

INSPECTION REPORT

BOURTON MEADOW SCHOOL

Buckingham

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110397

Headteacher: Mrs Gill Race

Reporting inspector: Ms Vreta Bagilhole
17517

Dates of inspection: 4-5 November 2002

Inspection number: 246995

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Burleigh Piece Linden Village Buckingham
Postcode:	MK18 7HX
Telephone number:	(01280) 823374
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Ian Payne
Date of previous inspection:	24 November 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bourton Meadow is a large primary school in Buckingham with 542 pupils on roll, made up of a broadly equal number of boys and girls. The school is much bigger than other primary schools nationally. The school contains twenty classes for pupils from the reception year to Year 6. (At the time of the previous inspection there was also a Year 7). Socio-economic circumstances are favourable. Almost all of the pupils come from a white UK heritage and the rest come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. There are two pupils with English as an additional language who are at an early stage of English acquisition. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs (7.5% per cent) is well below the national average and there is one statemented pupil. There is a high rate of pupils who join the school other than at the usual time of first admission. This is largely because of people moving into the area. The leaving rate is low. Children enter the reception class in the year in which they are five. Most children have attended a local nursery or playgroup before moving to reception. The attainment of children on entry to the reception class is above average

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This school provides a high quality of education and performs very well in all aspects of its work. Leadership and management are excellent and the teaching is very good. Test results in 2002 do not reflect the current standards in the school. Inspectors found standards to be high in English and science and above average in mathematics. The school consistently achieves above the national average in the number of pupils attaining the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. All pupils benefit from what the school provides. They become very mature, self-assured and enthusiastic ambassadors for their school. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are high in English, science and music and above average in mathematics.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The quality of the curriculum is excellent.

What could be improved

- There are no major areas of the school's provision which require special attention to effect improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1997 and it has made very good improvement since then. Standards have been maintained in Years 3-6 and standards are higher for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Arrangements for marking pupils' work and the guardian and community scheme are now very strong. Pupils have sufficient access to the information technology resources to develop their independent learning skills across the curriculum and standards in the subject are now above average. The school is in a very good position to make further improvement.

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	B	A	B	C
mathematics	B	B	C	D
science	A	A	A	B

Key

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

National test results in 2002 show that standards for eleven-year-olds in English were above average and in science were well above average. Standards in mathematics were average. Standards in science were higher than those in schools with a similar intake of pupils. Those in English are broadly the same while those in mathematics are lower. These test results do not reflect the current standards in the school. This particular year did not attain such high results as the school has done over the last four years but pupils achieved well for their ability. Inspectors found that currently standards are high in English and science and above average in mathematics and pupils are doing very well. This is because of the very good teaching and planning and the high expectations of staff. Trends show that the performance of pupils exceeds the national average for their age group. The variation in 2002 is due to the ability of the year group. The school's very good assessment and tracking systems had identified that the 2002 cohort of eleven year olds contained a different spread of abilities to that normally expected and consequently these test results were no surprise. However, to be sure that it has not missed any areas of weakness the school has prioritised mathematics in this year's improvement plan. The tests for pupils aged seven in 2002 showed that standards were well above the national average and those of similar schools in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence agrees with this. Standards in music are high and pupils throughout the school explore and develop ideas in a variety of musical activities producing highly pleasing results. By the end of Year 6, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above average and show a good improvement from the last inspection. In all other subjects, standards are at least at the expected levels if not better. The children in reception make good progress and achieve above the expected levels for their age.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are eager to learn, enjoy their work and are very involved in the activities offered. They are proud of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are very well behaved nearly all the time. Any incidents are carefully recorded and dealt with very effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work and play with each other very well. They make good progress in their personal growth, confidence and independence as they move through the school. In Year 6 they benefit from outstanding opportunities to demonstrate leadership and responsibility.
Attendance	Excellent. Rates of attendance are consistently well above the national average. There is no unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good	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 and learning are very good. Pupils show a large amount of intellectual, physical and creative effort in their work and concentrate very well during lessons. Teaching in English is very good and teaching in mathematics and science is good throughout the school with a significant amount of very good teaching. There is some excellent teaching in English and music. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well. The main strength in teaching is the very high, but achievable, expectations which teachers have of the pupils. Teaching assistants provide very good support. Very good teaching was also observed in history, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school meets the needs of all pupils very well. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good and the highest attaining pupils are also very well challenged. In the reception class, teaching and learning are good. The teachers show a good knowledge and understanding in the way they present the curriculum for this age group and the children are interested and engaged in all the activities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent. There is a very rich, broad and balanced curriculum which includes extensive opportunities for activities outside of lessons and for educational visits.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school is constantly evaluating and improving the provision. Pupils know the targets they need to achieve in order to improve. All staff have a very good knowledge of individual pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils who need extra help in speaking English receive prompt and effective support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good and the provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Pupils are well prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Welfare, health and safety procedures are well organised. Arrangements to ensure that pupils play constructively at lunchtimes are excellent. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are very good and assessment systems are very well developed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The leadership team is highly professional, knowledgeable and effective in running and managing the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very supportive and receive a very good level of training. They are very active in development planning and shaping the direction for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school is very successful in identifying, monitoring and evaluating its performance. The school knows what its strengths and weaknesses are and how it can improve further.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is very efficiently run and it manages and uses its resources very well. Priorities for development are appropriately financed. Best value principles are applied very well to the purchase of goods and services.

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 child likes school and the school expects their child to work hard • Behaviour in the school is good and the school is helping their child become mature and responsible. • The school is well led and managed and the teaching is good. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school. 	<p>No major areas of concern but a few feel that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are not well informed on how child is getting on. • The school does not work closely with parents.

The inspection team agrees with the very positive views of the vast majority of parents. There have been a very small number of incidences where parents have been justified in feeling that they are not well informed or that the school does not work closely with them. The school does act to remedy this, but sometimes not immediately, particularly in an area where the school feels less secure.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are high in English, science and music and above average in mathematics.

1. By the age of eleven, standards are high in English, science and music and above average in mathematics. Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained in Years 3-6 and standards are higher for pupils in Years 1 and 2. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented very effectively and ICT is used well to improve pupils' skills in all classes. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, different ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language, make very good progress and are achieving the standards that they are individually capable of. This is because of the very good teaching and planning, rigorous assessment and tracking procedures and the challenging marking of work. Higher attaining pupils also do very well. The performance of boys and girls in all core subjects exceeds the national average for their age.

2. Standards in English are high throughout the school. The pupils' speaking and listening skills are well above average. Pupils listen intently to staff and other pupils and express ideas enthusiastically. The newest reception children are using language confidently. Pupils in Year 2 can discuss a humorous story and communicate ideas well. Older pupils have a good command of spoken English and are able to stand in front of the whole school and report in some detail on how and why the latest sports fixtures turned out as successfully as they did or to outline the latest charity initiatives. Pupils are very good readers and writers. Children in the reception class do well in communication, language and literacy and many exceed the expected levels by the time they begin Year 1. They confidently write sentences using capital letters and full stops. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read accurately and with increasing fluency and have formed clear views about the books they like to read. Pupils in Year 1 write sentences showing a good grasp of simple spelling. Higher attaining pupils often write over a page. In Year 2, pupils use a joined style of writing and write across a good range of writing styles. They write story settings, instructions for games and character profiles, describing the character of 'The Selfish Giant'. Pupils in Years 3-6 develop interesting ideas showing a richness in the language and vocabulary used. A pupil in Year 3 writes 'The tranquillity is like a golden butterfly's wings fluttering in the sky'. Year 4 pupils write in a journalistic report about a burglary in a sensational style and this style is extended in Year 6 by reporting on events such as the Lynmouth flood disaster. Pupils in Year 6 also prepare an interview with children on their first day of secondary school. Their writing is varied and interesting, conveying meaning clearly in a range of forms and often engages and sustains the reader's interest. The standard of handwriting and spelling is very good. Throughout the school, pupils plan their work very well and the final presentation is neat and of a good standard.

3. There are some good links with ICT and subjects such as science and history. The CD-Rom and Internet are well used for research. In ICT, pupils in Year 2 search a CD-Rom dictionary and use the index. They enter information on staying healthy. Year 3 send email and Year 4 report on the life and times of Henry VIII. Year 5 design and write a newspaper. Year 6 research information on Sutton Hoo and write a story for younger children. They record the plot of a well-known story as a time line. The children in reception listen to talking stories and read their reading scheme, making good progress in mouse control as they turn the pages.

4. Standards in mathematics are well above average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. The school has clear plans to ensure that standards rise

further. From the moment they enter reception, the children make good progress in their learning and achieve the expected levels by the end of the year, with many exceeding them. They have a good understanding of numbers to 10 and soon after joining the reception class they can count backwards from twenty and understand less and one more. At the beginning of Year 2, pupils are familiar with numbers up to 1000 and by the end of Year 2 they build on this knowledge and use it to investigate problems involving multiplication and division using decimal notation. They make good progress in shape, space and data handling. Pupils make good progress in Years 3-6 and by the age of eleven they attain above average standards. Higher attaining pupils do very well and achieve above the nationally expected levels. The standard of recording work in books is very good. By the end of Year 6, pupils are good at explaining their reasoning. Most pupils add, subtract and multiply decimals to two or three places and use formulae to calculate the area of a triangle. They have a good understanding of percentages and volume. They are competent in recognising the properties of angles and parallel lines and explain their reasoning clearly. They use ICT very well to present and interrogate information and to work out costs, displaying the information on graphs and charts. All groups of pupils are achieving well for their ability.

5. Standards in science are high at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In Year 1, pupils are aware of the importance of light and sound in the world around them. Pupils in Year 2 can explain about the importance of vitamins to keep us healthy and predict if plants will stay alive with no water but with light. Pupils in Year 4 know that some materials are better insulators than others and that a ski jacket traps the heat. They make insulation jackets with various materials and find out which one will keep you warmest. They make very good links with mathematics when they draw graphs to predict the temperatures. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, ask questions and decide how to find answers. By the end of Year 6, pupils record results and plan and carry out their own investigations. Pupils demonstrate an increasing knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. They use a spreadsheet to show how the length of an elastic band changes when increasing force is put on it. They know that weight is a force and is measured in newtons. Higher attaining pupils plan their own investigations to try to stop food from going mouldy and how they can preserve food, writing tables for the results. Lower attaining pupils think of different ways to measure the strength of a magnet.

6. There has been very good improvement in music since the last inspection and standards are now high. Singing is of a very high standard and the whole school sings the school song with gusto in assembly. The large choir practises, rehearses and presents high quality performances, singing songs such as 'I'm a drop in the ocean' with clear diction, control of pitch and a sense of phrase and musical expression. The orchestra accompanies the singing very well and consists of a very good range of instruments such as the cello, violin, clarinet and flute. One lesson was observed during the inspection. This was in Year 5 where pupils displayed a high quality appreciation of music. They identify the contrast in melody between two different extracts of music and identify when the music starts to feel sad. They identify the melody shape in the song 'Merely Meandering'. They sing the melody with many pupils playing instruments and can explain tempo and pitch. There is some use of ICT. For example, pupils in Year 4 compose a simple tune. Music makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Leadership and management are excellent.

7. The leadership and management groups in this school lead and manage the school very efficiently promoting high standards and effective teaching and learning. The headteacher and the two deputies provide very strong, knowledgeable and effective

leadership and have a very clear vision for the work and development of the school. They are rigorous and very active in all areas of school life and have successfully ensured that all staff have the highest expectations possible to achieve the best quality of education. They are very well supported by staff, governors and parents. Since the previous inspection, the school has further refined the process of analysing its performance and evaluating the progress each pupil makes, resulting in the high quality of education seen during this inspection.

8. There is a very good annual school improvement planning cycle and short and long term priorities are identified in the school improvement plan. Strategic new initiatives for this year include clear plans for improving the provision in mathematics and ICT. A management group of staff from each year group has been set up to develop pupils' thinking skills and ideas will be fed back into the planning. This is already showing a positive impact on pupils' work in science. Analysis of all data available to the school is very rigorous and used to highlight aspects for improvement. The school makes very good use of new technology to support administration and is using data very well to set and review targets. The school has also developed its own manual system for recording the progress of pupils' performance in all classes and teachers have copies of what has been achieved. All these strategies take place within a very effective system for the performance management of teachers and training needs are carefully identified. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning is very good and is led by the school improvement plan. Mathematics will be monitored in all classes this year and the leadership group will also monitor the impact of the thinking skills initiative.

9. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well, ensuring that the school is run efficiently. It plays an active role in the daily life of the school and encouraged the school to apply successfully for the Investors in People Award. The governors have a very clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Since the last inspection, the governors have formed a more comprehensive committee structure and as a result their monitoring of the school's work is more effective. They describe the headteacher as a 'leader of leaders'. New governors are able to benefit from a very comprehensive governor induction package.

10. The school is also a provider of graduate teacher training. The induction of staff new to the school and effectiveness of provision for training of new teachers is very good. Some of the newly qualified teachers received their training at this school. One of the deputy headteachers is responsible for this area and she and the advanced skills teachers provide a very good programme of mentoring and support.

11. The provision for special educational needs is managed very well and is supported by a knowledgeable governor. There are regular reviews of pupils' progress and good involvement of parents in statutory reviews. All statutory requirements are met. The provision for English as an additional language is managed well. Leadership and management are also good in the Foundation Stage.

Teaching and learning are very good.

12. There has been an improvement in teaching since the previous inspection and it is now very good. There is excellent teaching in English and music. All pupils learn well and make very good progress. The main strengths in learning are the way pupils take delight and interest in acquiring new knowledge and skills. They are able to sustain concentration and think and learn for themselves.

13. In the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are good. Consistent messages are given to the children and reinforced in a friendly but firm way. Learning is assessed well and

consolidated and supported effectively. The children are fully involved with activities and the teachers show a good understanding of the needs of children of this age enabling them to work well together and to be happy and feel very well cared for.

14. In English, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are applying the literacy hour very well. The basic skills of literacy are taught with a rigorous attention to ensuring that pupils acquire the necessary skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing. All ages and abilities have suitably challenging work. Lessons are managed very well and very good relationships are established so that pupils work purposefully. Teaching assistants provide very good support in lessons, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. There are many very good or excellent lessons, which are a significant factor in the high standards achieved. Setting arrangements in Year 6 also make sure that each group of pupils make the best progress possible. An excellent English lesson for Year 6 boys uses poetry to explain the meaning of kennings and how the language used can create atmosphere. Even within a setting arrangement the needs of different abilities are very well met. In an excellent lesson in Year 2, vibrant teaching uses questioning to inspire the pupils to develop a wide range of vocabulary. Pupils can find synonyms such as terrible and horrible. They use description such as 'One sunny day I met a fox in the deep dark wood'.

15. Teaching and learning are good in mathematics. There are a significant number of very good lessons. Teachers apply the National Numeracy Strategy very well in all classrooms. As a result, the pupils are confident and well motivated. The basic skills of numeracy are taught very well. A setting arrangement for pupils in Years 3-6 is having a good impact on the standards the pupils are achieving and ensures that all pupils achieve well for their ability. Teachers have a very good knowledge of mathematics, the programmes of study and the National Numeracy Strategy, and these strengths have had a major impact on standards. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and standards. They direct the pupils through a challenging series of problems and the pupils work willingly and productively. Lessons are very well planned, well paced and effective and introductions are clear.

16. In science, the quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some very good teaching in Year 4 where the teacher demonstrates a very good subject knowledge. Planning is very good and experimental and investigative science is taught very well. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that a very good range is covered across all aspects and challenging marking is used to help the pupils improve. Pupils are encouraged to develop their thinking skills and there is plenty of reinforcement to check their understanding. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and the pupils are encouraged to use scientific terms accurately. Teachers give very clear demonstrations of the tasks such as how to use a pipette to test viscous liquids.

17. In music, one teacher with specialist knowledge takes a number of year groups. She has an excellent subject knowledge, which she uses to build a high quality of appreciation of music in the pupils. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils explain their feelings after listening to a piece of music and identify the parts played by the cello, flute and violin. They make very good progress in identifying how the melody changes and can explain tempo and pitch.

18. Very good teaching and learning were also observed in history, ICT and PSHE. In a Year 3 history lesson, the teacher clearly demonstrated the importance of note taking and how to scan for information. This enabled the pupils to acquire new skills and knowledge about Queen Victoria and make good progress in their learning. In a Year 6 ICT lesson the teacher gave a very good demonstration, using a smart board on how to make an Action Button in a PowerPoint presentation and led the learning through at a brisk and challenging

pace. Very good relationships are established in PSHE. Teachers show great sensitivity but are also rigorously challenging.

19. All teachers and members of support staff provide a very good level of support that effectively contributes to the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. Sessions at the end of lessons are well used to check pupils' understanding and to present further challenge. This helps to ensure that all groups of pupils make the maximum progress that they are capable of. Marking is very good and has significantly improved since the previous inspection. There are clear and challenging comments on how pupils' work could be improved and a marking code is used consistently throughout the school and displayed in classrooms. The teachers set homework regularly.

The quality of the curriculum is excellent.

20. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school are excellent. It fully meets statutory curricular requirements, including religious education, PSHE and citizenship. The curriculum is inclusive and ensures equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. There are very effective strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. All ages and groups of pupils, including those having special educational needs, are provided with a broad range of worthwhile opportunities. Parents are extremely happy with the curriculum provided and describe the opportunities as 'brilliant'. The curriculum prepares pupils well for living in a diverse society.

21. The curriculum is very well planned and the school makes very good use of new technology to ensure that the planning is as effective as possible. The schemes used are from a variety of sources and are altered or extended as the school's expectations of many programmes of study are above those required in relation to pupils' chronological age. The curriculum is enriched by a planned series of termly year group focus weeks when a unit of work is studied in more depth. This time is devoted to the arts, humanities and practical science. During the inspection the focus by Year 3 was on the Victorians and was very well planned to develop literacy skills as well as history. There is also an annual school focus week. Last year it was entitled 'Around the World' which was very popular with pupils and parents.

22. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. These pupils are provided with individual education plans with specific targets to guide their development. The pupils know their targets well. Support in class is planned so that all pupils take part in the main activities. The school meets the requirements of the new Code of Practice for pupils identified with special educational needs. The school is at present developing a new policy for including physically disabled pupils.

23. The provision for PSHE and citizenship is very good. This includes sex education and attention to drug misuse. The school has devised its own scheme for all year groups. There is a school council, which meets regularly to discuss school issues. Year 6 pupils attend circle time in other year groups and all Year 6 have a responsibility through the guardian and community scheme such as helping the younger pupils. There are good links with the local community, which make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. There is an excellent programme of visits and visitors to the school, which greatly enhance learning opportunities. There are visits from the local religious leaders, community police, the school nurse, visiting artists, authors, historical groups and dancers. The fire service, mounted police and St John's Ambulance visit each year. All year groups have a minimum of two trips per year to a wide range of places, including outdoor centres, historic houses and museums. The programme includes residential visits for Year 6. Excellent opportunities

exist for activities outside of lesson. The school has a wide range of well-attended school clubs at lunchtime and after school. All staff participate in at least one activity per week. Clubs include football, netball, French, orchestra, choir, gardening, drama and sewing. The school has much success also in local sports competitions. As the parents say 'Bourton Meadow is always doing something'. All these aspects and the rich curriculum provided make a significant contribution to the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

24. There are no major areas of the school's provision which require special attention to effect improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. There are no major areas where the school should improve further. However, an action plan is required following an inspection and the school should send in its place its school improvement plan.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	542
Number of questionnaires returned	266

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	42	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	52	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	60	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	58	8	2	4
The teaching is good.	42	53	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	57	12	2	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	41	1	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	42	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	32	54	10	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	53	42	3	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	47	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	47	5	2	14