

St Roberts Catholic Primary School, Harrogate

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121642
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327538
Inspection date	5 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	286
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Toop
Headteacher	Mrs M Benson
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ainsty Road Harrogate North Yorkshire HG1 4AP
Telephone number	01423 504730

Age group	5–11
Inspection date	5 May 2009
Inspection number	327538

Fax number

01423 701104

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the reasons why pupils achieve more highly in English than in science; the quality of pupils' learning and the factors that aid their high achievement; the factors behind high quality inclusion and whether leadership and management were better than good; and the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Evidence was collected from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data, school documents and parents' questionnaires. In addition, there were discussions with the headteacher, governors, staff, the school improvement partner, pupils and parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report. The out-of-school care was not included in the inspection.

Description of the school

St Roberts Catholic Primary School is a little larger than average. It serves two large parishes, covering the most deprived as well as some of the more affluent areas of Harrogate. Pupils come from as many as 19 different pre-school settings before joining the Reception Year. A Reception and Reception/Year 1 class make up the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is on-site out-of-school care that is not managed by the governing body. Over 90% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The majority are White British; 20% come from minority ethnic backgrounds; 14% speak a different language at home and 10% are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. In some year groups up to seven different languages are represented, the most common being Malayalam, Polish and Tagalog. The school has an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and eight have a statement of special educational need. The proportion of vulnerable pupils is a little higher than average. The rate at which pupils join the school at times other than the usual is also above average. There have been five changes in staffing in the last two years. The school holds the highest grade of the Inclusion Quality Mark, the Dyslexia Friendly School Award and the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school gives pupils an outstanding education. From below average starting points, pupils make outstanding progress to reach high standards by the end of Year 6. Writing standards are exceptionally good. This is because pupils are taught extremely well and the school is outstandingly well led and managed. The school has very high expectations of all its pupils. Leaders and managers at all levels play a vital part in ensuring that pupils fulfil their potential. Governance is first-class and asks the right sort of questions to ensure the school meets increasingly challenging targets. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with a large majority returning questionnaires. Comments such as 'inspirational teachers', 'lovely school and staff' and 'We are thrilled to have our children at St Roberts' are typical of parents' views. Pupils think the best things about school are 'the headteacher and teachers who are very kind' and 'there is nothing needed to make it better'.

Achievement is outstanding in English and mathematics. Reading standards are high because this is encouraged from the start. Wider reading, including being read to, is a key feature in all classes. In writing, a very large proportion of pupils reach the higher Level 5. A carefully-structured approach, which takes into account pupils' interests, gives very clear guidance as to how to 'Make your writing sparkle!' Literacy lessons start with warm-up exercises so pupils practise the basics daily. This enables them to write and express themselves fluently and accurately. Lessons give pupils ample opportunities to speak, listen and role-play. Pupils have plenty of time to write and improve their work. As a result, they enjoy writing very much and are proud of their extensive vocabulary. Despite a successful investigative approach to science, standards are a little lower in that fewer pupils reach the higher Level 5 compared with English and mathematics. This is because pupils do not always have time to write up investigations in their own words and so they do not get much practice in using scientific vocabulary to help them read and answer scientific questions.

Pupils learn exceptionally well at each stage of their education. They are captivated by the wealth of interesting, challenging and highly enjoyable learning opportunities and so they learn at a fast rate. Teaching quality is outstanding, with major strengths in questioning and prompting discussion. Teachers approach lessons from the pupils' point of view. The 'Top Tips' for learning are agreed at the start of each lesson and clearly show pupils what they need to do to succeed. Pupils are involved fully in all aspects of assessment and so they know exactly how to improve their work. Individual 'Key Skills' booklets help pupils to keep a check on their learning and adults double-check that they update their progress accurately. Marking is excellent and always gives precise, achievable points for pupils to develop further. As a result, all learners make outstanding progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and new learners of English.

The school has a leading role in developing inclusion in other schools. It is exceptionally successful in promoting equality of opportunity and in ensuring there is no discrimination. Community cohesion is a strength of the school. The impact of its strong local, national and international links is seen in pupils' sense of responsibility and ability to think and respond seriously to important issues. Simple systems, such as the 'language of the month', including sign language, celebrate the very broad cultural diversity within the school. For example, two young pupils were teaching each other Polish and exclaimed excitedly as they learnt new words, 'It's like Christmas!'

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding because the school gives them excellent care, support and guidance. Safeguarding meets all current government requirements. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils' relish for all that school offers them is evident in their excellent attendance, including attendance at extra-curricular clubs. They are ambassadors for health and successful in competitive sports. Pupils know their own minds and have the confidence to question when they have doubts. They are generous fund-raisers for charities and very supportive of each other. Year 6 pupils, for example, think being 'a special friend' to Reception children is one of the highlights of school. Pupils are outstandingly well prepared for their future lives, not just because of their advanced literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, but because they are articulate, independent and self-assured individuals. It was these factors that led the school to judge its outcomes, the curriculum and academic and personal support as outstanding and did not do so for all aspects of its work because, in its own words, 'there is always more to be done.' It has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's achievement is outstanding. All children are taken care of extremely well. They have ample time to rest and relax as well as play. As a result, children make rapid progress. By the end of the Reception Year, most are working comfortably within the levels expected for their age and beginning to forge ahead in their reading, number work and knowledge and understanding of the world. This is because of rigorous checking of children's progress and outstanding teaching. Adults' questioning and skill in developing children's language for communication are major strengths. Activities both indoors and outdoors cover all areas of learning fully and offer high levels of challenge, as well as exciting children's curiosity. The activities also give children full scope to pursue their own interests. For example, following a visit to the town library, children donned hard hats and built a library outdoors, using plastic crates, bricks and boxes to recreate tiered shelving to display books, despite the rain. Staff use observations of children's learning very effectively, capitalising on the moment to push learning on to the next step. Parents are closely involved in their children's learning. Children's different languages are celebrated, for example, with parents reading stories in the home language, while the other children try to guess the story. Children's start to their education is exceptionally rich because of outstanding leadership and management.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils time to write up science investigations in their own words so that they get more practice in using scientific vocabulary to help them read and answer scientific questions.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Roberts Catholic Primary School, Harrogate, HG1 4AP

Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome and for being so polite, friendly and helpful. We really enjoyed our day in your school and agree with you that it is a lovely school that makes newcomers feel instantly at home. I should like to say a special thank you to the group of Year 6 pupils who gave up their time to talk to me and show me their work. It was also very useful to hear all about your school council that clearly does an excellent job.

Your school gives you an outstanding education. It helps you to learn exceptionally well because your teachers know exactly what to do to make learning exciting and fun as well as challenging all of you to think for yourselves. This helps you reach high standards by the end of Year 6. Your writing is exceptionally good. You are taught extremely well and your teachers give you lots of time to plan and correct your work. Your 'Key Skills' booklets are a great idea, as are the 'Top Tips' at the start of lessons. All these things help you to know what to do to improve your work. Your headteacher and other staff know just what to do to help your school continue to improve.

Because this was a short inspection, I looked at selected areas very closely. One question I looked at in particular was why you tend to do slightly better in English than in science. It is very good that you learn about science in a very practical way. The next step is for teachers to make sure that they give you time to write up investigations in your own words so you get lots of practice in using scientific vocabulary. This will help you when you have to read and answer scientific questions.