

INSPECTION REPORT

BARWELL COMMUNITY INFANT SCHOOL

Barwell, Leicestershire

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 119930

Headteacher: Mrs P J Sanchez

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 17th – 18th September

Inspection number: 248066

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
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Townend Road Barwell Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE9 8HG
Telephone number:	(01455) 842310
Fax number:	(01455) 845806
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rosemary Strange
Date of previous inspection:	9 th – 12 th March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
8339	Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector
14083	Andy Anderson	Lay inspector
20498	Mary Hamby	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Hugh Protherough Inspections Ltd.
PO Box 396
Banbury
OX15 5XJ

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This average sized infant school has 215 pupils on roll, comprising 123 boys and 92 girls, almost all of whom are of white ethnic origin. The area is not well favoured economically and the effects of economic depression, caused by the closure of local industries, have led to less social mobility and a fall in the school's roll since the last inspection. Around 12% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The children come from a variety of backgrounds, and about 20% travel from outside the catchment area to attend the school. Taken overall their levels of attainment on entry are slightly below average, especially in early reading and writing. Currently, 18% of the pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs, including 4 with statements. There have been a significant number of staff changes within the in the past two years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. The new staff team is working together with increasing effectiveness to sustain the positive ethos for learning, and the quality of education provided is generally good. The children feel secure and valued, and as result they enjoy school and work hard. The standard of much of their work compares favourably with the results of similar schools and most achieve well. The school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- The strong leadership of the headteacher ensures that the governors, senior management and staff work well together and share common aims and values.
- The positive relationships throughout the school enhance the pupils' attitudes to learning and underpin the strength of provision for their spiritual, moral and social development.
- The management of special educational needs provision is very good and helps pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to succeed.
- The parents have very positive views of the school.

What could be improved

- The quality and range of the children's writing.
- The monitoring of the teaching and learning to improve still further the pupils' progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in March 1998, the school has made sound improvement. Standards have fluctuated, but the overall trend has been upwards. The approaches to managing the pupils' behaviour are far more consistently and successfully applied across the school. Most lessons are well planned, and the objectives and assessment opportunities clearly identified. The provision for outdoor play for the children in the Foundation Stage has been considerably enhanced. The new computer suite and attractive library reflect the increased expenditure in these areas. The subject co-ordinators have improved their oversight of curriculum planning and standards. However, more needs to be done to sharpen the evaluation of the teaching and to improve the presentation of the children's writing. The school is well placed to sustain continuing improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	C	C	B	A
writing	C	E	B	B
mathematics	C	D	B	B

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

At the time of the inspection, the children in the Foundation Stage had only been in school for eleven days. This group has a wide spread of abilities that includes some pupils with significant special needs and others who are bright and articulate. Almost all the pupils have settled swiftly in to the routines of school and have made a good start to their work on the Foundation Stage Curriculum.

The table shows that in 2001 the children achieved results that were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and compared favourably with the results achieved by pupils in similar schools. Taking a three-year average, the performance of the boys and girls is similar in mathematics, but in reading and writing the girls have done slightly better. Although fewer pupils reached the expected levels in 2002, standards were broadly average and the school's detailed data show that these pupils achieved well. For instance, almost half of them exceeded the expected level in reading and well over a quarter managed this in mathematics. Far fewer managed this in their writing, but the majority of these were boys.

The inspection findings confirm that most of the current Year 2 pupils are achieving the expected levels in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics. However, the presentation and content of their writing is below average.

The effective deployment of a part-time special educational needs co-ordinator to support the pupils with special educational needs helps ensure that these children make good progress towards the targets within their individual education plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children are keen and enthusiastic about life at school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The vast majority of the pupils behave well in lessons, at lunchtimes and at play.
Personal development and relationships	The children take pride in their school and respond positively to the opportunities provided to accept responsibility. This is a reflection of the very good relationships that exist between adults and children throughout the school community.
Attendance	The school has worked hard and successfully to improve attendance to a level that is now approaching the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Not applicable

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.

Generally, the school provides a good quality of education. Since the last inspection, the teachers' planning has improved so that each lesson has clear objectives. The teachers are careful to make the aims of the lesson clear to the pupils so that they know what they are expected to learn. The classrooms are tidy, attractively displayed and organised in ways that encourage the children to accept responsibility for books and equipment. This and the improved management of behaviour have a positive effect on the children's attitudes and commitment to learning. The school has a strongly inclusive ethos and the teachers do their best to set work that matches the wide range of abilities in each class. In particular, the pupils with special educational needs are well supported, as a result of the effective collaboration between the class teachers and the special needs co-ordinator. The teaching of literacy and numeracy receive due emphasis, but the teachers' knowledge and skills are generally stronger in reading and mathematics than they are in writing. The oral and written feedback provided to the children about their work sometimes lacks rigour.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that is enhanced by its use of the local community and a good range of educational visits and visitors to the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The individual education plans clearly identify their needs of these pupils, and what is to be done to help them to improve. The support provided ensures their good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school is successful in meeting its stated aim of providing for the children's all round development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school makes good provision for the health, safety and welfare of its pupils.

The senior management team knows the children very well. The new teachers have made a good start to learning about the pupils in their classes and their individual needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and soundly managed. The current monitoring of the effects of the teaching on the rate of the pupils' progress has insufficient rigour.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are well informed, supportive and have a good oversight of the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management team makes good use of a wide variety of relevant data and information collected at first hand to inform its view of the school. The test and assessment data are analysed thoroughly to track the pupils' progress.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes full use of its budget, and has made a good start to introducing the principles of best value in taking decisions about spending.

The headteacher and senior management team have successfully managed a period of considerable staff change. The new teachers feel secure, valued and increasingly part of a team committed to school improvement. The decision to employ a part-time teacher responsible for the management of special educational needs has led to the very successful upgrading of this aspect of the school's provision.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children love to come to school.• They see their children making good progress from term to term.• The lessons are fun and the children and teachers get on well together.• It's easy to come into school and talk with the staff.• The headteacher is really good at her job.	The questionnaires suggest that a few parents would like to see more extra curricular activities and additional homework.

The inspectors agree with the overwhelmingly positive views of the vast majority of parents. However, they consider that the children are encouraged to do an appropriate amount of work at home each day, such as reading with their parents. They also find that the range of the extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The strong leadership of the headteacher ensures that the governors, senior management and staff work well together with common aims and values.

1. The headteacher has a clear educational philosophy and her strong leadership drives forward the work of the school. She is open-minded and appreciates that she and her staff must continuously improve their levels of expertise. The school mission is prominently displayed so that parents and visitors can be in no doubt about the school's values and aspirations. The headteacher maintains a high profile throughout each day. She makes herself available to parents and carers, teachers and children at the start and end of each session. She listens attentively. She greets children by name and reveals her detailed knowledge of them through her friendly enquiries about their work, hobbies and family life. The staff, governors, parents and children all speak of the headteacher's leadership and strong personal example as central to the success of the school.
2. At a time when there have been considerable changes within the staff team, the thorough work of the headteacher and governing body has ensured that suitable replacements have been found and the new staff successfully prepared for life at Barwell. The conversations held between the inspectors and teachers new to the school provide strong evidence of the leadership's recognition that investment in the training and support of staff is vital to the success of any institution. For example, following their appointment, all the teachers were encouraged to visit school as often as possible. Those that were available for work were employed as temporary supply staff. Good written guidance is provided in the form of a comprehensive staff handbook, curriculum frameworks and information about special educational needs. Each teacher has been successfully paired with a colleague working in the same year group to help ensure consistency in the planning and approaches to teaching. In the case of the newly qualified teachers, an appropriately qualified mentor provides further support.
3. Strong emphasis is placed on staff training at all levels throughout the school, so that the teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff and schools meals supervisors can all keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This effective development of teamwork across the school helps to create and maintain a positive ethos within which the children flourish.

The good relationships throughout the school have a positive effect upon the pupils' attitudes to learning and underpin the strength of the provision for their spiritual, moral and social development.

4. The school is a happy and caring community where the hard work and positive role models of all the adults help the children to feel secure and valued. The daily act of worship sets a positive tone and provides a good illustration of the rapport between the children and the headteacher and their appreciation that this is a special occasion. For instance, the children joined in purposefully to create the sound effects of the storm on the sea of Galilee before listening in rapt attention as they are told how Jesus commanded, "Be still...and the sea was silent." Photographs and displays of other events, such as the annual hatching of chicken eggs and the close observation of life in the school pond, show that the pupils receive many other regular opportunities for quiet reflection and wonder about the marvel of creation.

5. In each class, the teachers are careful to ensure that they are there in good time to greet the children and their parents each morning. They listen carefully to the news the children tell them and use this sensitively in their subsequent conversations. The routine of the school day is carefully established to allow the children to make their own contributions, for instance, by taking care of equipment and returning the registers to the office. In the case of the older pupils, this might also involve greeting guests and showing them part of the school.
6. The teachers speak with the children calmly and quietly, and expect the same in return. There is a strong emphasis on building the children's awareness of the need to be considerate of others so the reasons for rules and the teachers' expectations are clearly explained. As a result, daily events such as the movement from the upstairs dining room to the playground are managed safely and with the minimum of fuss. Personal responsibility and wider moral and social awareness are also promoted through regular visits within the local community and occasional journeys further afield, such as a day trip to the seaside.
7. The school has a significant minority of pupils who find it hard to concentrate and behave well throughout each day. Since the last inspection, the teachers have successfully improved their approaches to managing these pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis upon praising good behaviour and positive response from the pupils. The teachers are also developing good arrangements for helping the children whose concentration wavers. For instance, through direct questioning they include them in learning rather than isolating them and risking disruption to the work of the majority.

The management of special educational needs is very good.

8. The appointment of a special educational needs co-ordinator with responsibility for the management and support of pupils with special educational needs across the school has paid dividends. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable, well organised and provides effective support to the staff team.
9. Key documents, such as the pupils' individual education plans, are carefully prepared to a common format. The assessments of the pupils' needs are accurately identified, the proposed actions to be taken by staff and/or parents are specific and realistic and the criteria for judging success measurable. The co-ordinator ensures that the regular formal reviews involve the class teachers, parents, the child and any other relevant outside agency, and that details of the decisions reached at these meetings are carefully recorded. However, it is clear from speaking with the parents that the regular informal conversations held between the teachers and parents at the start and end of each day also provide a vital conduit for information exchanges that are valued highly by both sides.
10. The arrangements for introducing new pupils to the school each September are strong, and the co-ordinator uses the visits and meetings with parents in the summer term to get to learn as much as possible about their children. Even though the inspection occurred early in the school year, a good start had been made in identifying several children with learning and behavioural needs and developing appropriate support. A further, significant strength is the way that some parents now have the confidence to approach the school with their own concerns about their children in order to ask for help.
11. The co-ordinator provides useful teaching support both within the classroom setting and through the withdrawal of small groups to her room. The focus of her activity is agreed in discussion with the staff and provides good opportunities for her to assess the progress of individual pupils.

This information is then shared with the teachers and any modifications to targets and/or provision agreed.

12. The headteacher works closely with the co-ordinator to ensure that there is effective communication at all levels about the specific needs of individual children across the school. A daily "log-book" includes messages from outside agencies, such as educational psychologists and social services, and the details of important training events is another example of the priority given to this aspect of the school's work.
13. The school's draft policy for the Special Needs Code of Practice 2001 covers the majority of requirements well, especially those relating to arrangements for pupils with disabilities and learning difficulties.

The parents have very positive views of the school.

14. There was a good response to the parental questionnaires and a significantly large measure of agreement in many areas. For instance, around three-quarters of those replying **strongly** agreed that they felt comfortable approaching school, and that their children enjoyed school and made good progress. They also felt that the teaching was good, the teachers had high expectations and the school was well led and managed. The pre-inspection parents' meeting and the inspectors' informal conversations with the parents and carers during the inspection itself confirmed these positive views.
15. The inspection evidence confirms that the headteacher, staff and governors are extremely successful in meeting their publicly stated commitment to working with parents, carers and the wider community. At the start of each school day, there is overwhelming evidence of the positive relationships that are being developed between many homes and the school. The parents and carers evidently feel that this is "their" school and many demonstrate a refreshing confidence in their friendly greetings and interchanges with the staff. Many help on a voluntary basis in school. As a result of these positive relationships, the home school partnership is increasing in strength. For instance, the "Nearly New" shop that is run by parents provides uniform and clothing for children at prices that represent good value for money. Many parents are increasingly confident in supporting their children's learning at home by helping with homework and participation in shared reading.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The quality and range of the children's writing.

16. Over the course of previous school year, the vast majority of the pupils made reasonable progress in the development of their writing skills. For instance, last September most of the higher and average attaining Year 2 pupils could manage only a line or two of writing with letters that varied in size and orientation. By the summer, however, they were writing at greater length, occasionally using simple punctuation and making logical guesses at their spelling. Many of the lower attaining pupils moved from writing strings of marks and letters that required a teacher's written commentary in explanation to completing a line or two of independent writing.
17. However, there are weaknesses in the school's current approaches that are hindering more rapid progress. For instance, the teaching of handwriting lacks coherence. The staff has adopted a useful published scheme that teaches letter formation based on the strings of letters found in common words, but at the moment there are few explicit links made between this work

and that within the lessons of the National Literacy Strategy. The use of exercise books dedicated to handwriting practice further divorces the processes of letter formation from the children's own personal writing. These exercise books contain potentially useful guidelines to assist the children in establishing the correct proportions of letters and the length of ascenders and descenders. However, analysis of the children's work shows that some pupils do not understand how to use the guidelines. Moreover, in some cases incorrect letter formation is being reinforced through practise exercises and is overlooked by the teachers when they mark the work.

18. The analysis of the children's other books and folders reveals that although there has been some coverage of the key aspects of the programme of study suggested by the National Literacy Strategy, much of this work lacks the depth that would enable more pupils to reach the higher levels in their writing. There is good evidence of occasional pieces of work that have motivated the pupils and helped them produce work of a better calibre. This is evident, for instance, in simple books entitled "About Me" and in the use of word processing to write about a favourite author. However, too many exercise books contain weekly "News" writing that seldom rises beyond the mundane and takes up time that could be made available for more important work. Consequently, the few children approaching the higher levels typically achieved by brighter pupils are not yet able to structure the content of their more extended writing and their spelling and punctuation are not yet sufficiently consistent.
19. The marking of the children's work lacks rigour. The teachers make use of ticks and occasional encouraging comments, but there is little evidence of systematic feedback that tells the children how to improve their work and no subsequent checks to see that these improvements are carried out. In some cases, the teachers' own modelling of handwriting is poor.
20. In the literacy lessons observed during the inspection, the teachers provided appropriate work in a way that interested the children and motivated them to work hard. The teachers invariably promoted a good working ethos and positive relationships, but they were less effective in demanding a brisk working pace and in showing individuals how they might improve their writing. For instance, in one lesson, a group of pupils were writing about a fireman. The teacher working with the group expertly encouraged discussion, helped generate ideas and supported spelling, but neither corrected the few children who were forming letters incorrectly, nor set a framework to indicate what she wanted the children to achieve in a given time.

The monitoring of teaching and learning to improve still further the pupils' progress.

21. The headteacher and senior staff make full and effective analysis of the test and assessment data that they gather over the course of each year. Their written commentary clearly identifies trends and issues for improvement, such as the weaker performance of the boys in reading and writing, and the comparative strength of the pupils' performance in each of these skills. The recent introduction of performance management has led to the increased use of lesson observations with a negotiated focus carried out by senior staff. However, this practice is not yet firmly established as a part of the school's programme for bringing about wider improvements in the teaching.
22. The next step is for the senior management team to carry out more regular observations of the teachers at work, and to make a deeper analysis of what the pupils manage to achieve and why this might be. For instance, some of the "good" lessons observed during the inspection had the potential to become "very good". They now need a sharper focus in the questioning during the

introductions to literacy and numeracy lessons, a brisker pace to the changeovers between whole class and group activities and a more purposeful use of the whole class sessions. Furthermore, a regular and systematic analysis of the pupils' exercise books and folders is also essential. For instance, a termly examination of a sample of the children's writing across the school to establish improvements made in fluency, style, content and volume would allow the teachers to measure the progress being made in these vital aspects of the work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

23. In order to build on the school's many successes and raise standards still further, the headteacher, governors and staff should now

1. Improve the quality and range of the children's writing by:-

- establishing greater coherence in the arrangements for the teaching of handwriting;
- fuller coverage of the range of work suggested in the National Literacy Strategy;
- better oral and written feedback to the children about the quality of their work and how it might be improved.

2. Extend the scope and effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching and learning by:-

- increasing the frequency of lesson observations;
- establishing a sharper focus on what the children learn;
- checking the quality of written work and the feedback provided for the pupils about how to improve it.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

17

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	0	9	8	0	0	0
Percentage	0	0	53	47	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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y Rec – Y2

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

215

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

29

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

Y Rec – Y2

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

4

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

31

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

2

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

10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	5.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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
	2001	35	33	68

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	32	33
	Girls	31	31	28
	Total	64	63	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (81)	93 (76)	90 (84)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	31	32	34
	Girls	31	30	30
	Total	62	62	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (80)	91 (89)	94 (85)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	143	2	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	68	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: YRec – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.6
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YRec – Y2

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	145.5

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	441,993
Total expenditure	445,451
Expenditure per pupil	2,024
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,209
Balance carried forward to next year	20,751

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
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	219
Number of questionnaires returned	90

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	29	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	27	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	39	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	43	17	0	1
The teaching is good.	71	24	3	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	29	13	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	22	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	20	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	30	9	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	79	18	2	1	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	32	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	31	20	0	17