INVESTIGATING HOW TEACHERS AND PARENTS' COMMUNICATION AFFECT PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WESTERN AREA URBAN DISTRICT.

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Abstract

The specific focus of this research is to uncover the extent to which teachers and parents' communication affect pupils' academic performance in public primary schools in western area urban district of Sierra Leone. The study targets an estimated number of (60): of which parents, teachers, and pupils selected from (5) primary schools in the western area urban. A purposive sampling technique was used to examine the total population of parents, teachers, and pupils in the assessment. The outcomes of the study indicate that the communication between parents and teachers affects the student's performance. School administrators and stakeholders should create a platform for effective communication between pupils, parents and teachers. The study's findings also showed that majority of teachers' poor communication made them uncooperative with pupils' parents. Teachers should guide pupils in terms of discipline and punctuality so that pupils can achieve good performance. The study also, revealed that teachers should help pupils with problems solving instead of punishing them. Parents must check the exercise books of their children so as to know the progress of the pupils and help them to do their homework. For increase in pupils' academic performances, the study recommends that government and other stakeholders must ensure that all necessary equipment like books, chalk, desks, good classrooms, and toilets are provided for the comforts of pupils and teachers. The government should make sure that teachers get their rights on time like salaries, teaching materials and motivation. This will give them confidence to teach well and increase performance.

Keywords: Investigating, Teachers Parents, Communication, Affect Pupils' Academic Performance, Public Primary Schools.

1. Introduction

The No Child Left behind Act (Tittle 1 part A) of the US Government emphasized the significance of parental involvement in children's academics instructing schools to lacking support were struggling Saultz, A., et al (2019). Activities that require the minimum involvement should best describe type 1. Type 1 activities include parents ensuring that Pupils attend school and are ready to learn Xiong, et al (2023). Epstein's second type includes all forms of communication between the school and parents Lareau, Melnikova, J. (2024).

According to Betancourt, C. (2022), parents' best support their children's educational success by having home and school communication. The theory therefore provides a caring educational environment and illustrates how this environment can improve academic excellence, good communication and productive interactions. The model indicates that frequent parental contacts, engagements, and interactions with their children would build healthy behaviors, reduce aggression through discussion, and uplift their self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence in all their endeavors hence shaping them historically for a hopeful future. Engage in regular two-way communication involving student academic achievement and various school activities Coleman, J. S. (2018).

Due to the pressure from administration applied by partially funding schools for successful parental involvement programs Kaptich, et al (2019) and adoption of multiple reforms that incorporate parental involvement as one of their integral parts, schools across the United States have been working on designing and implementing various parental involvement initiatives in hope of improving student academic performance.

In Nigeria, Fajoju, et al (2016) correlate parental involvement to academic achievement of primary using ex-post facto research design. In their study, they establish a significant influence of parents being involved and often communicating with teachers on the pupils' academic achievements. However, they attribute this influence to only affecting three core subjects hence; Mathematics, English Language and Science. The involvement of parents getting in their children's school work through frequent communication with the teachers was therefore highly recommended. The government of Kenya has remained committed to providing quality education and training for all Kenyans and it views education as a human right. In 1990, the government committed itself to The Education for All (EFA) initiatives that were discussed at UNESCO World Conference at Jomtien, Thailand. Various strategies have since been put in place to achieve these goals. For example, in 2003 the government of Kenya re-introduced free and compulsory education in pursuit of Universal Education for All attained in 2015, Muthoka, S. M. (2021).

In the Vision 2030, Kenya will provide a globally competitive quality Education, through training and research for development. The overall goal for 2012 was to reduce illiteracy by increasing access to education, improving the transition rate from primary to secondary and raising the quality and relevance of education Kaptich, et al (2019).

Akello, G. R. (2020), conducted a study to investigate the influence of parental involvement on academic performance of pre-school children in Emgwen division, Nandi Central District, Kenya. Majority of the respondents sometimes communicated with their pre-school children about their school progress. It was established that children whose parents communicate with, perform better in academics than those whose parents do not. The study concluded that only a few parents' responses showed high aspiration on their children's academic achievement. Thus, the study recommends that parents should be sensitized on the importance of pre-school children education so as to understand their role and involvement in the children's academic performance. Every school should be mandated to organize general parents' meetings to enable the parents to meet teachers and discuss problems affecting their children's academic performance. These parents therefore should be advised on the need to motivate their children to work harder.

Cultivating the teacher-parent relationship is also considered vital to the development of team work Pelemo, P. E. K. (2022). Unfortunately, many teachers are not specifically trained in the skills they need, to communicate effectively with parents, Gisewhite, R. A., et al (2021). School communication practices are so fundamental to involving families in the education process. Therefore teacher preparation and professional development programs should actively promote the development of communication skills for teachers Cadag, C. E. (2024). Teachers strive to establish partnerships with parents to support student learning. Strong communication is fundamental to this partnership and to building a sense of community between home and school. In these changing times, teachers must therefore continue to develop and expand their skills in order to maximize effective communication with parents. Good communication between parents and teachers has many benefits. When parents and teachers share information, children learn more and parents and teachers feel more supported. Good communication can help create positive feelings between teachers and parents.

According to Bond, A., et al (2024) communication is the major reason for lack of parental involvement, especially the lack of clear straight forward and helpful information. Powers, B. R. (2023) found that most communication that occurs between parents and school is often from school to parents. Such communication only takes place in situations where pupils of those parents have behavioral or learning problems or with parents who have shown interest in helping their children Kaptich, P., et al (2019).

According to González-Calvo, G., & Fernández-Balboa, J. M. (2018) the relationships between parents and teachers take a deep understanding, time, vigilance, and desire by both parties to bring together the families, schools and community as whole. They all identify needs and most importantly, the abundance of both soft and hard resources to support the one unifying mission for all – that involves, support for the pupils aspirations through successful education. Parental involvement in the academic performance of their children has observably ripped good results. An improvement in the class average performance for Adukrom Methodist Primary School pupils in Ghana was seen to have improved from 68% to 79% with majority of teachers attributing this improvement to parental participation in the children activities at school. The fact that parents kept contact with the teachers in school as concerns of their children academics was a boost to most of the children putting in more efforts to achieve better results Thabologo, F., & Kesianye, S. K. (2024), concluded that teachers' partnership with parents was influential in leading to better pupil's performance in classroom.

A study conducted in USA, sought to evaluate the efficacy of teacher communication with parents and Pupils as a means of increasing student engagement Hughes, E. K. (2021). It estimated

the causal effect of teacher communication by conducting a randomized field experiment in which children were assigned to receive a daily phone call from home and a text/written message during a mandatory summer school program. It was found out that frequent teacher-parent communication immediately increased student engagement as measured by homework completion rates, on-task behavior and class participation. On average, teacher-parent communication increased the odds ratio; Pupils completed their homework by 42% and decreased instances in which teachers had to redirect pupils' attention to the task at hand by 25%.Class participation rates among 6th grade pupils increased by 49%, while communication appeared to have a small negative effect on 9th grade pupils' willingness to participate. Drawing upon surveys and interviews with participating teachers and Pupils, there were three primary mechanisms through which communication likely affected engagement: stronger teacher-student relationships, expanded parental involvement, and increased student motivation.

Sheldon, S. B. (2002) suggested that improved communication between the school and the home strengthens social networks, enables access to information and material, allows parents to appreciate their own essential roles and personal efficacy and motivates them to continue their own education. Similarly, it enhances the contact with other parents experiencing comparable problems, which is beneficial. On the side of teachers, they observed that teachers feel more positive about teaching the school in which there is effective communication. Schools and teachers know that good communication with parents is an important part of their job. Teachers therefore need to know about the children's families, language, and culture in order to help them learn. Parents benefit because they learn more about what goes on in school and can encourage learning at home. Most importantly, children benefit through improved communication because contact between families and school helps children learn and succeed. However, parent-teacher communication can also be difficult, especially when parents feel uncomfortable in school, can't speak English well, or come from different cultural backgrounds than teachers. Fortunately, both parents and teachers have developed ways to make communication easier. Some parents might have had a bad experience in school when they were children. Other parents might have not felt welcomed by the school or teacher. Nevertheless, there are things that can be done to help overcome these barriers Garcia, A. S., et al (2025).

Kaptich, P., et al (2019) observed that concerning a survey done in United States, most parents did not communicate with the school during the year and neither did they have a meeting or conference with teachers over the year. Communication serves as the medium of information sharing between two or among many involved parties MASSUCCO, J. (2020), parental involvement framework communication between the three overlapping spheres plays a fundamental role towards student's achieving optimal learning outcomes. A case study conducted by Mahuro, G. M., & Hungi, N. (2016) on parental participation in Iganga and Mayuge district in Uganda revealed that parental involvement such as providing conducive environment at home, checking student's progress record and school random visits significantly increased student's numeracy and literacy by 6 and 15 units of measure. This finding was concurrent with a research done by Abuya, B. A., & Muhia, N. (2025) in Kenya which showed that parental participation by engaging and creating an open communication with teenage school going children significantly improved their learning outcomes.

Teenage children became more aspired in education, developed open communication and were able to make critical decisions.

In a recent study, Siebert, W. S., et al (2018) in examining student feedback based on parent-teacher communication, found that having bi-weekly pupil feedbacks using a special schoolwork scorecard behavior of the pupils led to an improvement mathematics performance by the pupils and further communication of the same by teachers to the parents further large mathematics ripped benefits for the young left-behind children. This is because they worked harder to achieve better results knowing that the same would be communicated to their parents Zhou, X., et al (2024). From the foregoing discourse, the authors developed this study to establish the extent to which parent-teacher communication influence academic performance among pupils.

2. Methodology

The study used the survey design as it entailed the collection of qualitative and quantitative data from the various respondents at the same time. This study adopted descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is a plan, a roadmap and blueprint strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research objectives; it is the heart of any study Conteh, S., & Akuntansi, M. (2021). The study used this design because it looks at the phenomena, events and issues the way they are Didham, R. K., et al (2020). This design is used because it examine the problem at hand thoroughly to define it, clarify it and obtain pertinent information that can be of use to people in the education sector. The design is good in generalization of the results and it is easy to administer and record answers.

2.1. Data Collection Methods and Instruments:

Questionnaires were administered to 10 pupils, 40 parents and 10 teachers. This means the sample constituted 60 respondents. This instrument was used basically due to its capacity to collect a lot of information from a large number of respondents and within a short period of time. The instrument is useful because of its ability to collect the data beyond the physical reach of the observer Calloway, E. E., et al (2022). A questionnaire is essentially a structured technique for collecting primary data. It is generally a series of written questions for which the respondents have to provide the answers Kapur, R. (2018).

A questionnaire survey was used to collect primary data from NSSF mid-level employees during the study. The questionnaire comprised both restricted or closed and unrestricted or open ended questions. The reasons for using open and closed ended questionnaire was to enable the coding process of data in the SPSS program. Questionnaires were pre-tested before being used. The aim was to test whether the questions were understood by the respondents to achieve the research objectives, to test whether the questions are relevant and adequate, to test whether the wording of questions is clear and suit to the understanding of the respondents with different background and to develop appropriate procedure for administering the instrument with reference to field conditions Haq, Z. U., et al (2023). Also, pre testing was assessing whether the questions are clear, specific, answerable, interconnected and substantially relevant Şeker Akın, V. (2023). The exercise helped to fine-tune the questionnaire. Some ambiguous questions were removed and others were rephrased. After a pre-test, questionnaires were revised; some questions were rephrased in order to make them more understandable. After revision, questionnaires were

duplicated ready for use. The time for pre-testing was about 20 minutes per respondents.

Questionnaires were administered to establish rapport and to explain the purpose of the study as well as to clarify the meaning of the items that may not be clearly as noted by Beatty, P. C., et al (2019). Misra, M., & Moetia, M. (2023) defines an interview as a tool, "whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena". An interview is a data collection technique that involves oral questioning of respondents either individually or as a group. The answers to the question posed during an interview can be recorded by writing them down either during the interview itself or immediately after the interview or by tape recording the responses or by a combination of both. Interviews can be conducted with varying degrees of flexibility as described by Bay Brix Nielsen, et al (2024). Chen, M. S., & Eweje, G. (2020) asserts that, an interview is regarded as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest and emphasizes the social situations of research data. It is a research instrument for data collection that involves a collection of data through verbal interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. Hellström, L., & Beckman, L. (2021) argues that, it enables participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and express how they regard the situation from their own point of view and it is associated with very high response rate. Raya, S. T. (2018) considers that the general interview guide approach is useful as it 'allows for in-depth probing while permitting the interviewer to keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the aim of the study'. Therefore, in this study in-depth interviews were conducted and the answers were recorded immediately by writing down for further use in the analysis.

Another method used to gather information from the pupils on the challenges they faced as they learnt mathematics was by using a focus group discussion. A focus group is a method whereby a group of six to eight people are brought together to discuss a given event or phenomenon in which they have a shared experience Gammie, E., et al (2017). The researcher decided to use a focus group discussion because it is a technique that can be used where individual interviews are too time consuming and too difficult to arrange. It is an economical method of collecting a lot of verbal data. Among its strengths are providing rich and in-depth data and allows the researcher to produce concentrated data on a precise topic Brinkmann, S. (2022). The researcher conducted the focus group discussion with the participants using an interview guide with semi-structured questions. The researcher facilitated the interaction and let the questions guide the discussion by allowing a flexible allocation of time to participants. Hence the researcher was able to explore new directions relevant to the study and allowed a more fluid interaction between the participants as they were given the opportunity to elaborate on each other's answers. A dynamic interaction among the participants was encouraged for the purpose of stimulating their thoughts and all participants, including the researcher had an opportunity to ask questions.

Various methods of data analysis can be used by researchers when they are conducting the research. However, based on the nature of this study and the type of data collected are the major aspects to consider during the time of data analysis Mukherjee, A. A., et al (2022). Qualitative techniques begin by identifying themes in the data and relationships between themes. The researcher used qualitative technique to analyze data in the form of logical statements and arguments. This is because qualitative research helps people to see the world view of studies concerned.

The researcher used qualitative to analyze data, whereby SPSS software package version 20 was used, percentages, tables, charts and histograms was used to summarize the amount of data obtained from the field. Computer program software called Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used. The reason of using SPSS is just because SPSS is a large and powerful general purpose statistical package with excellent data management facilities and high quality graphics Mertler, C. A., et al (2021). Editing was done so as to eliminate errors that might happen during field data collection and also to identify any inconsistencies in data collection. It is also important to edit data in order to avoid entering wrong data into the computer software since when wrong data are processed, even the end result was wrong (Al-Shallakh *et al.,* 2021). Besides coding is the process of condensing data into smaller units through creation of categories and concepts from data Ji, S., et al (2024). Validity states whether is the instrument is capable of measuring what is accurate, effective and efficient Arar, M. (2024). This was achieved through setting standards on constructing questionnaires and interview related to the researcher's objectives and questions. In this study, interview and questionnaires was generated in conjunctions with the researcher. This ensures that the interview guides and questionnaires focused on the topic under investigation and the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the respondents and issues of concerned were resolved satisfactorily. The procedures of interview and questionnaire were explained to the respondents. Lastly, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, which in turn encouraged frankness during the interview.

Besides that, the type of data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentary sources are valid and reliable. The validity and reliability of data was based on the fact that, documentary data were obtained from the already worked data available in schools and those data from the primary source (from pupils). Data from questionnaires will supplement gaps that were occurred due to improper recording of data in documents, since questionnaires allow a particular person to explain what exactly he/she perceives. On the other hand, interviews provide reliable data because they draw data directly from one to be interviewed expressing his/her ideas. All these techniques improved the quality of data and hence its reliability. The above steps helped to ensure that the multiple sources of data collection such as literature, interviews and questionnaires were conducted under conditions and in an environment acceptable to the respondents and therefore ensured that the process and findings are trustworthy and valid. The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were ensured so that they enabled to provide information for use strictly for the purpose of the study. A rapport with the respondents was successfully established during the preliminary fieldwork study. The relationship of trust with the respondents was built, the credibility of the study was well be reinforced which was ensured that the discussion level to be high are necessary and relevant to the study.

Objectives of the Study

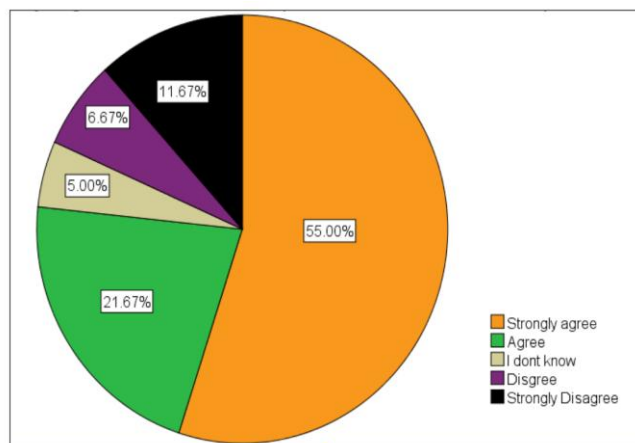The Study was guided by the following Research objectives:
1. Examine the Communication level between Parents and Teachers on Pupil's Academic Performance in Western Area Urban District.

2. Assess the Academic Performance of Pupils in Primary Schools in Western Area Urban District`
3. Determine the Reasons leading to Pupils' Poor Academic performance in Schools in Western Area Urban District

Research Object 1

Examine the level of Communication between Parents and Teachers on Pupil's Academic Performance in Western Area Urban District.
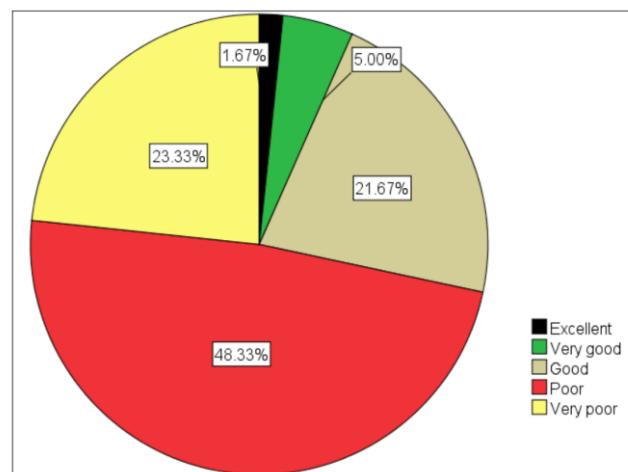
Figure 1.

Source: Research Data (2024)

From figure 1 above, shows the communication between parents and teachers on pupils' academic performance and its' provides the following data: (55%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the communication between parents and teachers affects the students' academic performance, while approximately (22%) of the respondents agreed with the above given scenario. However, (5%) of the respondents indicated I don't know whether the communication between parents and teachers affects pupils' academic performance in primary schools in the Western Area Urban District. Notwithstanding, approximately (12%) of the respondents strongly disagree that communication between parents and Pupils affects the students' academic performance and approximately (7%) of the respondents disagree with the above opinion.

The findings have shown that the majority of the respondents (77%) strongly agreed that communication between parents and teachers affects the student's performance. However, the minority (19%) strongly disagrees that communication in the above given scenario is important. The study by Adem, S. (2023) established the fact that communication between teachers and parents on the student's school activities improves Pupils' performance because in case the student misbehaves in school, the information can readily be available to parents, and therefore chances are high that a student will live up to his/her school obligation. The goal of the study was to determine how well students performed in class. The question asked about the academic performance of your school's students over the previous five years.

Research Object 2

Academic Performance of Pupils in Primary Schools in Western Area Urban District
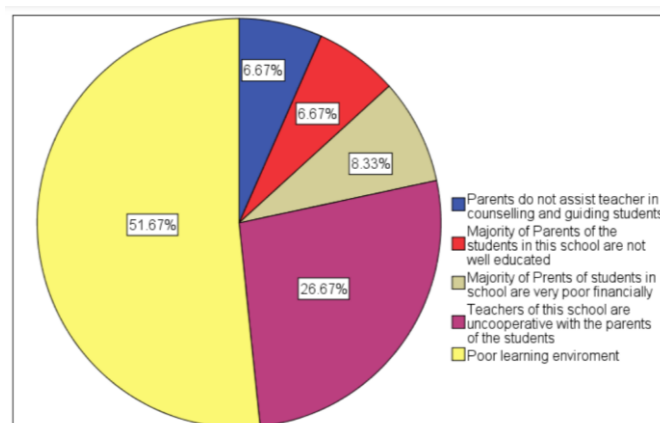
Figure 2.

Source: Research Data (2024)

The Summarized findings shown in the Figure 2 above, indicated that (48%) of the respondents had very poor performance, (23%) of the respondents had poor performance, (22%) of the respondents had good performance, (5%) of the respondents had very good performance and lastly (2%) of the respondents had excellent performance. From the above summarized results it can be said that, the majority had poor performance by (71%) of the respondents indicated that they had poor results and the minority by (27%) stated they had good results while (2%) had excellent results in their performance. Thus, it can be argued that the poor performances by pupils are as a result of the stunts performances at school which continued unchecked and also most schools lacked effective communication between parents and teachers. Because of these, other elements like parental income and educational attainment have become irrelevant in the Western Areas Urban District.

Research Object 2

Reasons leading to Pupils' Poor Academic performance in Schools in Western

Area Urban District

Figure 3.

Source: Research Data (2024)

Figure 3 showed the rates of respondents' reactions to the statement, Reasons Leading to Pupils' Poor Academic Performance in Schools: approximately (52%) of the respondents affirmed that pupils have poor learning environments and,

approximately (27%) of the respondents stated that teachers were uncooperative with the pupils' parents. Moreover, (8%) of the respondents indicated that majority of the parents of pupils in school are very poor financially, while approximately (7%) of the respondents indicated that pupils in these schools are not well educated, and also, another approximately (7%) of the respondents confirmed that parents do not assist teachers in counseling and guiding pupils. Thus, most of the respondents (59%) stated that there are poor learning environments in primary schools in the Western Area Urban District.

3. Results and Discussion

This study used stratified random sampling to ensure that the two (2) zones in the western area urban are all represented. Therefore, stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques was used to select the primary school in the Eastern and Western area of Freetown from which data were collected from pupils, parents and teachers. Schools from each zone had the same chance of being selected. The remaining schools were to be used for pre testing of this research and were not included in the research study. According to Nanjundeswaraswamy, T. S., & Divakar, S. (2021) a sample size for descriptive study should be between 10 percent to 20 percent of the population. Ten (10) pupils were selected from the selected primary schools, through simple random sampling techniques; also forty (40) parents were selected from the community teachers association (CTA) through simple random sampling techniques, and ten teachers were purposively selected from the selected schools, giving a total of sixty (60) respondents from each school, the number of schools selected from the two zones (East and West) was five (5), thus the respondents for the each zone is 30 (30 x 2). Therefore the population for this study is 300 subjects and a sample size of 60: Re (20% of 300; the sample size for this study is 60 subjects).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The results reveal that the majority of the respondents agree that the communication between parents and teachers affects the student's performance. This implies that communication between teachers and parents on the pupils school activities improves their performance because, in case the student misbehaves in school, the information can readily be available to parents, and therefore chances are high that the pupil will live up to his/her school obligation. On the overall academic performance of pupils over the last five years, the data revealed that majority had poor performance .This implies that majority of Pupils had lacked good communication between teachers and parents and pupils activities at school went on unchecked. Other factors such as income of parents and level of education do not play apart in primary schools in western area urban. The study's findings also showed that the majority of respondents claimed that their poor communication made them uncooperative with their Pupils' parents.

Recommendations

School Administrators, parents and Stakeholders should ensure that there are improvements in the academic performance of pupils and they should affirm that there is a platform for effective communication between pupils, parents, and teachers. The study's findings also showed that the majority of respondents claimed that their poor communication made them uncooperative with their pupils' parents. School Administrators and Stakeholders in education should improve communication between parents and teachers. Teachers must work hard so that pupils understand what

they have been taught to get good performance. Teachers should guide pupils in terms of discipline and punctuality so that Pupils can achieve good performance. Teachers should help pupils with problems instead of punishing them. As for parents, they must guide pupils so that they can perform well. Parents must check the exercise books so as to know the progress of the Pupils and help them to do their homework.

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