

INSPECTION REPORT

MERRYHILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Enfield, London

LEA area: Enfield

Unique reference number: 101999

Headteacher: Mr. D. Edmonds

Reporting inspector: Mrs. Mary Summers
25455

Dates of inspection: 10-11 July 2000

Inspection number: 191017

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bincote Road Enfield London
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. A. Revell
Date of previous inspection:	03/06/96

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils reach high standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school because of good quality teaching, particularly in the older classes.• The school is led and managed successfully by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and governors perform their roles very effectively.• Good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that pupils are well behaved and develop good levels of respect for others, positive attitudes to their learning and very good relationships with one another.• The school offers an extensive range of activities to pupils out of school time, which gives pupils very good opportunities to improve their individual skills and also enables them to develop teamwork and confidence.	
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although most pupils reached expected levels in writing and mathematics in the national tests for seven year old in 1999, fewer pupils reached higher levels than in other schools.• There are no clear systems of assessment in writing and this means that lessons are not always planned well enough to meet pupils' individual needs.	
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	14
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	15

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Merryhills Primary is a very large community school catering for pupils between four and 11 years of age. There are currently 444 full-time pupils on roll, 233 boys and 211 girls. There are 21 children in the Reception classes who are under five years of age. Nineteen per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and there are 14 per cent of pupils for whom English is an additional language. These figures are above average, compared with most schools. Nine per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is below average. Seventeen per cent of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register, which is average for a school of this size, although less than one per cent have statements of special educational need, which is below average. Children enter the school at above standards for their age. Most recent indicators show that their socio-economic backgrounds are favourable.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Merryhills is an effective school which is well led and managed and provides an attractive, stimulating and caring environment for its pupils. Good quality teaching, particularly in the older classes, and pupils' enthusiasm for learning mean that they reach high standards by the time they leave the school. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils reach high standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school because of good quality teaching, particularly in the older classes.
- The school is led and managed successfully by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and governors perform their roles very effectively.
- Good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that pupils are well behaved and develop good levels of respect for others, positive attitudes to their learning and very good relationships with one another.
- The school offers an extensive range of activities to pupils out of school time, which gives pupils very good opportunities to improve their individual skills and also enables them to develop teamwork and confidence.

What could be improved

- Although most pupils reached expected levels in writing and mathematics in the national tests for seven year old in 1999, fewer pupils reached higher levels than in other schools.
- There are no clear systems of assessment in writing and this means that lessons are not always planned well enough to meet pupils' individual needs.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in June 1996. Standards in English, mathematics and science are now well above average and many more pupils are attaining high levels in the national tests. A programme of regular classroom monitoring has been introduced and this has improved the quality of teaching. Teachers' planning now caters more effectively for pupils of different capabilities, although there are still some lessons in literacy where this could be even better. The leadership and management of the school continue to be strong. The governors and staff now plan more effectively for school development and this has enabled them to increase the level and

quality of resources in the school to support teaching and learning. Subject co-ordinators now perform a satisfactory management role.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1998	1999	1999	
English	A	C	A	A	well above A average above B average C below average D well below E average
mathematics	B	A	A	A	
science	B	B	B	B	

When children start school in Reception, they are at standards which are above those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Reception classes and the vast majority reach or exceed nationally expected standards in all the recommended areas of learning. They continue to make satisfactory progress in the infant classes although the results gained in last year's national tests were lower than in previous years. The results of tests this year indicate that standards have risen significantly although it is not yet possible to make firm judgements as national figures are not yet available. However, the percentage of pupils attaining high levels in writing is still too low.

Pupils in the junior classes make significantly faster progress because of good quality teaching, and reach standards in English, mathematics and science which are well above the national average. This year, almost half the pupils reached higher than average levels in English and mathematics and almost two thirds reached higher levels in science. Targets, which the school set for 11 year olds to achieve this year, have been exceeded.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very keen and enthusiastic about their learning. They generally work hard in lessons, especially when the activities are interesting and capture their imagination.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are well behaved in class and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and pupils show high regard for one another, adults and property in the school. Girls and boys play happily together and show respect for one another's ideas and opinions.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and there are few unauthorised absences.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	satisfactory	good

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

Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is good. During the inspection, 31 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Of these, 19 per cent were very good, 48 per cent were good, 26 per cent were satisfactory and seven per cent were unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is significantly better in Years 4, 5 and 6 because teachers in these classes show very clear knowledge of the subjects they are teaching, with a particular strength in mathematics. The arrangements for setting into groups for numeracy are very effective and ensure that pupils receive work which is matched well to their different needs. This enables them to achieve highly for their capabilities. The quality of teaching in literacy is also good in these older classes because the activities are well organised to meet the objectives of the lessons and the teachers give clear explanations and instructions. This means that pupils know exactly what is expected of them and precisely what to do and they settle quickly to their work. Where teaching is weaker, pupils' work is not being assessed well enough to identify areas for improvement with future lessons planned to meet these needs effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets national requirements well. The school uses the local community very effectively to enrich pupils' experiences in music and sport.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are identified quickly and receive appropriate support. Some targets on pupils' individual education plans are not specific enough for their progress to be measured effectively.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Teachers and classroom assistants provide appropriate support in class to ensure that these pupils understand the lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils learn about a range of cultures from their work in religious education, geography and literacy. They have appropriate opportunities to reflect upon their own beliefs and values during assemblies and circle times. Clear school rules and good opportunities for paired and group work ensure that pupils learn how to live and work together successfully.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a safe and caring environment. Pupils' academic progress is tracked carefully as they move through the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides effective leadership and is well supported by his deputy and senior staff. Staff with subject and management responsibilities carry out satisfactory roles and ensure that the curriculum is delivered successfully. The school's ethos is strong and its aims are well met.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors make a very good contribution to the life and work of the school. Regular meetings and visits to see the school in action enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The governors and headteacher maintain a good overview of how the school is performing, both locally and nationally. A useful bank of assessment data is being developed which will be used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the performance of specific pupils and groups.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources very well. Governors plan the use of their funds very carefully and check spending regularly throughout the year. They consider a range of different spending options in order to achieve the best value for their money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Behaviour is good. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps their children become mature and responsible. • Parents feel welcome in school. • The school encourages parents to become involved in their children's education and in school life in general. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of homework. • The information they receive about how their children are progressing. • Greater liaison with parents. • Increase in number of extra-curricular activities.

The inspection supports all the positive views held by parents but does not support their concerns. Inspection findings indicate that levels of homework are appropriate and that there is a range of opportunities for parents to find out about how their children are progressing. The school works successfully with parents to address individual concerns. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and involves a high number of teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils reach high standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school because of good quality teaching, particularly in the older classes.

1. Standards attained in the national tests for 11 year olds in 1999 were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Standards have improved since the last inspection, particularly in the percentages of pupils attaining high levels in the tests. Although the progress pupils make in the younger classes is satisfactory, they make more rapid progress in Years 4, 5 and 6 because of the high quality teaching in these classes.

2. In these classes, the teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects which they teach. For example, in a very good numeracy lesson in Year 6, the teacher was able to show pupils a wide range of strategies to enable them to solve problems involving percentages. Pupils showed their understanding by progressing rapidly towards finding more difficult percentages of given amounts. The high expectations of teachers, particularly in numeracy, result in very challenging work being presented to the pupils. Pupils respond to this enthusiastically and become very involved in their mathematics lessons. In another lesson observed in Year 6, pupils were so absorbed in their work on decimal fractions that they did not want to stop working and it took the teacher a few moments to engage their attention to move them on to the next part of the lesson. In a literacy lesson in Year 4, the teacher transmitted her own love of language successfully to encourage pupils to use more imaginative vocabulary to make their written work more interesting.

3. Teachers throughout the school state their objectives for the lesson in their plans and often share them with their pupils at the start of lessons. However, in the older classes, teachers manage to stimulate and interest the pupils more effectively, particularly in written work, by using well thought out and organised activities to meet these objectives. The subjects are more appropriate to pupils' interests; pupils in Year 6 were well motivated to write good quality poems about their dreams and hopes for the future because it was an appropriate time of the year for them to be thinking about such things.

4. Good questioning techniques challenge pupils to explain how they reach their answers and thus fix the methods more firmly in their minds. In a Year 5 numeracy lesson, one pupil explained how he worked out $55 - 32$ by counting on 8 from 32, to make 40, then adding a further ten then five. Skilled use of questions to which there are a range of answers encourages confidence and respect for one another's ideas. "Give me two numbers which add up to 8.52," challenged a Year 6 teacher. She then qualified the question for one group by saying one number could be a whole number. Through these carefully graded questions, pupils at different levels were able to participate on equal footing and maintain high levels of self esteem whilst making good progress in developing their mental skills.

5. Clear explanations and instructions mean that pupils understand what they have to achieve and they waste little time in settling to their activities. This ensures that they spend the maximum amount of time on their work and produce good quality results.

The school is led and managed successfully by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and governors perform their roles very effectively.

6. The headteacher provides effective leadership, steering the school towards continued improvement and he is supported well by his deputy and senior managers. The headteacher and his deputy form a very effective partnership and this is appreciated by parents, who say they feel confident to approach them with any concerns. A good system of appraisal is in place for teachers, which links effectively with systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching. Through annual professional interviews, teachers are able to identify future training needs and arrangements are then made to meet these. Subject co-ordinators are involved in planning and monitoring curriculum development and receive non-contact time to carry out their duties.

7. The deputy headteacher has worked hard over recent months to develop a system of maintaining records of pupils' attainment in national and school tests on a computer database. This is still under development but the school has already begun to monitor the progress of individuals and cohorts and use the data to predict standards in national tests. Individual targets are set for each pupil in English, mathematics and science and plans are in hand to share these with parents and children in order to involve them more effectively.

8. The governing body operates efficiently and governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Many show great commitment, having been associated with the school over long periods of time. A system of regular visits, during which governors monitor aspects of current school development and report back to the full governing body, ensures that all governors are well informed. Many governors attend training sessions run by the local education authority to keep themselves informed of recent educational initiatives. Governors are well placed therefore, to be able to prioritise areas for school improvement and plan for them appropriately. Their system of visits allows them to evaluate the success of their spending decisions.

9. The last inspection identified the need to plan for school development on a longer-term basis in order to be able to focus more effectively on spending priorities. The school has taken this idea on board and the results of good financial planning are evident around the school in its high level of good quality resources to support teaching and learning. A three-year programme of premises developments, linked well with regular maintenance and safety checks, ensures that the school is in good repair and is well decorated and spotlessly clean. Governors also monitor the use of accommodation carefully; the school makes use of every available space and teachers work hard to ensure that the lack of space in many classrooms does not affect their lessons.

Good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that pupils are well behaved and develop good levels of respect for others, positive attitudes to their learning and very good relationships with one another.

10. The school considers pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development carefully and provides for these aspects well within everyday school life as well as individual lessons. Religious education lessons and assemblies give pupils the chance to reflect on their beliefs and values, for example when they listen to a story from the New Testament about Jesus healing the lame man. Young pupils in Year 1 learn to respect and value Judaism when they learn about the beliefs and traditions from one of their Jewish friends and take part in a celebration meal to learn about Shabbat. They are able to describe similarities and differences between Judaism and their own religious practices. During the same lesson, pupils discussed the different names for places of worship and one pupil sang a Muslim prayer at the end of which her classmates applauded spontaneously. The school uses the cultural diversity of its pupils well to ensure that different cultures, traditions and beliefs are respected and valued. Pupils in a Reception

class were studying the Caribbean story "Handa's Surprise" and learned effectively about the different foods and way of life there. Two children acted out the story with dolls, demonstrating how, for example, Handa transported a basket of fruit on her head. The pupils' cultural development is further enhanced by lessons in history, art and music.

10. Pupils' moral values are strengthened when they follow their school and classroom rules which are displayed prominently around the building. Pupils take an important part in drawing up these rules, all of which emphasise respect and care for one another. The positive way in which teachers deal with any misdemeanours further encourages pupils to reflect carefully about what is right and wrong. For example, some boisterous behaviour during lunchtime was discussed sensitively and calmly with the pupils involved by the deputy headteacher. The extensive range of out of school activities provides further valuable opportunities for pupils to learn the value of rules within team sports.

11. Many of the activities which teachers organise for pupils within lessons involve them working together in pairs or groups and enable pupils to understand the value of co-operation. In a Reception class, a group of children worked together on a large frieze to illustrate their story. They discussed their drawings with the adult who was supervising and made helpful suggestions to one another about their drawings. They were very proud of one another's work and were keen to point out drawings which they thought were particularly good. In a design and technology lesson in Year 2, pupils worked in pairs to weave Joseph's coat of many colours. Pupils helped one another and took great pride in the finished result. Good social awareness is further encouraged by giving older pupils responsibilities as school monitors and opportunities to help younger children in the playground and at lunchtimes.

The school offers an extensive range of activities to pupils out of school time, which gives pupils very good opportunities to improve their individual skills and also enables them to develop teamwork and confidence.

12. Many teachers give up their lunchtimes or time after school to run clubs and activities for the pupils. There is a very good range of sports available, which includes cricket, netball, rugby, athletics, gymnastics and football, as well as opportunities for pupils who are learning to play a musical instrument to play in the school orchestra. Other clubs include drama, art, chess, choir, recorders, design and technology and science. Some of these activities are open to younger pupils. Through these opportunities, pupils can improve their individual skills as well as developing their social awareness and moral values.

13. There are two residential visits arranged for pupils, one in Year 4 and the other in Year 6 which enable pupils to learn how to live and work together in different situations. These also encourage independence and confidence. Through well-organised visits to places, such as Kentwell Hall, the Science Museum and local places of interest, the pupils develop their knowledge in a range of subjects. Participation in local music festivals and sporting competitions instil a sense of pride in representing their school, as well as providing useful occasions where pupils can learn how to operate within a more formal setting.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Although most pupils reached expected levels in writing and mathematics in the national tests for seven year old in 1999, fewer pupils reached higher levels than in other schools.

14. Standards in 1999 were affected adversely by the low numbers of pupils who reached high levels in the tests. The school had experienced staffing difficulties over the year and this was the main factor why standards dropped that year. In the previous two years, standards in reading, writing and mathematics had been very high compared with schools nationally.

15. Results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests indicate significant improvement in writing and mathematics, although it is impossible to make a firm judgement on standards at this time as national figures have not yet been released. Standards in reading have risen slightly although the percentage of pupils reaching higher than average levels has fallen slightly. In mathematics, all pupils reached the nationally expected level and almost a third reached higher levels. In writing, the percentage of pupils reaching average standards has risen considerably but the percentage gaining higher levels remains low. This reflects the lack of clear ongoing assessment procedures in writing which should then be used to plan lessons to meet pupils' individual needs. Activities are not geared well enough to building on pupils' existing knowledge and challenging them to improve further.

16. When children begin school in the Reception class, their literacy and numeracy skills are above average for their age. They make satisfactory progress in their Reception year and continue this rate of progress into Years 1 and 2. This reflects the satisfactory quality of teaching in these younger classes. However, when pupils progress further through the school, the quality of teaching is significantly better and, consequently, they progress at a faster rate and the standards they reach in the national tests at 11 years of age are well above average.

There are no clear systems of assessment in writing and this means that lessons are not always planned well enough to meet pupils' individual needs.

17. Although teachers make regular assessments of pupils' progress in subjects such as mathematics and science, there is no such system yet in place to monitor progress in writing. This means that often, teachers are not fully aware of individual pupils' development and what they need to do to improve further. On a day-to-day basis, work is marked regularly but does not always provide enough information to pupils about how to improve.

18. The lack of ongoing assessment in writing means that lesson planning lacks specific challenge for individual children. Literacy lessons usually follow the prescribed format, but the independent activities are often too general and lack challenge for both higher and lower attaining pupils.

19. The school plans to introduce personal targets for all pupils, beginning in the new school year. Pupils will be involved in setting their targets and monitoring their progress towards them. These targets will include some for writing which will motivate pupils further and help them to understand what they need to do to improve.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

20. The governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- (1) improve standards gained in the 1999 national tests for seven year olds in writing and mathematics;
- (2) improve the quality of teaching of writing, particularly in younger classes by:
 - assessing pupils' written work thoroughly to identify what they need to do to improve;
 - sharing this information with the pupils, through the marking procedure;
 - implementing the school's plans to involve pupils in setting their own targets and monitoring their progress towards them;
 - ensuring that independent activities in the literacy hour meet the needs of all groups of pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0%	19%	48%	26%	6%	0%	0%

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the 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)		444
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		40

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		75

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	62

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.4

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	27	39	66

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	26	26
	Girls	35	32	33
	Total	61	58	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92	88	89
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	26	26
	Girls	35	35	34
	Total	61	61	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92	92	91
	National	82	86	87

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	35	29	64

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	30	32
	Girls	25	25	27
	Total	52	55	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81	86	92
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	30	30
	Girls	23	25	25
	Total	49	55	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77	86	86
	National	68	69	75

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	2
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	331
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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)	16.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	32.2
Average class size	31.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	209

Financial information

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	802,786
Total expenditure	814,580
Expenditure per pupil	1,848
Balance brought forward from previous year	41,794
Balance carried forward to next year	30,000

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	444
Number of questionnaires returned	167

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	47	7	4	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	52	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	52	19	4	1
The teaching is good.	44	46	6	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	48	25	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	35	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	41	7	1	5
The school works closely with parents.	34	46	16	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	49	44	4	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	46	4	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	39	12	1	7