

INSPECTION REPORT

SPRINGFIELDS FIRST SCHOOL

Yarnfield, Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124141

Headteacher: Mrs N Anderton

Reporting inspector: Mr P Mathias
Rgl's OIN: 21945

Dates of inspection: 7th – 8th October 2002

Inspection number: 248554

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-9 years old
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Yarnfield Stone Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST15 0NJ
Telephone number:	01785 760249
Fax number:	01785 761674
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Beauchamp
Date of previous inspection:	9 th – 12 th March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

No of full time pupils:	98 (Less than most schools)
Pupils with English as an additional language:	2 (Low)
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	4 (Below average)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs:	5 (Below average)
Pupils with statements of special educational needs:	2 (Below average)
Average class size:	18.6

The school serves the village of Yarnfield and nearby areas. A large proportion of pupils come from outside the local area and few come from non-British backgrounds. Pupils enter the nursery on a part-time basis in the term after they reach three years four months and move to the reception class in the September of the year in which they will be five. Few pupils join or leave the school at times of the year other than the normal. They come from homes with a range of social and economic advantage and disadvantage. On the whole they begin school with above average levels of basic skills. Pupils transfer to the next stage of their education at the end of the school year in which they are nine years of age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Springfields is a good school where the leadership of the headteacher is a strong feature. It achieves high standards and provides well for all its pupils. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and in the national assessments for seven year olds results are consistently well above average. The quality of teaching is good and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school uses information it gathers from regular assessments well to enable teachers to teach consistently well to raise the high standards further.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and lead to purposeful learning.
- The overall quality of provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is high.
- The quality of leadership shown by the headteacher is very good.

What could be improved

- Due to staff changes the roles of some subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently well developed. They are not yet able to visit classes to look at the quality of teaching and learning or to judge the impact of initiatives, which the school is pursuing in the School Development Plan.
- There is no clear overall policy for homework which sets out year on year what parents should expect of the school in this area.
- Teachers' expectations of standards in handwriting and the presentation of pupils' own work are inconsistent.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection in March 1998 found that Springfields was a school where standards, the quality of education, the climate for learning and the management and efficiency of the school were all good. However the report highlighted the need to match carefully the work set for pupils to their different abilities and to improve teachers' systems for judging and recording what pupils had learnt and could do; to improve pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics and in problem solving; to increase provision, quality of resources and teaching of information and communications technology; to improve pupils' behaviour; to raise standards in pupils' writing and to strengthen the role of the headteacher and subject co-ordinators in looking, first hand, at the quality of teaching and the standards pupils attain.

Since then the school has continued to maintain high standards in mathematics and science and to improve in some areas where standards were weaker than others. For example in English, information and communication technology, design technology, history, physical education and religious education standards are higher now than they were.

Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Very good progress has been made in improving the way teachers match work to different abilities in their classes and in the way they assess pupils' standards and progress. Behaviour, which was an area of concern at the time of the last inspection, is now a strength. Standards in using and applying mathematics and problem solving are now good where they were unsatisfactory. The school has worked hard to improve the quality and quantity of hardware and software for information and communication technology and now teachers teach the subject confidently. The overall quality of pupils' creative and imaginative writing is good. However, the school does not give sufficient emphasis to ensure that standards of handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work are consistently high across the school. The headteacher and some co-ordinators have worked very effectively with other teachers to look at first hand at the quality of teaching and learning going on. However, due to changes in staff not all co-ordinators have received the training and opportunities to carry out this aspect of their responsibilities. The school has recognised this and is in the process of beginning to make sure that all co-ordinators have good opportunities in the future to work effectively alongside other teachers. The school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
Reading	B	A*	A*	A	well above average A
Writing	C	A	A*	A	above average B
Mathematics	D	A	A	A	Average C
					below average D
					well below average E

This is a strong set of results when compared to schools nationally and when compared to schools considered broadly similar. In reading the school's results were very high in 2001 and 2002 and in the highest five percent of schools nationally. Currently in reading, writing standards are in the highest five percent schools nationally. In mathematics results are well above average. Pupils make good progress and build successfully on the above average levels of basic skills they have when they begin school. A particular strength is the high proportion of pupils who reach above average results (Level 3) in these assessments. Evidence from the inspection confirms that standards are above average for seven year olds and many pupils in Year 4 are likely to obtain at least above average standards when they are 11 years of age. Both in the assessments and in classes boys and girls reach broadly similar standards. Overall trends of improvement have been erratic but above the national average and are improving faster than most schools. The school is attaining higher standards than those realistic targets set and pupils make above expected progress.

Many pupils enter the nursery class with levels of basic skills, which on the whole are above average. By the time they transfer to the next stage of their education at the age of nine, pupils attain above average standards in English, mathematics, science, design technology, history, physical education and religious education. In the other subjects of information and communication technology, art and music their standards are in line with the standards expected nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and to each other. They all work enthusiastically to meet the high expectations set for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	It is now very good both in classes and around the school. Pupils behave sensibly and show respect and care for each other and their teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Good. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop an understanding of how to live in a community.
Attendance	Good. There are effective arrangements to maintain good attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery - Year 4
Quality of teaching	Good

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

The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school and has a significant impact on the standards pupils attain at the age of seven and the progress they make by the age of nine. In nearly all of the lessons seen during the inspection the quality of teaching was good. In a small number of lessons, teaching was very good and in a similarly small number of lessons it was satisfactory.

The quality of teaching of English and mathematics is good and teachers have a good understanding of how to teach the skills of literacy and numeracy. The quality of teaching for children under six years of age is consistently good. Across the school all pupils, including those with some degree of special educational needs are well taught by teachers and their assistants.

The best lessons are very carefully planned so that the teachers have a clear picture of what should be achieved in the time available. The lessons are carefully thought out so that they build systematically on what pupils already know and can do. Work is carefully matched to the different abilities in the class so that all pupils are appropriately challenged. The teachers have good subject knowledge so that they are able to demonstrate and explain simply what is expected. The pace of learning is maintained well because the teachers question effectively and encourage the pupils to find the lessons interesting. Pupils respond very positively to the generous encouragement they receive, listening carefully and behaving well.

Where teaching is less successful and has some weaknesses, lessons are over organised so that pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to work independently and accept responsibilities. The teacher does not place enough emphasis on the importance of pupils giving of their best. Occasionally in some lessons pupils work steadily but without a real sense of urgency or purpose because the teacher has not made the expectations of pupils clear enough.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum is good. The National Curriculum is thoroughly addressed. There is an appropriate range of out of school activities for the age of the pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Support is well matched to individual needs and targets are clear and well set out.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There are good opportunities through religious education and assemblies for pupils to be made aware of the deeper meaning of life. Pupils have well planned opportunities to take on some responsibilities. Provision for pupils to be made aware of their own and other cultures is thorough.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic and personal progress are now very good and a major strength of the school. Pupils receive an appropriate amount of individual support and are well known to their teachers.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led overall. The headteacher provides a very good lead to the staff who work closely and constructively together. Some co-ordinators have regularly visited classes on a planned basis to look at the quality of teaching and learning and the success of the initiatives they are involved in. This has helped to raise standards further. However, due to staff changes not all co-ordinators have had opportunities to train to do this.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is active and has a good understanding of the long-term strategic needs of the school. They discharge their statutory duties in full and have provided an attractive environment for teaching and learning. They judge the success of their major spending decisions carefully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are very thorough and form a major strength of the school. There is a strong commitment from all teachers to ensure that all the pupils achieve well.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There is a good range of resources, which are well used. Governors have managed the school's finances prudently and have a strong commitment to provide best value in their decisions. The school is an attractive and colourful environment, which reflects the value teachers place on their pupils' efforts.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standards of behaviour.• The quality of teaching.• The information they receive about their children's progress.• The high expectations the school sets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of activities outside lessons.• The amount of homework set.

The inspection team agrees with the great majority of parents who have positive views of the school and the quality of education it provides. However, a significant minority expressed concerns about the range of activities outside lessons and the amount of homework that is set. The school provides an appropriate range of out of school activities bearing in mind the age of its pupils. The school's overall expectations of homework are not expressed clearly enough and as a result some parents are unsure of what is expected.

A meeting was held between the Registered Inspector and parents. Fifteen parents attended. They were generally happy with the quality of education the school gives.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school uses information it gathers from regular assessments well to enable teachers to teach consistently well to raise the high standards further.

1. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are high and in reading the school achieved results in the 2001 tests which were in the top five percent of schools nationally. In the most recent tests in 2002 results were in the top five percent of schools nationally in reading and writing. In mathematics results are well above average. While standards in the national assessments for seven year olds have varied since 1997, the school's overall results have been well above the national trend. The school has improved faster than most schools. When pupils' performance is judged against what is predicted for them when they start school, pupils achieve very well and do better than those predictions would indicate. Standards are also high in design technology, history, physical education and religious education. There has been significant improvement since the time of the last inspection in information and communication technology, history, physical education and religious education.
2. Pupils' individual results are carefully analysed. This information is used to identify quickly when pupils are not reaching the standard predicted for them and as a result teachers are very aware of what needs to be done to help. When pupils are identified as not fulfilling their potential, they are given appropriate support. Short-term targets for improvement are agreed with parents and pupils so that all are aware of what pupils need to do to improve.
3. Teachers assess regularly and methodically setting aside specific time during each term to measure the success of their teaching. They assess pupils' performance in all subjects so that they are able to plan carefully the next stage of pupils' learning. This ensures that work is well matched to the range of abilities in each class. The matching of pupils' work to the needs of pupils was a weakness at the time of the last inspection – now it is a strength. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and share a strong commitment to get the best out of their pupils by the very thoughtful planning and teaching. For example, while standards are high in English and mathematics, the school development plan is still focused on raising standards further in these subjects. The headteacher and teachers are far from complacent about maintaining high standards.

The overall quality of provision for children in the nursery and reception class is high and leads to purposeful learning.

4. Currently there are 16 children who attend the nursery on a part time basis and 17 children who are in the reception class. They generally come to school with levels of basic skills, which are above average. They make good progress so that by the age of 6 all are ready to begin the National Curriculum.
5. Children in the nursery are taught by an experienced nursery nurse. Those in reception have their own teacher and additional support from teaching assistants. Overall the quality of teaching for children under six years of age is good. The teachers and their assistants in this area have a thorough understanding of the needs of children of this age and plan carefully to provide them with an appropriate curriculum. In the best lessons there is a strong sense of fun because the adults encourage children to enjoy what they are doing, for example in a communication, language and literacy lesson they are encouraged to be "sharks in the park", or in a

physical development lesson "crocodiles in the river." Children are regularly encouraged to work independently and to be sensible and considerate to others. The lessons move on purposefully and there are many opportunities for children to speak, which they do appropriately. The practitioners take every opportunity to promote the children's vocabulary for example when talking about homonyms such as "bulbs". This is carried out in an informal and lively way.

6. The teachers know each child very well and record their progress carefully. As a result the curriculum is carefully organised to provide each child with an appropriate level of challenge and to help them move on to the next small step in their learning.
7. The area set aside for children under six is spacious and very attractive. Many displays of children's work not only reflect the value that adults place upon this work but also help to create a vivid and lively environment for future learning, for example the work associated with the "Under The Sea" topic. The very good range of equipment and resources meets all the needs of the curriculum for these children. For example there are well-organised areas for children to undertake role-play and to experiment with different materials. The outdoor play area is particularly attractive. It is very well maintained and contains a good range of fixed play equipment and large moveable toys. The area is carefully laid out and provides a safe and stimulating space, which the children use well.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good

8. At the time of the last inspection there was some concern regarding some pupils' attitudes and their standards of behaviour. Since then there has been a marked improvement. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are now very good. Positive attitudes and good behaviour are a particular strength for children under six years of age and in Years 1 and 2 where it is consistently very good. In the rest of the school it is always good and occasionally very good.
9. This improvement has been brought about by the introduction of a range of strategies to recognise good behaviour and to encourage pupils to enjoy their lessons and for pupils to find them fun. Parents also feel that the school's focus on this area has been successful and that the headteacher and staff keep a tight rein on inappropriate behaviour.
10. In lessons and around the school from an early age, pupils know clearly what is expected of them and wish to please their teachers. They work together very readily and share and take turns fairly. They show consideration for each other and for their teachers and adult helpers. During the inspection pupils were invariably polite and courteous, working hard and taking a pride in their school.
11. The playground is a cheerful place and pupils play happily together. No pupils have been excluded in recent years. Neither parents nor pupils regard bullying as a problem. Pupils look after their environment well and there is no litter.

The quality of leadership shown by the headteacher is very good.

12. The headteacher has a clear sense of direction for the work of the school and has very high expectations of what pupils can and do achieve. The headteacher sets a very good personal example of commitment and enthusiasm. A close and supportive attitude amongst all staff has been carefully developed. Teachers share the headteacher's vision for the school. Together they have created a very positive ethos and a commitment to continuous improvement. For example the headteacher has encouraged teachers to share their individual expertise with each other and to work closely and constructively as a team. Those teachers who have been in post for some time have had significant and effective training to enable them to do this.
13. A particularly strong feature of the headteacher's leadership is the use made of national and other reliable assessment information to improve standards particularly in English, mathematics and science. This information is used carefully to track pupils' performance and to guard against under-achievement. The headteacher rigorously evaluates and follows up the work of the school in order to maintain and raise standards further.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

14. Since the time of the last inspection there has been significant progress in developing the roles of some subject co-ordinators. Co-ordinators now help teachers to look critically at the quality of work pupils produce. For example, in literacy the co-ordinator has worked closely with other teachers to develop pupils' skills in writing in different styles. The co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy have worked hard with the headteacher to establish effective procedures to identify where there are general areas of strength and weakness in the performance of pupils in the national assessments. They have made teachers aware of what pupils need to do to reach the targets set for them. All co-ordinators look closely at the results of "assessment weeks" and oral tests of what has been previously taught. There is a strong culture amongst teachers of using assessment information to track pupils' performance and guard against under-achievement.
15. However, not all co-ordinators have had sufficient opportunities to evaluate the success of teaching and learning at first hand across the school, as have for example, the co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy. This in part is the result of recent staff changes, currently some co-ordinators are awaiting training in how to carry out this activity. As a result they are unable currently to provide focused support and guidance to individual teachers based on what they have seen at first hand. Not all subject co-ordinators have sufficient planned opportunities to celebrate and share good teaching and learning and subject expertise. The school has recognised the need to complete arrangements for this shortcoming to be addressed in its most recent School Development Plan as part of its ongoing commitment to improvement.

There is no clear overall policy for homework which sets out year on year what should be expected of pupils in this area

16. At the meeting of parents with the Registered Inspector and in their responses to the questionnaire sent out to parents prior to the inspection, some parents expressed uncertainties about the school's expectations for homework. There is a general policy for homework, which indicates that the amount and type of homework set is decided by individual teachers. Parents are advised of each teacher's expectations in this. This arrangement, while having the advantage of being adaptable to the perceived needs of individual classes, lacks clarity.

17. Parents say that some teachers set more homework than others and they do not understand the reasons why. The school has recognised the need to formalise arrangements so that parents can be informed of what the school's overall policy for homework is and what they should expect their children to do as they move through the school.

Standards in handwriting and the presentation of pupils' own work are too uneven

18. At best standards in handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work are high. Some pupils by the age of nine are able to write neatly and fluently in a mature, joined style of handwriting. They take a real pride in presenting their work carefully for example, when as a result of their study of "Ancient Greece" some pupils in Year 4 produced very detailed and carefully organised projects on this subject. The school has a policy of introducing at an early age the skills of how to form letters and how to begin to write in a fluent joined style. To help in this process the school has recently adopted a new commercially produced scheme.
19. Currently standards of handwriting vary greatly in individual classes so that in some circumstances some pupils who have the skills to write neatly and fluently do not always put them into practice while others do. All teachers do not always give sufficient emphasis to developing these abilities systematically and indicating in their marking of pupils' work when expected standards are not reached. Teachers generally have high expectations of the quality of creative and imaginative writing pupils should achieve. Their expectations of pupils' handwriting standards are not high enough.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governing body, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Provide all subject co-coordinators with appropriate opportunities to visit classes to look at the quality of teaching and learning and to judge the impact of initiatives, which the school is pursuing. This issue has been identified by the school and is being addressed in the current School Development Plan. (Paragraph 15)
- (2) Complete the review of the school's homework policy so that it provides a clear picture to parents of what the school expects pupils to do as homework on a year on year basis. (Paragraphs 16, 17)
- (3) Raise standards in handwriting and the presentation of pupils' own work so that the good standards seen in some cases become the norm in all classes across the school. (Paragraph 19)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	15
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	1	12	2	0	0	0
Percentage	0	7	80	13	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	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	8	90
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		5

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.8
National comparative data	5.6

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	9	11

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	9
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	20	20	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (96)	100 (91)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	8	8
	Girls	11	10	10
	Total	20	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (91)	85 (91)	90 (96)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
71	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

No ethnic group recorded

0

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

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20:1
Average class size	22.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	4.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	41
Number of pupils per FTE adult	4:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	290,661
Total Expenditure	293,145
Expenditure per pupil	2,403
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,690
Balance carried forward to next year	36,206

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	98
Number of questionnaires returned	53

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	17	8	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	66	28	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	68	25	0	4	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	38	8	6	4
The teaching is good.	57	40	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	43	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	30	2	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	32	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	38	49	11	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	42	38	13	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	38	6	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	9	38	28	4	17