

INSPECTION REPORT

St. Robert's Catholic Primary School

Harrogate

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121642

Headteacher: M. Benson

Reporting inspector: S. Dobson
18074

Dates of inspection: 25-27th September 2000

Inspection number: 224455

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4-11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ainsty Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A.J. Kerr

Date of previous inspection: April 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Roberts School serves members of the Catholic parishes of St. Robert and St. Aelred in Harrogate. It is a slightly larger than average primary school having 264 pupils on roll. The school has a below average percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and a slightly above average percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The number of pupils on the register of pupils with special needs is about average. On entry to school the attainment of children is as expected for their age with a significant number of them having good language skills. However, there are some children who have limited learning and social skills on entry to school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school which is well led and managed. The headteacher gives very good leadership and is supported very well by the deputy head. Pupils make good progress in all subjects and in their personal development and they reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2. The standard of teaching is predominantly good and the school gives pupils a well-structured curriculum. The school has improved well since the last inspection in 1996 and now gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school helps all pupils to achieve good standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2 and they also reach good standards in a broad range of other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make good and often very good progress.
- The school supports pupils well in developing positive attitudes towards themselves and others and towards learning. Good personal development is a feature of the school.
- The school delivers a broad and well-balanced curriculum which equips pupils well for the next stages of their education.
- The school is well led and managed and is well placed to improve further.
- The school cares for its pupils very well.

What could be improved

- The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage could be improved by making better provision for their education outdoors and by offering additional stimulating areas for their work in the classroom.
- The role of the curriculum co-ordinators could be further developed in order that they are equipped to gather information about standards more systematically and thereby make a greater contribution to school improvement.
- The school's arrangements for the marking of pupils' work could be altered in order that the marking gives pupils clearer written advice on how to improve.

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

The things that the school does well far outweigh the areas for improvement.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996 and improvement since then has been good overall. The school improvement plan is now an effective document which leads development and sets criteria for the evaluation of success. This has been particularly successful in leading curriculum development but there is a need to ensure that all the issues contained in it are important ones. The school has improved well in the teaching of skills, knowledge and concepts within and across subjects. Schemes of work are fully in place to support pupils' progress. Regular assessment now informs the planning of the curriculum though the marking of work could be improved. Progress in improving assessment has been good. Other good features of the school have been maintained. In addition, there is a much more effective management team and a greater emphasis on team responsibility for development and this shared responsibility is of great benefit to the school. The quality of provision for pupils under five has also

improved. Design technology has improved from unsatisfactory to good both in standards achieved and the quality of the curriculum. The school has good capacity to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	A	A	B
Mathematics	A	A	A	B
Science	B	A	A	B

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

Baseline assessment indicates that children achieve as expected for their age on entry to school. The standards achieved in tests in all three core subjects are consistently good. This is also reflected in pupils' classwork. The school sets appropriate targets for improvement, but reflects the ability of each cohort in realistic but nevertheless demanding targets. The school has attempted many ways to raise the standard of writing in Key Stage 1 in particular, as whilst this is better than the national average, the school still considers results could be better. Inspection evidence suggests that the school gives the pupils in Key Stage 1 a broad range of opportunities to write for a good range of purposes and the quality of writing is generally good. However, this means that less time is spent focused on the type of writing which is often tested at the end of Key Stage 1. There are no obvious patterns of underachievement of boys or girls. Pupils on the school's register of special educational needs make good progress and achieve good standards for their capabilities. Pupils who are particularly talented make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They come to school happily and they are ready to work. They are mostly enthusiastic about their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The vast majority of pupils behave very well both in the classrooms and at other times. Even the youngest pupils have very quickly learnt how to behave well. In some classes, the immature behaviour of a small minority of pupils gives teachers a cause for concern.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. The school encourages independence and almost all of the pupils take responsibility for others and show initiative when things need to be done.
Attendance	Attendance levels are slightly above average and there are no unauthorised absences. Pupils are punctual at the start of day and to lessons.

Most of the pupils are enthusiastic and proud to be members of the school. They show respect for the school, the teachers and each other and maintain a good sense of fun and enjoyment. In this atmosphere they are able to get the best from what the school offers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
24 lessons seen	Good	Good	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.

The teaching of both English and mathematics is almost always good. Lessons are well structured, move at a challenging pace and are enjoyable. There is clear evidence of the pupils learning what the teacher intends. Where the teachers' knowledge is particularly good, as in a maths lesson and a French lesson, pupils learn rapidly because the teachers make learning fun, the pupils are supported in participating fully in the activities and teachers' explanations are clear and concise. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well in a range of lessons as well as in English and mathematics. Classwork and work in withdrawal situations is very well matched to the needs of the pupils and those experiencing learning difficulties make very good progress. 75 per cent of the lessons seen were good or better with a small percentage (16%) being very good or excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a good curriculum at both key stages. It is well planned and pupils gain full access to each subject. There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities which make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Outdoor provision for pupils under-five is not satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good both in the classrooms where teachers provide learning opportunities which are matched well to needs and in withdrawal situations where they are given high quality support. The provision for special educational needs is very well managed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond particularly well in their moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils' welfare, health and safety are at the heart of the school and are organised very well. The school makes good use of all assessment and other information to ensure the well-being and progress of each pupil.

The school works very well with parents and effective links are established and maintained. The pupils' entitlement to the full national curriculum is assured. The school encourages and supports pupils in participating fully in all aspects of school life and gives opportunities for pupils to perform in public. All subjects meet statutory requirements. All of the staff are fully involved in the school's duty of care for the pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well managed by the headteacher with good support from the senior management team and the whole staff. The day-to-day organisation of the school is very good and the strategic planning for school improvement is also good. The school has a very strong sense of its own Christian values and a very positive ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The school governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil their statutory obligations. There is positive and useful contact between the Chair and the headteacher and the governing body is well informed about the development of the school. The governors are fully involved in school development planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is good analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses though the role of curriculum co-ordinators could be developed further to support this area.
The strategic use of resources	Staff are deployed well to meet the needs of the pupils and to support development of the curriculum. Learning resources are used well and the teaching space available is used to good advantage. Recent improvements to the security of the school grounds have meant that the space around the school is now much more useful. Use and management of financial resources are good.

The school is well led and managed and the management of finance is secure. The planning for school development is appropriate and in most instances appropriate targets are set. Sometimes however, issues are included unnecessarily in school improvement planning and this then detracts from the main targets. For example, improvement in communication with parents was included as an issue even though parents generally are very pleased with this aspect of school performance. Efforts are made to seek best value when the school is looking at developments and all development items are evaluated.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like coming to school • Behaviour is good • Teaching is good • School is easy to approach and listens well. • Children are expected to work hard • Parents get a good range of information regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents did not indicate any areas of significant concern.

The inspection team agrees that the parents are right to be pleased with most aspects of the schools' performance. A very small minority of parents thought that there could be more for children to do outside school but these were predominantly the parents of children of five and six year olds. As many of the children come to school by bus, and the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for older children, it is difficult to see how more could be expected.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school helps all pupils to achieve good standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2 and they also reach good standards in a broad range of other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make good and often very good progress.

In the last three years, the pupils have achieved good standards at the end of Key Stage 2 when compared with schools nationally and when compared with schools of a similar background. This is a very positive and consistent picture which has been achieved through the hard work of the teachers and the pupils.

The school makes good analysis of the pupils' performance throughout the school and the individual difficulties of pupils are known. In the majority of lessons in English, maths and science, and in other lessons, the work which the teacher sets is matched to address those particular needs. Even in lessons where teachers have large groups, such as in Year 6 mathematics, the teaching is of high quality and the pupils get individual attention when it is needed. A feature of many classes is the way in which everybody is included. This has a very positive impact. When pupils with special educational needs are given additional help, this is of high quality, either in the classroom or when given special help in withdrawal situations.

The school goes to great lengths to address issues of standards. For example, many alternatives have been tried to attempt to raise the standards of writing in Key Stage 1. However, the quality of writing in Key Stage 1 is good, the pupils are able to write effectively for a range of purposes and they are not simply restricted to story writing. This early experience provides a very good foundation for their written work, leading to high standards by the end of Key Stage 2.

In the vast majority of other subjects of the curriculum standards are good and they are always at least satisfactory. Pupils' written work shows a very good range of subject knowledge and this is confirmed in discussions with them. Pupils are able to apply skills in different areas of the curriculum, for example using information technology well to record and represent their ideas.

The school supports pupils well in developing positive attitudes towards themselves and others and towards learning. Good personal development is a feature of the school.

All of the staff know the pupils well and they model good relationships. Almost all of the pupils comment that they like their teachers and enjoy being with them. Pupils comment that this, along with being with their friends is a highlight of the school. The pupils and the staff show respect for each other.

In classes, pupils are ready for the start of lessons. In most lessons they are keen to know what they are to do and equally keen to get on with it. They make suggestions and ask questions sensibly, knowing that sensible enquiries are welcomed and that they will be given time if they need it. In turn, the pupils are very tolerant and supportive of those experiencing difficulty and will volunteer to help. In most cases, pupils pay full attention.

The older pupils have a responsibility to care for one or more of the youngest pupils who have just started at the school. All of them are happy to do this, and this is very supportive to the younger pupils especially, for example, when travelling to school by bus.

Pupils comment that they do not like to see bad behaviour and whilst they understand what bullying is, they indicate that this is not part of life in school. They are confident in their teachers to ensure that this remains the case.

This positive situation comes about as a result of the genuine interest and concern which the staff have for the pupils. Staff are regularly seen talking socially to pupils at lunch and breaktimes and listening

attentively to pupils' concerns and aspirations. This relationship is further supported by the school's good relationship with and support from parents.

The school delivers a broad and well-balanced curriculum which equips pupils well for the next stages of their education.

Since the last inspection one of the areas of improvement has been in the planning of the curriculum and this is an area of school life which is constantly being reviewed.

The school has adopted a strategy for literacy and numeracy and this is helping to maintain and improve standards. However, the school has expressed a concern about the impact of these two strategies on the time available for the other subjects. In response to this concern, the staff have re-timetabled the school days, creating additional blocks of time for teaching and thereby ensuring that there is at least adequate space for all of the subjects of the National Curriculum in addition to Religious Education and French. This is to be commended as the teaching staff are rightly confident that the pupils gain their full curriculum entitlement.

The school now has full schemes of work for all the curriculum subjects and these schemes are used well to inform teachers' planning for learning. The schemes help teachers to ensure that pupils' learning builds on what they already know and are able to do. They also help teachers to ensure that subject skills are addressed.

The pupils' education is additionally supported by a good range of extra-curricular clubs including sport, music, dance, art, drama and information technology. In addition, visits and visitors enhance the curriculum, for example residential visits to field centres.

The school is well led and managed and is well placed to improve further.

The headteacher has built a team of teaching and non-teaching staff who are very supportive of each other and of school improvement. This is a very positive situation for the school as there is open discussion of areas for improvement and, as a result of action taken, improvement occurs. This means that the school regularly embraces change where this will potentially lead to the raising of pupils' standards.

The senior staff have a very good knowledge of statutory requirements and the day to day running of the school is efficient. Resources are used very well to maintain high standards and support improvement. The school manages to maintain its focus on its own aims and values in the face of changes and this is a great strength. The head ensures that the staff do what is reasonable and helpful. The headteacher is very keen to support the teaching staff but also to develop their potential and all staff are encouraged to progress.

The governors fulfil their role well, meeting all statutory requirements and being very involved with the school. They are able to make independent judgements and offer advice. The governors are increasingly able to be critical friends to the school.

The role of the curriculum co-ordinators has developed since the time of the last inspection. They ensure that the curriculum is resourced fully and they are a source of help and support for each other.

The school cares for its pupils very well.

In all respects the welfare of the pupils is central to the success of the school.

The staff, and in particular the headteacher, know the pupils and their families well and therefore, any issues which affect pupils' learning and development are known and acted upon. The staff are very supportive of pupils and their families if they are experiencing any form of difficulty. Child protection and health and safety are very well managed.

The school has good assessment procedures. The staff complete a baseline assessment at the start of the reception year and from this point onwards, the information gained from assessment is used in the planning of the curriculum. There are good mechanisms for information to pass from teacher to teacher. Because of this, as the pupils progress through school, their needs are addressed and they make good progress both academically and in their personal development.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage could be improved by making better provision for their education outdoors and by offering additional stimulating areas for their work in the classroom.

Since 1996, the school has made improvements to the provision for children under five years old and the content of the curriculum is planned well to meet children's needs. All of the areas of learning are planned for but there are some shortcomings in the curriculum of which the school is already aware.

There have recently been improvements to the outdoor area including security fencing around the school grounds. There is a small fenced area for children under five years old where they can work outside the reception classroom. However, this is only easily available on a daily basis for one of the reception classes.

At the present time the designated area of outdoor provision is lacking in areas of interest and there is little suitable equipment or resources. There are no ground markings and no fixed equipment or seating. When the outdoor area is used, all resources have to be taken outside. There is therefore little opportunity for children to make choices or to decide on their own work or play. There is no immediate access to anything other than a tarmac space. The teaching staff make an effort to take children into the main playground and garden area but this is not a substitute for a good quality outdoor area which could relatively easily be provided. The outdoor area needs to be planned to provide for all six areas of learning.

Inside the classrooms teachers provide stimulating learning areas, for example the role play areas which are currently used well to support language and social skills development. However, there is potential to extend the range of opportunities offered by providing more areas and activities, for example by using the areas between the two reception classes.

The role of the curriculum co-ordinators could be further developed in order that they are equipped to gather information about standards more systematically and thereby make a greater contribution to school improvement.

The curriculum co-ordinators are effective in ensuring that the school is fully resourced for subjects to be delivered and by being a point of reference to their colleagues. As a result of interaction with their colleagues, they have some knowledge of standards in their subjects and they know where curriculum weaknesses exist.

However, they have not yet developed a systematic way of collecting evidence about their subjects and therefore, as a group, they are not able to contribute fully to school improvement planning. The senior management team has recognised the need to support the development of this role and for the first time this term, all co-ordinators have been given some time to work on their subjects.

The co-ordinators of subjects other than English and mathematics do not undertake monitoring of teaching and learning and monitoring of planning for teaching is limited. Closer focus on particular aspects of subjects is needed to help the co-ordinators to be more knowledgeable about standards.

The school's arrangements for the marking of pupils' work could be altered in order that the marking gives pupil clearer written advice on how to improve.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and pupils are informed about the accuracy of their work. They also take the opportunity of marking to praise pupils' efforts.

The marking however, does not necessarily focus on the target for the piece of work. Spelling and punctuation are repeatedly corrected but pupils are given little written information on how to improve other aspects of their writing. As some of the class groupings are particularly large, there is limited opportunity for teachers to interact as fully as they might like with individual pupils, despite their best efforts.

Teachers spend sufficient time marking. The school needs to develop more effective ways of using this time to give pupils more information about how to improve the quality of their work. This should apply to all subjects of the curriculum where written work is a feature.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

This is a very good school and the issues for improvement are included to make provision even better. In developing these areas care needs to be taken not to adversely affect the existing good practice.

In order to raise standards further, the headteacher and governing body should;

- (1) Improve provision for the under fives by:
 - creating a more stimulating outdoor environment;
 - planning for education out of doors to support all six areas of learning;
 - creating additional attractive learning areas in the classroom in which children can work.

- (2) Improve the effectiveness of the curriculum co-ordinators by:
 - more systematically gathering evidence of standards in none-core subjects;
 - gathering more evidence about the effectiveness of the curriculum;
 - developing ways for the co-ordinators to contribute more directly to school improvement planning.

- (3) Improve the quality and effectiveness of marking by more closely relating written marking to the learning target.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

24

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

7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	8	59	25	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	264
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	17
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	34
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	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

FTE means full time equivalent.

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.45
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	17	12	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	16
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	28	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (88)	97 (88)	97 (90)
	National	82 (80)	80 (81)	86 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	16
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	28	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97(86)	97 (93)	97 (95)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	16	19	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	13	15
	Girls	18	16	19
	Total	31	29	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (89)	83 (84)	97 (87)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	13	13
	Girls	16	16	17
	Total	27	29	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (84)	83 (84)	86 (84)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	2
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	254
Any other minority ethnic group	4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	77

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	99-00
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	£
Total income	415506
Total expenditure	421989
Expenditure per pupil	1508
Balance brought forward from previous year	39436
Balance carried forward to next year	32953

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	264
Number of questionnaires returned	123

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	29	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	44	2	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	40	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	57	7	2	9
The teaching is good.	63	33	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	41	4	1	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	29	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	27	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	45	46	7	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	66	32	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	33	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	34	10	1	7