of the PRU that includes the need for developing further opportunities for pupils to return to mainstream schools, wherever possible.

62. Senior staff and relevant LEA officers work very hard to monitor, compare and evaluate the work and the success of the PRU. Finances are kept in very good order and day-to-day administration is competent, efficient and supports teaching well. Staff are well aware of the principles of best value and are diligent in pursuing value for money, well supported by LEA staff. Specific grants are very well targeted at their goals. Admission criteria are defined clearly.

63. Staff have been involved in a number of national and borough initiatives and use this information to support and improve the work of the PRU. The LEA has worked hard to produce comparative data on PRU costs, which support the notion that Coningsby is an efficient service.

64. Staff at all sites are well trained and qualified and have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. They are dedicated, committed and hardworking. Support staff are experienced and provide an important role, which they fulfil extremely well. Staffing levels are good, being well matched to the number of pupils on roll. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced, with several having experience of pupils with special educational needs, as well

as of mainstream education. Additionally, a number of staff also hold specialist qualifications in outdoor activities. Several staff work and/or liaise on a part-time basis in primary and secondary schools, supporting individual pupils. This is beneficial in terms of professional development. All staff have relevant job descriptions which accurately reflect their duties and responsibilities. Staff are given frequent opportunities to discuss the development of their roles. Opportunities for in-service training are regular and relevant to staff development and the needs of the PRU. Formal appraisal systems are on "hold" until the guidance for performance management is provided by the Department of Education and Employment shortly, but the PRU has organised an extensive pilot programme based on current guidance for schools. Difficulties in recruitment were evident during the course of the inspection, following the recent resignation of two teachers. Currently there is no qualified science teacher at Cotelands and home tutors are covering the teaching.

65. There have been some improvements in the accommodation since the last report. Nevertheless, the accommodation is unsatisfactory at both the Coombe Road and Cotelands sites. Overall capacity and resources are limited, especially at Cotelands. During heavy rain, water seeps through the window frames into the nursery, storage space is limited and two or even three groups often share classroom space. Although the space in classrooms is just adequate for the numbers of pupils that are currently attending the sites, there is a lack of sufficiently good facilities for the teaching of science and physical education. With exception of a small paved patio area at the Coombe Road, there are no facilities outside the PRU for pupils' recreational use.

66. In all sites, the buildings are imaginatively used to provide for a variety of activities as well as teaching. There are areas for pupils' socialising and the entrance space is well used for the reception of visitors. The interior is bright and attractive where staff have made good use of available wall space to display pupils' work. Female staff, share toilet facilities with female pupils and this is unsatisfactory. Good efforts are made to create a pleasant and welcoming learning environment, which contributes well to the positive ethos of the PRU.

67. The quantity, range and variety of learning resources are generally good and support the curriculum provided. There is sufficient number and range of textbooks and books for reference and wider reading. However book resources are often shared between sites because of the lack of storage at Cotelands.

68. Overall, the efficiency of the PRU is very good. The headteacher and the management committee receive and review regular computer reports from the LEA finance department and the unit's finance officer. This process is based on well maintained and accurate information from the PRU's computerised finance system. The LEA finance officer visits the centre on a regular basis, updating the system and producing reports. Day-to-day financial management, control and planning are very good. There are effective and established procedures for the monitoring of financial expenditure and the ordering of new resources and stationery. The PRU action plan identifies suitable initiatives for the current period, which have been established through discussions with staff and officers, although management committee involvement is not strong. The document is well structured and provides suitable costing.

69. Overall, the headteacher, senior managers and management committee make a very positive contribution to the standards achieved. The PRU provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The Local Education Authority should:

- ⇒ seek ways to improve the accommodation further so that the curriculum is no longer hindered by physical limitations of the buildings; [see paragraphs 30, 55 and 65]
- ⇒ improve the provision of physical education opportunities; [see paragraphs 30 and 55]
- ⇒ extend the amount of direct involvement of the advisory committee in the evaluation and monitoring of the PRU; [see paragraph 60]
- ⇒ develop further the access pupils have to full-time educational provision, including by extending re-integration and preventative work; [see paragraph 35]

The headteacher and key staff should:

- ⇒ further develop the curriculum as soon as the accommodation allows; [see paragraphs 30, 55 and 65]
- ⇒ extend the range of physical education opportunities for girls and boys at all sites; [see paragraphs 30 and 55]
- ⇒ develop further the access pupils have to full-time educational provision, including by extending reintegration and preventative work. [see paragraph 35]

REINTEGRATION

The improved learning that takes place at the PRU and the resultant increase in self-esteem, assist the attempts to reintegrate pupils into mainstream schools. The good links that the PRU maintains with all involved agencies ensures that any transition is handled well and is in the best interests of the pupil. Pupils returning to mainstream schools following recommendation from the PRU, are dual registered and continue to receive support from PRU staff for up to two terms, as deemed necessary. There are currently 16 pupils dual registered at a school and at the PRU. Staff involved in reintegration and support of pupils in mainstream schools, are knowledgeable, adaptable and effective. Support involves ensuring all relevant information is provided to the receiving school and regular support visits and review dates are agreed with the school and parents. Evidence of visits is kept, problems are identified and strategies discussed before actions are agreed. Partner schools consulted during the course of the inspection value the involvement of the PRU in sustaining difficult pupils within a mainstream setting. A recent stakeholders' survey confirms this positive view of the service the PRU provides.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	22	69	9	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 unit's pupils

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	92

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	92

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
Unit data	16

Unauthorised absence

	%
Unit data	15

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for last whole term before the inspection

Attainment

Less than 10 boys or girls sat for end of Key Stage tests at the end of Key Stage 3. The January roll at the PRU does not include a group of late excludees, and therefore only limited information on GCSE results is possible without giving a distorted picture. It is worthy of note, however, that the results were a noticeable improvement on the previous year. In 2000, the number of candidates sitting for GCSEs was 24 with 11 gaining 5 A* - G and 24 gaining 1 A* - G. In English, 12.5% of those entered gained A-C grades and 83% gained D-G grades. In art, 23.5% of those entered gained A-C grades. In Child Development, 33% of pupils entered gained A-C grades. In 1999 the figures were 36 candidates with 4 gaining 5 A* - G and 36 gaining 1 A* - G.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	8
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	57
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This does not include pupils receiving home tuition.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) including nominal 0.5 for in-school support	9.05
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	202

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	676,549
Total expenditure (includes some home tuition costs which cannot be disaggregated)	649,341
Expenditure per pupil	7, 058
Balance brought forward from previous year	27,208
Balance carried forward to next year	(9,986)

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	90
Number of questionnaires returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	33	7	7	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	37	11	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	44	15	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	44	15	4	0
The teaching is good.	63	26	0	0	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	74	22	0	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	11	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	26	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	74	26	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	74	22	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	26	0	7	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	41	11	7	11