

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST PETER'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY  
SCHOOL**

Plymouth

LEA area: Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113492

Headteacher: Kevin Norris

Reporting inspector: Susan Smith Airey - 18322

Dates of inspection: 28 – 29 March 2001

Inspection number: 197849

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior  
School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Brentford Avenue  
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Plymouth

Postcode: PL5 4HD

Telephone number: 01752 217010

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Colin Knight

Date of previous inspection: 07/10/1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils	278	(average)
Pupils with English as an additional language	1	
Pupils entitled to free school meals	47	(17.6%, average)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs	35	(13%, below average)
Average class size	26.7	

St Peter's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the district of north Plymouth and beyond. Pupils come from a broad mix of home backgrounds although there is a small but significant number from low-income families. Around 17% are not Roman Catholics. Nearly all of the pupils have had some pre-school experience. They enter school at four-years-old with a wide, but broadly average range of attainment.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school where standards are generally well above average for the oldest pupils because of the high proportion of good teaching. Strong leadership from the headteacher coupled with committed governors and hard-working staff has created a caring Catholic Christian community where achievement is fostered. The school provides good value for money.

#### What the school does well

- Standards are well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science for 11 year-olds: they are above average in writing, mathematics and science for 7 year-olds.
- Children make a good start from the earliest age, enjoy coming to school, generally behave well, work hard and achieve well.
- Nearly all the teaching is good, with a strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy and scientific knowledge.
- Pupils are very well looked after; those with special educational needs are particularly well supported and they make good progress.
- Leadership and management successfully promote a Catholic Christian ethos in which pupils' personal development is important; they feel valued and are encouraged to do their best.

#### What could be improved

- The range of reading activities for high attaining pupils in Key Stage 1.
- The clarity and precision of actions for improvement to raise standards.
- Measures to evaluate spending decisions.

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

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

There has been significant improvement since the school was last inspected in October 1997. All key issues for action identified in the last inspection have been tackled effectively. The curriculum is now planned systematically and new assessment systems help teachers set appropriate and challenging individual targets to improve pupils' learning. The management team uses data effectively to analyse trends in pupils' learning to inform curriculum planning and to identify training needs. The school has a strong potential to continue improving.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	B	A	A
mathematics	D	B	A	A
science	B	B	C	C

**Key**

well above average    A B

above average

average                            C D

below average

well below average    E

In the 2000 tests, standards for 11 year-olds are well above average for English and mathematics when compared with all schools and also with similar schools. The school has maintained this good level of attainment since 1996, staying above the national trend of improvement. Standards in science for 11 year-olds have maintained pace with the national upward trend since 1997, but test results are generally average. The inspection confirms that the number of pupils reaching the required standard in English and mathematics is still well above average and now above average in science.

Standards for 7 year-olds in writing and mathematics have risen since 1996 and are above the national average and above average when compared with similar schools. This improvement is better than the national trend. A high number of pupils reach the expected standard of Level 2 in writing and pupils of all abilities achieve well in mathematics. However standards in reading, which were above average in 1996, have declined to broadly average, against the national trend. This is because the school underestimates some pupils' reading potential and does not give them sufficiently challenging reading materials. This is now being rectified. Inspection findings confirm teachers' assessment that standards in science are above average.

Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1 and make very good progress in gaining literacy and numeracy skills throughout Key Stage 2. There has been a significant improvement in pupils' communication and data handling and they are developing appropriate skills in other areas of information technology and overall standards are generally average.

The school has already exceeded its targets for English and mathematics for the oldest pupils as these were set some time ago: insufficient account was taken of the positive effects of the setting arrangements and booster classes in Years 5 and 6.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils generally work hard and are very interested and involved in their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils settle quickly and behave well in lessons; they are sometimes a little boisterous around the school but generally behave appropriately.
Personal development and	Relationships are very good. Most pupils are confident and well-adjusted, showing concern for others and the environment as they

relationships	develop an increasing sense of responsibility and personal initiative.
Attendance	Attendance is around the national average. Lessons start promptly and no time is wasted.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

*I*

*nspectors 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.*

86% of the teaching is good and none is less than satisfactory. There are a number of significant strengths in the teaching across the whole school. The planning of lessons coupled with good subject knowledge ensures that pupils learn the right things and that they build successfully on previous knowledge. Teachers work effectively with assistants and helpers and together; they ensure that groups and individuals, especially those with special educational needs, are well supported and appropriately challenged. They create a positive climate where pupils feel secure and know what is expected of them. As a result, pupils try hard and behave well. They concentrate well in lessons and are eager to contribute their ideas. Literacy and numeracy skills are systematically taught ensuring that pupils acquire and apply these skills to good effect in other subjects of the curriculum.

There is a weakness in the teaching of reading for higher attaining pupils in Year 2. The school recognises that pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging texts and reading opportunities and is reviewing resources.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy and a developing provision for information technology; an out-of-hours sports programme is well-supported.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils make good progress. Their needs are identified early and they are given appropriate work to extend their learning. They are effectively supported by assistants and helpers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There are very good opportunities provided for moral and social development in all aspects of school life. The Catholic faith is central to the day to day life of the school and every effort is made to develop pupils as well-balanced individuals with the personal skills to enable them to grow to Christian maturity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There is a family atmosphere and pupils feel secure and safe. Teachers know each pupil well and keep a close track of individuals' needs and progress.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The head teacher provides strong and effective leadership. He analyses school needs well and identifies appropriate priorities for development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed to raising standards and are currently reviewing ways to improve development planning and defining management roles more clearly.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and analyses data effectively to inform future actions. However, currently, the school development plan lacks precision in the description of actions to be taken to improve standards.
The strategic use of resources	Whilst the school is becoming more aware of the principles of best value and manages finances carefully, measures to evaluate the effects of the school's spending are not specific enough to be useful.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good ethos created by the strong management and dedicated staff</li> <li>• High standards of attainment which school maintains</li> <li>• Safe, happy caring atmosphere</li> <li>• High standards of behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider range of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Some parents are dissatisfied with the amount of homework given</li> </ul>

The inspection findings support all the parents' positive views. Whilst the range of extra curricular activities is appropriate, there is an emphasis on sport; in this respect, parents' views are supported. However, the inspection found that the amount of homework given was reasonable for the age and maturity of pupils across the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

**Standards for 11 year-olds in English, and mathematics are well above average and above average in science: standards are above average in writing, mathematics and science for 7 year-olds.**

The school's systematic and consistent approach to teaching English has ensured that pupils in both key stages have consolidated their learning and achieved well in national assessments every year. This is particularly evident in writing lessons. Pupils in Year 2 selected a range of descriptive phrases to use on a 'wanted' poster, whilst pupils in Year 6 invented similes to enliven a piece of comic writing. By the time they leave the school, pupils have a good understanding of different genres of fiction and confidently select and use language features consistent with particular genres. They develop a wide vocabulary as they move through the school and use it to good effect in their writing. One 10 year-old created this delightful image in a poem about school: *"Teachers are like yo-yos as they bounce across the playground to tell you off"*.

Pupils across the school calculate confidently and are used to trying different approaches to solve mathematical problems. National assessments show that all pupils aged seven reach the required standard and a good proportion achieve above the national average. This is due to systematic teaching of basic skills, which is then built on successfully in Key Stage 2 where pupils are taught in ability groupings. This has helped pupils of all abilities to achieve their best. Year 6 pupils are successfully completing work beyond that expected by the end of Year 6 in mathematics. For example, high attaining Year 5 and 6 pupils calculate statistics from data and successfully use technology to collate and present their findings. The inspection confirmed that standards are well above the national average for 11 year-olds.

Pupils' scientific knowledge is good. The recent focus on improving provision for science, now that the literacy and numeracy strategies are well established, is having a good impact on attainment in science throughout the school. Pupils in the Reception class could work out, with prompting, why the balloons they released did not fly very high. Pupils in Year 6 enthusiastically investigated complicated electrical circuits and made thoughtful deductions from their observations. As one pupil remarked: *"The bulb on the parallel circuit only got half the power because the current divided."* Inspection findings agree with teachers' assessments that standards are above average attainment in Key Stage 1. Furthermore, the inspection found that standards in science for 11 year olds are now above the national average.

Inspection evidence supports the parents' view that standards of attainment are high and that pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1 and very well in Key Stage 2.

### **Children enjoy coming to school, generally behave well and work hard.**

Pupils enjoy school and are keen and responsive learners. This is because they are valued and because teachers strive to give interesting and stimulating lessons. Pupils respond enthusiastically to questions and are eager to try things out for themselves. They particularly enjoy art and science because of the 'hands on' aspect of many of the tasks they are given. One pupil voiced the opinion of many during a Year 4 lesson: *"I like doing experiments."* On special occasions, as when the Russian clowns came to give each class circus skills workshops, their concentration and response were excellent. They were so enthused by the activities, such as walking on stilts and plate-spinning, that they concentrated throughout,

obeyed each instruction to the letter and did not waste one moment of the opportunities presented to them.

Behaviour in class is good. This is because teachers make their expectations clear and pupils know and conform to established routines in lessons, quickly settling down to work. They help one another when appropriate and concentrate well. They listen well to what other pupils have to say and eagerly talk about the work they are engaged in. They are involved in the daily routines of the school; even the youngest deliver the register to the office, which is a long way from their classroom. Some older pupils act as prefects and help with supervision of the younger pupils in lining up and coming from the playground back into class. Some pupils are a little boisterous in corridors but there is little room to pass in certain parts of the school, which makes it difficult for pupils to proceed in an orderly fashion.

The overwhelming majority of parents reported on the parents' questionnaires and at the parents' meeting that their children enjoyed school and behaved well. This view is supported by inspection findings.

**Nearly all the teaching is good, with a strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy, scientific knowledge.**

During the inspection, 86% of the teaching observed was good and on one occasion very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

The teaching of the under-fives is good overall. The teacher and assistants have established good relationships with their young pupils and create stimulating activities for them. The home corner, currently a Hat Shop, has captured pupils' interest and the teacher has expertly planned literacy activities around this theme. Pupils were eager to identify some of the many hats, which she had provided, and to find the right place to put them in the 'hat catalogue' they were making for the shop.

A significant feature of the teaching in both key stages is the thorough planning of literacy, numeracy and science for the differing abilities in each class. Teachers in Key Stage 1, for example, carefully match activities, such as times tables work in numeracy, to lower and higher attaining pupils so that all can make progress. In Key Stage 2, pupils are taught literacy, numeracy and science in ability groups, which has had a positive impact on their learning and improved standards. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils are now studying some of the elements of the Year 7 science and mathematics syllabuses. This is possible because throughout Key Stage 2, teachers structure lessons carefully so that learning is broken down into consecutive steps which teachers then build on in each lesson. They are confident in their subject knowledge and as a result, pupils in Year 4 are, for example, able to give clear explanations of photosynthesis and pupils in Year 6 develop their own strategies for problem solving and use correct mathematical terms.

All teachers manage pupils well and have high expectations with regards to pupils' behaviour and concentration. There is obvious enjoyment in their teaching and a desire to engage their pupils. Thus pupils feel valued, respond with enthusiasm and try their best. Teachers take care to clarify what the lesson is about, how it connects to the previous lesson and what the pupils will be doing. They prepare resources well and put a lot of thought into class teaching as well as planning exciting tasks for group or individual work. In a Year 3/4 numeracy lesson, the teacher effectively involved pupils in constructing a 'fractions wall' so that they could clearly see that fractions such as a half and five tenths were equivalent. This was followed by a fractions domino game which really challenged the pupils to apply what they had just learnt.

**Pupils are very well looked after; those with special educational needs are particularly well-supported and they make good progress.**

It is very apparent that teachers know their pupils very well and make good provision for their needs. Parents are very pleased with this aspect of the school's work. Staff work hard to cultivate and promote good relationships and this is reflected in the happy working atmosphere evident in the classes visited during the inspection. Monitoring of pupils' academic progress has greatly improved since the last inspection and the school now carries out termly teacher assessments and has initiated personal targets for pupils which are reviewed at parent consultations. The school has also begun to compile data profiles for each year group so that pupils' progress can be followed closely

Planning for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school has recently reviewed provision for these pupils and the new co-ordinator for special educational needs ensures that pupils' progress is monitored closely. Teaching assistants and voluntary helpers are key elements in the provision. Their effective support is due to teachers' clear planning for particular groups of children within the class and the assistants' skill and experience in working with children experiencing difficulties with learning. In a Year 4 numeracy lesson, the assistant carefully ensured that pupils understood the meaning of 'estimate' and could apply this to working out approximate areas of rectangles. Assistants have developed good relationships with pupils who respond well to their help and thus improve their skills and knowledge.

Another important element in the provision for pupils with special educational needs is the organisation of pupils into ability groupings for English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2. This enables teachers to match teaching methods and activities closely to the needs of the less able. The school has seen significant gains by pupils in these ability groups and this good progress is confirmed by the inspection.

**Leadership and management successfully promote a Catholic Christian ethos in which pupils' personal development is important and they feel valued and are encouraged to do their best**

The headteacher and management team promote a very clear vision of what sort of school this should be. This ensures that the great majority of pupils achieve well and try to do better. Staff and pupils have high expectations of success and the maintenance of high standards of attainment is just one way in which the school has been successful in achieving its aims. There are special awards for attainment and these are coupled with celebration of achievements, which pupils gain outside school.

At the heart of the work of the school is the premise that the school develops the whole child. This aim, coupled with a curriculum which is infused with a religious understanding of life and the principles of the gospels, is evident in the work of the school. For example, in a Key Stage 2 art lesson, pupils were absorbed by the task of creating designs for an Easter window. In a Year 1/2 classroom, the prayers on the display indicated pupils' empathy with others and awareness of others' feelings. The leadership attaches great importance to good relationships within the school community and all are involved in creating an environment in which pupils can prosper. Pupils and parents feel that the school looks after them and pupils are confident to approach adults in the school community if they have a problem. Their thoughts and responses in lessons are always valued and they are given responsibilities to carry out appropriate to their respective ages. Both Catholic and non-Catholic pupils are treated equally and all are expected to play their part as members of the school community. To this end, a school council has been formed so that the pupils have a forum to put forward

their opinions and ideas. This has already had an impact on school life: on the council's suggestion, new markings for the school playground have been ordered and are awaiting clement weather to be carried out.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **The range of reading activities for high-attaining pupils in Key Stage 1.**

Whereas standards of writing for seven year-olds have stayed above the national average, standards in reading remain around the average, which is against the national trend. The co-ordinator has not had sufficient time to explore thoroughly why pupils' reading skills do not match their writing capabilities. A good percentage of pupils reach the required standard when they are seven but not many achieve above this level.

Although it was not possible to observe the teaching of reading in the short time of the inspection, listening to and talking about reading with a group of Year 2 pupils and with the English co-ordinator indicate that teaching of reading is not sufficiently rigorous for more able pupils. Although the termly assessments indicate pupils' level of attainment, these are not used effectively to plan which skills high attaining pupils need to develop next. Pupils stay on a reading scheme that does not give them a sufficiently varied diet of reading to challenge and move them on.

### **The clarity and precision of development actions to raise standards.**

The school has a number of valid and reliable assessment arrangements for year groups covering pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science and systems are being developed for information and communication technology. Whilst this data is used by individual teachers effectively in almost all areas to identify and tackle their pupils' learning needs, school development overall is not explicitly linked to raising standards.

This is because the monitoring of teaching and learning has not yet been fully established and linked to school development priorities. One cycle has been completed but commentary on the effects of teaching on pupils' learning is limited. Staff with management responsibilities have not been given sufficient time to evaluate which aspects of the learning of different groups of pupils across the school need to improve, although a start has been made in the monitoring of teachers' planning.

The headteacher has identified clear development priorities but these are not fully reflected in the actions on the school development plan. He and the governing body are looking at ways of improving school development but currently, plans are not sufficiently clear or precise to enable managers to check whether they are on course to achieve the targets they want.

### **Measures to evaluate spending decisions.**

The governing body are in the process of considering what they need to do to ensure they more fully work within the principles of best value. They manage and control finances carefully and discuss in depth new initiatives before committing resources. They consult widely with the school and parents and take account of prevailing views.

While assessment information is now more readily available in an acceptable form, governors are not yet fully familiar with interpreting this comparative data. This makes it difficult for them to agree realistic but appropriately challenging targets to raise standards.

Without such measures, governors are not able to evaluate the effect of their spending decisions in support of the actions to improve teaching and pupils' learning.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

Governors, the headteacher and staff with senior management roles need to:

- **raise seven year-olds' attainment overall in reading by providing a greater variety of appropriately challenging reading opportunities for more able pupils;**
- **be clearer in their development planning to link actions to be taken to raising pupils' attainment;**
- **be specific about what the school wants to achieve in terms of raising standards and agree to apply appropriate measures to check the effectiveness of their spending decisions.**

## 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	17

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	7	79	14	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	278
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	47
<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	35
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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
	2000	28	15	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	27	27
	Girls	13	15	15
	Total	37	42	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (91)	98 (97)	98 (94)
	National	83(82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	27	27
	Girls	14	15	15
	Total	41	42	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (97)	98 (100)	98 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (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
	2000	19	23	42

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	19	18
	Girls	23	23	23
	Total	41	42	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	98 (80)	100 (85)	100 (84)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	17	15
	Girls	18	22	22
	Total	32	39	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (82)	95 (85)	90 (91)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	275
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	26.7

#### **Education support staff: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	126.25

### ***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.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-01
	£
Total income	468375
Total expenditure	477004
Expenditure per pupil	1794
Balance brought forward from previous year	10312
Balance carried forward to next year	1683

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

199

Number of questionnaires returned

86

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	27	1	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	63	37	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	40	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	52	14	0	2
The teaching is good.	70	29	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	49	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	33	3	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	24	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	44	48	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	45	50	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	36	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	37	23	5	12

### **Other issues raised by parents**

There were no other significant issues raised by parents.