

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST. MARY'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Euxton, Chorley

Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119676

Headteacher: Mrs Barbara Coulton

Reporting inspector: Mr Brian Griffiths  
2607

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

Inspection number: 248051

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wigan Road,  
Euxton  
Chorley  
Lancashire  
Postcode: PR7 6JW

Telephone number: (01257) 262049

Fax number: (01257) 234324

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Jane Conley

Date of previous inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> March 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St. Mary's is an average sized, Roman Catholic, voluntary aided primary school that serves the village of Euxton, close to Chorley in Lancashire. Euxton is an established village of largely private housing. The school is attended by 204 boys and girls, of whom 28 are in the reception year. Altogether there are around 30 more girls than boys. Numbers at the school have increased steadily in recent years and a seventh class was formed in September 2000. The great majority of pupils are of white United Kingdom background whilst a very small number are of Indian or mixed heritage. English is the first language of all pupils. At four per cent, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Fourteen per cent of pupils are identified by the school as having special educational needs; most of these have moderate learning difficulties. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs. This is around the average. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Many pupils attend part-time local playgroups before they start at St Mary's but only a few attend nursery classes. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment covers the usual range and is around average. In the past two years there have been four new teachers appointed and three have left; six additional part-time teaching assistants have been employed.

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

The school is very effective, ensuring that pupils achieve very well from the reception class through to Year 6, by which time standards are well above average in many subjects. Pupils' learning is supported by very good teaching; it is always at least good and with a high proportion that is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school and their parents are rightly happy with the progress that they make. Leadership and management are excellent. The school is extremely well run and planning for further improvement by governors and staff is very careful and effective. The school gives very good value for money.

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

- Pupils' achievements are high because a rich and varied curriculum is taught very well.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the staff and governors help to manage the school very well.
- Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are very good.
- Relationships with parents are very good.

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

There are no significant areas requiring improvement

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

The school has improved considerably, and at a very good rate, since the favourable report received after the last inspection, in March 1998. Standards have risen markedly by Year 6. Teaching has also improved, from good to very good and a much higher proportion is very good and excellent. Both teaching and the curriculum in the reception year have improved greatly. School leadership and management were strong but even they have improved to become outstanding, with the governing body making a very effective contribution. A programme of improvements to the premises is well under way and having a positive impact on teaching and learning. Overall, the school has made very good progress since the last inspection.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by this school's pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A	A	A
mathematics	A	B	A	B
science	A*	A	A*	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The test scores of Year 6 pupils have been high for several years and in science they are often in the top five per cent nationally – as they were this year. Year 2 pupils also usually reach well above average standards in reading, writing, science and mathematics. Last year's average scores of Year 2 pupils in reading and writing were associated with temporary staffing arrangements, and pupils' standards are now back on track to be above average very soon. Although they have never been less than satisfactory, Year 6 test scores in writing have for some time lagged behind the very good scores in reading. The school has taken appropriate action to rectify this and standards are rising and the work of the present Year 6 is above average in writing.

Its determination to achieve high standards in literacy and numeracy has not deflected the school from its view that all subjects and areas of learning are important and that pupils should reach high standards across the board. This they achieve. In the reception class, pupils achieve well and by the time that they move into Year 1 they are on course to reach above average standards in personal and social development, their knowledge and understanding of the world and in speaking and listening. Standards are average but rising in all other areas of their learning. At the end of Year 2, standards are above average in all subjects. At the end of Year 6, standards are above average in all subjects excepting science, mathematics, history, art and music in which they are well above average. Taken overall, boys and girls achieve equally well. The ambitious targets the school sets for pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 are almost invariably met.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and eager to take part in the activities provided.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well at all times. Playground behaviour, though occasionally boisterous, is harmonious.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships between all groups are very good. The provision for the personal development of pupils is good, although the opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility are limited.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are very punctual so that lessons start promptly.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

Not only is teaching very good at all stages but a significant proportion is excellent. Teachers plan their lessons very well and often use materials and equipment that encourage pupils to learn at a very good rate. In the great majority of lessons pupils try very hard to succeed because they find the work very stimulating and they love the infectious enthusiasm of their teachers. Pupils learn well in the reception class. An imaginative variety of tasks is provided from which children make independent and increasingly mature choices, enabling them to make good progress. Over time, teaching ensures that each child experiences a broad range of areas of learning. Throughout the school, the good progress made in English and mathematics owe much to very good teaching of both subjects; literacy and numeracy teaching is very good and makes imaginative use of national guidance. The confident use of a practical and investigative approach to science teaching promotes an intense interest in learning and leads directly to very high standards. On occasions, teaching is inspirational so that pupils become strongly committed to learning, and standards, especially in literacy, science, mathematics, history, art and music benefit greatly. Teaching assistants contribute well although occasionally they are under-used. All pupils benefit from the very good teaching, so that pupils with special educational needs make very good progress towards their learning targets and higher attainers are often presented with work that makes them work hard and so reach very good standards.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. It is enriched by practical and investigative work and is very well planned in order to develop pupils' skills in all subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Well thought-out work and very good adult support – often from teaching assistants – ensure that pupils who have special educational needs make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There are particular strengths in the provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development and in many aspects of cultural development. There are many occasions when pupils experience real delight in their learning and that of others. There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to discuss moral issues in a supportive environment.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The well-being of all pupils is given high priority by all members of staff.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, the school has developed a powerful sense of purpose and a strikingly positive climate for learning. All members of staff contribute a great deal and many staff are helped to, and do, grow impressively into relatively new roles.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. All statutory duties are fully met. Governors know the school's strengths because many of them have good links with the day-to-day work of the school; they consider with great care the informative reports prepared by the headteacher for their meetings.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Pupils' performance is rigorously analysed. Teaching and learning in all classes is monitored very effectively. The outcomes of these processes are used very well to improve the curriculum and approaches to teaching as well as informing spending decisions.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Spending is very carefully directed at meticulously chosen priorities that focus on their impact on pupils' achievements. All pupils benefit, including those with special educational needs. Great care is taken to ensure that the best available value is obtained from spending, in order for pupils to receive maximum benefit.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children enjoy going to school, are taught well and make good progress.</li> <li>Children's behaviour is good.</li> <li>The school is managed well and staff are approachable.</li> <li>The school has high expectations of their children and helps them to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A significant minority of parents would like more information on their children's progress.</li> <li>Some would prefer different amounts of homework.</li> <li>A smaller number would like more activities out of school hours.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views – which are held by the great majority of parents. The amount of homework provided is reasonable for pupils of this age and the number and range of out of school clubs is good. Although parents are well-informed about school life and the general progress of their children, some information is not clear enough to allow parents to be fully engaged as partners in their children's learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

***Pupils' achievements are very high because a rich and varied curriculum is very well taught.***

1. The very good progress made by pupils of all levels of attainment stems inexorably from teaching that is always at least good (and on occasions inspires pupils to produce work of outstanding quality) and from a curriculum that is rich, varied and often with a stimulating practical element.

2. The school's aim to ensure that pupils develop as well-rounded young people is clearly evident. Not only are academic standards high, but pupils enjoy learning and so are well-placed to continue to do well. Standards are equally high in subjects as different as science, history and music. Pupils form very good relationships, both with adults and children, and they develop very well morally, socially, culturally and spiritually. This comes about because the curriculum is meticulously planned not only to cover very well the National Curriculum but also to ensure that pupils develop a good range of personal skills and very positive attitudes. It is approached in as interesting a way as possible and special emphasis is placed on areas identified as needing the extra attention. Thus there are very productive links made between subjects, very good use is made of educational visits and visitors to school, extremely helpful resources are used in lessons and teaching often has an infectious enthusiasm to which pupils cannot fail to respond. The school capitalises very well on local and national initiatives in order for pupils to benefit. For example, work in connection with gaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark was successfully focused on making work in literacy and numeracy more consistent and effective, so that work in each supported the other.

3. All teachers have a detailed knowledge of the subjects that they teach and use this to plan lessons in which both they and pupils are crystal clear about what is to be learned and how. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the animated explanations of teachers and frequently focus their interest so that it results in quiet working and deep concentration. In this they are helped considerably by well-prepared and chosen learning resources. Teaching assistants have excellent relationships with pupils and teachers and sufficient expertise to make good contributions to pupils' levels of concentration and progress with learning. At its best their work is very well organised and unobtrusive; on a few occasions they are merely observers whilst teachers instruct the whole class and opportunities are not taken for them to monitor learning or contribute to it. When pupils are working in groups their skills are very evident as they, alongside teachers, spot when help is needed, what type of help will be most effective and give it promptly before moving on to the next pupil who will benefit from their help.

4. Typical of the school's most effective work was that taking place in Year 2. Several weeks ago, the school's careful analyses of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work had identified two areas for further attention: the spelling and use of words in frequent use and the use of letter blends to help pupils' reading and spelling. In addition, the monitoring of teaching and learning had indicated that this work needed to be approached interestingly if pupils were to get full benefit from it. A lesson on how to understand and write instructions tackled these issues. The teachers' explanations were expert and clearly expressed. Cards carrying written instructions for pupils to follow were attractively produced; the work consolidated the understanding of key vocabulary and involved tasks that the pupils undertook as if it they were the greatest treat in the world. The teacher's enthusiasm communicated itself to pupils, who organised themselves very well and worked hard, with

immense pleasure. By the end of the lesson, pupils of all levels had made great progress in an area where it was needed and where previously they had struggled.

5. Clubs that are run out of school time enrich pupils' experiences and illustrate the staff's commitment to pupils. A wide range of activities is provided, with particular success in sport and music. Pupils speak enthusiastically about these and regard them as a crucial part of their rich school life. The atmosphere during break times is also viewed positively by pupils, many of whom cite playtimes as being a big part of the fun that they have at school. Many pupils enjoy taking responsibility and realise that this also is part of the richness of school. House captain and prefect roles are undertaken by many pupils, although there is no systematic use of such roles to develop pupils' abilities to take responsibility nor to encourage them to influence decisions that are taken on their behalf. However, the great majority of pupils develop very well as caring, thoughtful members of the school community.

***The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the staff and governors help to manage the school very well.***

6. The school's powerful sense of purpose owes a great deal to clear direction from the top. However, this determination to provide a positive working atmosphere in which children's learning will flourish is fully embraced by all staff and the entire governing body; it is seen in the ways in which administrative and premises staff go about their work. This gives the school a consistency of approach that is seen in situations as diverse as governors' meetings, assemblies and the sense of joy that pervades many lessons. The phrase, 'a culture of care', was used on several occasions by governors and staff. It always had the same meaning; that caring for pupils should have a practical element and that this encompasses working pupils hard and enjoyably so that the best possible standards are reached 'across the board'.

7. In order to realise the school's vision, little is left to chance. Carefully designed systems ensure that the school runs smoothly and efficiently, always with an eye on how management decisions impact on the quality of provision for pupils and how it will improve their understanding, knowledge and skills. Under exceptionally clear guidance from the headteacher, all teachers play significant roles in monitoring and evaluating work in their subjects. They then identify areas of good practice that are celebrated and areas of relative weakness in order to make improvements. Teachers who are relatively new to the school have been inducted very well into the school's approach, have made their own positive contributions to it and are indistinguishable in the ways in which they contribute from longer serving members of staff. Governors work in the same way; they act on the belief that their decisions must improve the experiences of pupils. Two examples illustrate this approach. Firstly, teachers who co-ordinate the work both of subjects and pupils in the school's three age ranges, take their roles very seriously and have systematically acquired a good range of the necessary skills. They consult widely and then oversee sensible adaptations to national guidance on the curricular areas for which they are responsible, they make recommendations regarding the resources needed to teach in that way and then monitor carefully the implementation of the school's decisions. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas of relative weakness that guides the school's priorities. Secondly, and similarly, governors use their good background knowledge of the school, giving due weight to guidance from the headteacher, in order to give teachers the tools for the job. A high budget under-spend is appropriately earmarked for substantial improvements to the premises, about which staff speak enthusiastically. They do so confidently, as previous projects of this kind have resulted in, for example, much better classroom sizes and significantly improved provision for the teaching of information and communication technology.

***Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are very good.***

8. Staff and pupils speak very warmly of each other. Pupils say such things as 'All the grown-ups (in school) try to sort things out for you' and 'It's all right to get things wrong; teachers understand and they help you'. Members of staff explain how hard pupils try to be helpful and do their best. Teachers give two main reasons for their emphasis on good relationships. One is that if children are to become adults who relate well to other people, they need to experience positive relationships at school. The second is very much to the point. 'Children always enjoy life, work harder and do their best if they feel loved but know how far they can go'. The consequence of these views is that the school is a harmonious, busy place. Often the calm sound of pupils working is almost tangible. Much of the learning sounds fun - the odd burst of laughter from children, the enthusiastic tone of an adult explaining. On one occasion during the inspection, 30 quiet 'mice' came tiptoeing, with curved paws and twitching noses back to class after a physical education lesson in the hall. Earlier, they explained, they had been wolves and FIERCER. On another occasion, catchy music in an empty hall heralded 60 children marching joyfully in time to the music with hand, arm, feet and leg movements, following their teacher in spiralling curves around the hall as they began a physical warm-up for what became an excellent music lesson. In each of these instances, as in many others, pupils enjoyed their time with the adults, who clearly were immensely fond of them, so that pupils worked enthusiastically and hard, so making very good progress.

9. These high quality and very productive relationships are close to the heart of the school. There is clearly a strong infra-structural support of Catholic faith, that inspectors not inspecting worship or religious education can only glimpse, but it shapes the quality of the pupils' education. At its best, it is seen in the absolute commitment to learning by adults and children and so to the high quality relationships and to high standards.

**Relationships with parents are very good.**

10. Seventy-five per cent of parents responded to an inspection questionnaire. They agree unanimously that their children enjoy coming to school, that the school is well managed and led and overwhelmingly agree that behaviour is good and that children make good progress. Similar support is offered by parents in almost all areas of school life. Examples of this were seen during the inspection. Parents arriving with their children at the beginning of the school day who wish to speak to the headteacher have ready access and their conversations are characterised by real warmth and trust; children are very much aware that work on their behalf is a team effort; they feel secure in this and so are able to give of their best.

11. Many parents speak regularly with teachers, often at the beginning or end of the school day. They value highly this ready accessibility of their children's teachers, feeling, rightly, that it enables their children to get the best from school.

12. A very active parent-teacher association (PTA) involves itself in social and educational events as well as in fund-raising. The very high quality of the school's resources owes a good deal to the PTA; in recent years very substantial funds have been raised and this is used, after discussions with staff and governors, to enhance resources of many kinds, but especially books.

13. Most parents give good levels of support to their children's homework activities. These range from the learning of spellings and number facts to sending to school photographs of their children as babies in order to help to make science and history lessons interesting. These, together with the many other tasks shared between home and school,

play very real parts in the school's very positive atmosphere for learning and so make good contributions to pupils' academic and personal achievements.

14. Most parents rightly value the more formal links between home and school, including reports on their children's progress and the opportunities made to discuss these. A significant minority would like reports to give a clearer idea of how well their children are doing. This is understandable because, although the reports are often painstakingly produced and detailed, it is not easy for parents to see whether their children are doing as well as they should be, as only in Years 2 and 6 are comparisons made with the national expectation for children of those ages. However, the school operates an 'open door' policy, so that teachers are readily available to discuss pupils' progress in greater detail at almost any reasonable time.

#### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

15. There are no significant areas in which the school needs to improve as the continued use of its own management systems is so effective.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	13
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	3	7	0	0	0	0
Percentage	23	23	54	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than seven percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Reception to Year 6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	204
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	Reception – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	28

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	*	*	*

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	26	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (97)	96(93)	100(100)
	National	84(84)	86(86)	90(91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	27	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100(97)	100(100)	100(100)
	National	85(85)	89(89)	89(89)

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

\* Separate figures are not given for boys and girls because there are fewer than 10 boys in the group.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	11	16	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	14	14	16
	Total	25	25	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93(92)	93(88)	100(96)
	National	75(75)	73(71)	86(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	12	13	16
	Total	23	24	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85(n/a)	89(n/a)	100(n/a)
	National	73(72)	74(74)	82(82)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	2
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	196
Any other minority ethnic group	1

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.5
Average class size	29.1

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	156

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	435,267
Total expenditure	426,757
Expenditure per pupil	2145
Balance brought forward from previous year	58,520
Balance carried forward to next year	67,030

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

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	204
Number of questionnaires returned	155

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	24	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	33	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	70	27	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	49	10	1	1
The teaching is good.	62	37	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	41	18	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	28	1	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	28	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	41	7	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	75	24	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	30	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	29	5	0	5