

INSPECTION REPORT

ESKDALE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Chilwell

Beeston

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122545

Headteacher: David Slee

Reporting inspector: Eileen Parry
2615

Dates of inspection: 11th – 13th November 2002

Inspection number: 248358

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Eskdale Junior School Eskdale Drive Chilwell Beeston Nottinghamshire
Postcode:	NG9 5EN
Telephone number:	0115 9179272
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Counsellor S Foster
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Eskdale Junior School is bigger than most other primary schools with 254 pupils on roll: 132 boys and 122 girls. Almost all pupils are white and very few are from other ethnic backgrounds. Three pupils have a different mother tongue from English and only one of these is still at a fairly early stage of learning English. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There is one pupil with a statement of educational need and the percentage of those identified as having some special need is well below what is usually found. Whilst many of its pupils come from the surrounding houses, some come to Eskdale from further away because parents make an active choice for their children to attend. This gives the school a slightly better than average social mix. Pupils who come to the school have a full range of skills and abilities; overall their attainment when they start is a little above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. High quality leadership and management by the headteacher and staff with management responsibilities ensure that teaching is very good and that pupils do very well. Pupils reach high standards in the national tests and also do well in the other subjects of the curriculum. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in national tests are high. Pupils of all abilities do well because the staff have excellent systems for assessing how well pupils are doing and ensuring that no one underachieves.
- Teaching is very good and helps all pupils to learn effectively.
- Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher ensure that all staff contribute equally effectively to the school's success. Governors support the school very well.
- The school provides a well-balanced curriculum, including extra activities.
- Pupils are given many opportunities for their personal development. They enjoy coming to the school and learning.

What could be improved

- The school has no major areas that could be improved.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998 when it was given three issues to address. Since then, these issues have been fully dealt with and the school has continued to improve very effectively. There is now a computer suite and a planned timetable for its use. As a result of the provision and improvements in the teachers' expertise in the subject, pupils are now reaching above average standards in information and communication technology (ICT). Parents receive good information to help them to support their children's learning. Pupils with special educational needs receive well-balanced support through individual and group support, as well as carefully planned learning within lessons so that they make very good progress. In addition, the school has continued to raise standards, improve the quality of teaching and develop the building through a new, attractive entrance.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A	A*	A*
Mathematics	A	A	A	A
Science	B	B	A	A

Key

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

A means that results are in the top five per cent of schools.*

Results of national tests have been rising steadily, and this year are at a high point. In all three subjects, results are well above average compared to all schools nationally and compared to similar schools (based on the take-up of free school meals). Additionally, they are in the top five per cent of schools in English. From the sample of subjects and work seen, standards are above average in other subjects. All pupils do particularly well in their ability to write creatively because of the imaginative way that reading and writing are taught together. There is clearly no difference between boys and girls in their excitement and application to writing. They have an impressive understanding of literary devices and command of technical vocabulary. Pupils are also secure in their mathematical knowledge and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs and those who start the school with lower attainment make very good progress because of the careful assessments that are made and the rigour of individually planned support and learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like the school and enjoy learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well, needing little prompting.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The school encourages pupils to work together with partners or in groups, and pupils do so very well. They take responsibility for their learning in a mature way.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned and carefully prepared, with good attention to providing a suitable level of challenge for every pupil from the most able to those who find learning harder. Most lessons are interesting and challenging without being beyond the pupils' capacities. Only occasionally are lessons more modestly pitched. Pupils know what they are going to learn and how much time they have for particular activities so that lessons move briskly and no time is wasted. A key feature of lessons is that talking is encouraged through paired or group work and this gives pupils the time to think out their ideas fully before they have to commit their thoughts to paper. When they are asked to work in silence for short times, pupils do so happily because they understand that silence is right for that particular activity. They understand well the school's approach and say, "You can talk as much as you like as long as it is quiet and work related."

Literacy and numeracy skills are taught most effectively. A particular strength is the school's involvement in a research project on helping pupils to write better –TRAWL (Teaching Reading And Writing Links). Pupils are taught to work with each other and learn to read each other's work, making perceptively critical and appreciative comments. This results in high levels of understanding about the technical aspects of writing, and in all children producing their own very well written books. The approach makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development by giving them much responsibility and teaching them to value each other's views. The way that teachers mark pupils' writing is exemplary. Praise and constructive criticism are given fully and pupils are eager to see what has been written and to learn from it.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a well-balanced curriculum which is effectively extended with extra activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. A wide range of pupils benefit from the detailed assessment, careful analysis and well-planned programmes of support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Not an issue this year, but the school's records show that when there are pupils who need support, they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Pupils learn about other countries, customs, faiths, art and music through lessons and assemblies and show a healthy respect for human differences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There are good systems for the care and welfare of pupils and excellent systems to monitor their academic progress.

Parents think highly of the school and the school takes care to listen to parents' views, providing them with good opportunities to support their children in school, through homework and through a variety of other ways such as by raising funds or attending performances.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and staff work together most effectively to move the school forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors fulfil statutory responsibilities. They are very aware of the need for the school to keep on improving and not rest on its laurels.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. There is a rigorous programme to check that the school is delivering quality in all aspects of its life.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funds are wisely spent to improve provision and there is a very good understanding of securing the best value. Care is taken to find out what parents and pupils think is needed as well as what staff and governors want to improve.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects children to work hard. • Children like school and behave well. • The school is well led and managed. • Children make good progress. • Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working closely with parents. • Being better informed about how their children are doing. • Changing facilities for Year 6 pupils.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. A few parents would like to see improvements in the way that the school works with them. The school takes great care to consult with parents. It has an open door policy and parents are welcome to contact the staff if they want to work more closely with the school. The school assures the inspection team that parent help would be appreciated. Teachers are prepared to see parents at convenient times or by appointment. Some parents were concerned about older boys and girls changing together. This was reported to the headteacher after the parents' meeting and we understand that separate changing arrangements are now offered.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards in national tests are high. Pupils of all abilities do well because the staff have excellent systems for assessing how well pupils are doing and ensuring that no one underachieves.

1 Results of national tests have been rising steadily and this year are at a high point. In English, mathematics and science, results are well above average compared to all schools nationally and equally high when compared to similar schools. They are in the top five per cent of schools nationally in English. The high achievement in English is because the school has looked at test and assessment information, seen that pupils were not doing as well in writing as in reading and found a way to bring the standards of writing up (see paragraphs 4 and 8). The school has exceeded its targets for all three subjects and by a good margin in English.

2 The school has made very good progress in raising the standards that pupils reach in ICT because it has improved the resources, improved teachers' expertise in the subject and provides a well-planned programme for the pupils. Standards are now above average and, by Year 6, pupils are competent users of ICT for the full range of activities. Their multi-media presentations show them combining word art, importing pictures, using *PowerPoint* and setting up hyperlinks for smooth presentations on the theme of the proposed tramways in Nottingham. Computers are used effectively to support learning in other subjects throughout the school. For example, in history and geography, pupils search for information to improve their knowledge. In mathematics, they collect data and produce a variety of graphs which they use for further information. In science, Year 6 pupils used sensors to monitor changes in temperature as liquids cooled and compared the effects of different materials as insulators. They also have a sense of humour in their work, for instance suggesting that a good use for their research might be to wrap noisy neighbours in bubble wrap or submerge them in water!

3 The sample of subjects and work seen indicate standards that are above average in all other subjects. Pupils do well in music because there is a well-structured programme that develops their skills, and good resources that help them to learn, combined with good teaching. The recorder groups play well in accompanying the singing in assemblies and percussion groups provide smooth rhythmic backing. In art, pupils experience a wide range of materials and techniques and look at different types of art from other countries and times. An example of above average work inspired by looking at other artists is the Year 5 patchwork quilt based on the work of an African-American artist. In a Year 3 design and technology lesson looking at packaging, pupils gave well thought out answers to a question about the purposes of packaging.

4 All pupils do particularly well in their ability to write creatively because of the imaginative way that reading and writing are taught together through the TRAWL project. This is a new and dynamic research project, under the leadership of Nottingham Trent University, which, combined with high quality teaching, is having a dramatic effect on pupils' attainment on writing. It is impressive to watch. For example, without hesitation, Year 4 pupils considering an extract from Ted Hughes' story *The Iron Man* were able to identify linguistic features such as alliteration. It is even more impressive when they respond to the simple question, "Tell me about the sentence, 'Where am I.....?'" with answers such as, "There is a question mark, an ellipsis," and, "This is a stream of consciousness." That they understand this is equally clear, because as they write their own stories using the extract's structure, you can hear them talking to each other and making comments such as, "Hey look, I've used a personification" or "The commas show that this is a 'long' sentence" or "This is a stream of

consciousness.” Boys and girls alike shared an excitement in writing and quite a few were reluctant to stop at the end of the lesson. At the end of each TRAWL project every pupil in the school produces a novel. Each is laminated and properly bound and pupils and parents take great pride in the finished results. The success of this project is likely to continue because the teachers are becoming highly skilled. They are now taking the project on to its next stages by becoming trainers themselves and sharing their expertise with other schools.

5 Pupils with special educational needs and those who start the school with lower attainment make very good progress because of the careful assessments that are made and the rigour of individually planned support and learning. The same rigour applies to all pupils. When assessments are reviewed, any pupil, including the highest achievers, who has not made enough progress is spotted and support given to bring them back on course to achieve well.

Teaching is very good and helps all pupils to learn effectively.

6 Teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned and carefully prepared, with good attention paid to providing a suitable level of challenge for every pupil, from the most able to those who find learning harder. As parents recognise, the school expects all pupils to work hard and achieve their best. An example of the way teachers challenge pupils was seen in a Year 4 English lesson when more able pupils were brought together and given more difficult work to do. Most lessons are interesting and challenging without being beyond the pupils' capacities. Pupils know what they are going to learn and how much time they have for particular activities so that lessons move briskly and no time is wasted. Teachers ask questions that suit the individual pupil's stage of learning so that pupils of all abilities can take part. Questions and time to answer are suited to purpose. For example, in mathematics, mental and oral questions expect quick responses but when explanations are required as to how they reached an answer, pupils are given time and sometimes additional questions to help them to explain fully. Interesting resources often make an impact on pupils' interest and learning, as in Year 4 lesson about the Hindu festival of Diwali. Looking at different clothes, artefacts and designs stimulated good discussions and increased pupils' knowledge.

7 A key feature of lessons is that talking is encouraged through paired or group work. Year 5 pupils, for example, discussed their scientific findings in a very mature way because the teacher emphasised the need for teamwork. In a Year 3 science lesson tasks were shared out. One of the group was the leader, another recorded findings and others contributed to the investigations. Pupils discussed their ideas fully and worked very well together. Discussions helped pupils to think out the process and consider what to do and what they found out before they had to record their findings. As a result of this type of approach, pupils write with more confidence. When they are asked to work in silence for short times, pupils do so happily. They understand that sometimes they need to work in silence and also that talking about their work is good as long as it is done so quietly and without interruption to others. A few lessons are more modestly pitched, having a slower pace and sometimes a lack of clarity of explanation.

8 A particular strength is the school's involvement in the TRAWL research project. Pupils are taught to work with each other and learn to read each other's work. They make comments that are both perceptive and critical. Sometimes these are shared through talking and sometimes these are written onto drafts. When combined with the teachers' own very detailed marking, these provide an unusually high level of feedback to the writer and visibly improve the final work. It also results in high levels of understanding about the technical aspects of writing. The approach makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development by giving them much responsibility and by teaching them to value each other's views.

9 The headteacher contributes well to the quality of teaching through assemblies which are very well planned, have a moral message and often a twist in the presentation that captures pupils' interest, for example eating a tin of dog food with apparent enjoyment to the amazement and disgust of the pupils then revealing that it was really soup with a different wrapper to prove the point that people should not be judged solely by first impressions.

Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher ensure that all staff contribute equally effectively to the school's success.[SNR22] Governors support the school very well.

10 The headteacher gives the school a very clear sense of purpose. He has a strong vision of the school's place in the community and how the school will support the development of the pupils who attend. There is rigour in the leadership and management and no complacency. For instance, the school's results have been consistently high for the last three years but higher this year because it was felt that standards could be better and because the headteacher and staff have the confidence to try new approaches such as the TRAWL project. The school exceeded its targets in English by a good margin and the confidence that the headteacher has in the TRAWL project leads him to believe that more pupils can achieve the highest level. He is aiming for as many pupils to achieve this higher level in his school as achieve the average and higher levels nationally. Given the very mixed ability of pupils who start at the school, these are indeed aspirational aims but judging from the impact of the project so far, they are also possible.

11 The new management structure that was put in place a year ago by the headteacher and governors has no deputy but three teachers with equal senior management responsibility. This is working well and adds depth and variety of management skills to the team. Each of the senior managers has well-defined responsibilities and a keenness to fulfil these both individually and as a team. There is planned time to support their work. A good example of effective management is the way that test and assessment data are collected, analysed and used to identify both individual pupils who need extra help and parts of a subject that could be better. Whilst this is co-ordinated by one of the senior management team, all subject leaders play a part in the process. This shared responsibility and ownership of developments coupled with the keenness and enthusiasm of staff are a major factor in helping the school to move forward.

12 Teachers have defined responsibilities for their subjects and some time is planned in the school calendar to help each person undertake these. Teachers keep an eye on all aspects, such as how all their colleagues plan lessons, what new skills teachers need, what pupils are learning or what resources are in place or needed. All have good levels of knowledge about the strengths in their subjects and where there are areas that can be developed further. This forms the backbone of the school development plan and leads to thoughtful improvements because the need is identified by the staff.

13 Governors support the school very well. There is good financial management and a healthy understanding that the school cannot stand still even with high results but should be constantly moving forward. Key governors understand that the notion of best value is not solely related to money but includes other aspects such as looking at the school's performance in all areas of its life and seeking the views of all its partners.

The school provides a well-balanced curriculum, including extra activities.

14 The school values the importance of the curriculum in developing its pupils as well-balanced individuals, and care has been taken to maintain breadth as well as to continue to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. Central to this good curriculum is the role of the co-ordinators as described above. They ensure that each subject has its place, that what is required is taught and that development in pupils' experience, knowledge and understanding takes place from year to year. For example, co-ordinators interview pupils to check how secure their learning is. As a result, pupils do well in all subjects.

15 Teachers give a significant amount of time to the extra activities that add richness to the school life. Breadth of activity is felt to be important so that there is something to appeal to all of the pupils. There is an excellent range. Concerts and plays, sometimes for whole year groups, give pupils opportunities to enjoy performing music and drama. Clubs are well attended. The choir, for instance, has between 60 and 80 members; the running club has a similar number. French adds a European dimension to pupils' learning and art clubs satisfy pupils' creative needs. There are around a dozen different clubs or activities at any one time catering for about 12 to 80 pupils. Residential visits in Years 5 and 6 include sporting, cultural, historical and geographical activities that effectively extend pupils' learning in different environments.

Pupils are given many opportunities for their personal development. They enjoy coming to the school and learning.

16 Children have very positive attitudes to learning. They understand that to work hard and do their best is in their own interests, but also recognise that learning can be fun and they make the most of opportunities to enjoy their work, while still putting in the required amount of effort. They value the fact that teachers "are like normal people – like friends" and that they can tell teachers anything "because you can trust them". In lessons, pupils settle quickly to their activities and concentrate on their work. Teachers create opportunities in every lesson for pupils to work together in pairs or groups of different sizes, and pupils respond sensibly to this. They listen courteously to each other and respect what is said. Learning to appreciate and evaluate each other's writing helps pupils to develop a sensitivity to the impact of what is said or written that is in a critical form. Teachers also ensure that pupils can take some initiative for what they want to learn. For example, in history, pupils use books or computers to search for things of interest to them that are related to the overall topic.

17 Children are very enthusiastic about their school. They enjoy coming because they feel that there is plenty to do, everyone is friendly and it is easy to make friends. The things they do not like are quite minor, such as the school fence not being high enough to stop footballs going over the top. The School Council acts as a forum for pupils' views. Its representatives feel that their concerns are heard and their views respected. They consider together what they would like to see improve or be extended. These range from a swimming pool to the much more modest suggestions of racks for bikes and safe storage for netball posts. They willingly volunteer to make other pupils aware of the contents of their meetings through minutes posted on the notice-board or on the website.

18 School routines and the ordinary daily expectations create a safe and secure environment. Children say that there are not many 'rules' but they know how they are expected to behave in different situations. The school operates a family service at lunchtimes so that groups of children regularly sit down together at a table and older ones serve food and look after young ones. This is a lovely social occasion and adds to the children's personal and social development.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

19 The school has a very clear development plan and there are no other issues arising from the inspection for them to work on.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

23*

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

5

*Some of these lessons were not looked at long enough to be given grades and some were observations of support staff which again were too short to be graded.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	11	2				
Percentage	10	55	10				

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	254
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	23
Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	32
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	30	49	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	29	29
	Girls	44	40	44
	Total	71	69	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (85)	87 (81)	92 (92)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	24	29
	Girls	40	37	39
	Total	62	61	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (81)	77 (87)	86 (92)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	249	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	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: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	25.4

Education support staff: Y3– Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	528,263
Total expenditure	504,412
Expenditure per pupil	1814
Balance brought forward from previous year	60,420
Balance carried forward to next year	84,271

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	254
Number of questionnaires returned	135

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	28	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	30	0	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	34	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	56	9	1	0
The teaching is good.	64	33	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	39	11	0	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	33	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	18	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	47	10	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	67	30	1	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	37	0	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	33	3	1	10

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents felt that separate changing arrangements should be made for Year 6 pupils.