

Thomas Russell Junior School

Gilmour Lane, Barton-Under-Needwood, Burton-on-Trent, DE13 8EU

Inspection dates 17–18 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- It is a school transformed from the ordinary. Under much improved leadership and management, it shows a lot of potential for further improvement.
- Pupils' achievement is good. It is speeding up as teaching improves. Pupils in Year 6 last year reached average standards from their variable, and for some, low starting points on entry to the school in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- The relentless drive to improve teaching is working. There is now an expectation of excellence rather than adequacy.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils are kept safe, learn how to keep themselves safe and are happy in school.
- Pupils behave well. They wear their uniform with pride and their attendance is above average. They show respect for the premises and almost all are open and friendly to visitors.
- Leadership, management and governance are good. There is a very strong focus on making the school better and raising standards through improved teaching.
- Staff morale is high and the local authority and community are latching on to the reality that this is a school that has a lot to offer.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment and progress in writing remains behind that in reading.
- Subject leaders are at an early stage in the development of their roles in raising attainment through improving the quality of teaching.
- Staff do not have opportunities to fully share and learn from the outstanding teaching already evident in the school.
- Senior leaders and governors do not communicate the ethos and direction of the school sufficiently clearly to all parents.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eleven teachers and visited 15 lessons. Teaching and learning in two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the mathematics subject leader, and subject and other leaders, pupils and governors. The lead inspector had a discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed pupils' work, looked at their exercise books, listened to them read and observed them in an assembly.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, information on pupils' progress, and documents related to safeguarding and key reports and policies.
- The inspectors talked with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 79 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also analysed 21 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The school provides a breakfast club managed by the governing body and formed part of this inspection.

Inspection team

Andrew Stafford, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julia Spittle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thomas Russell Junior is similar to the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has appointed a new deputy headteacher and two new teachers since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Lift the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement from good to outstanding by making sure that:
 - pupils achieve as well in writing as they do in reading
 - staff are given more opportunities to share and learn from the outstanding teaching already evident in the school.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they are able to make a more effective contribution to improving standards and raising the quality of teaching to outstanding.
- Do more to convince all parents that this is a rapidly improving school that is going to help their children to do well and stay happy, fulfilled and safe. Also, reassure them that their worries are being listened to and prompt and fair action is being taken to lessen them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. Most pupils arrive at the school in Year 3, and some in other years, from different infant schools and with different levels of achievement. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. In the past years, by the time they leave, progress has been adequate and attainment has usually been average.
- Pupils' levels of attainment can vary widely from year to year. For example, pupils assessed in Year 6 in 2013 reached broadly average levels of attainment but pupils currently in Year 6 are likely to be above average because pupils in this year group are making good progress. Pupils currently in Year 5 are working at above average levels, with a large majority of pupils already working at levels that exceed those expected for their age.
- Pupils are now making very similar progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In recent years, writing has slightly lagged behind reading and mathematics but this year shows that it is starting to catch up. Progress is now good across all subjects.
- Good attention is being paid to support the most able pupils. This year, those identified as being gifted writers have been set the task of writing successful articles for the school newsletter; others are currently involved in projects in mathematics and engineering that are creating enthusiasm and the results are wonderful.
- Good attention is paid to making sure that pupils with special educational needs are well supported and achieve to their full potential. There are many successful methods through which the school supports these pupils. At one extreme, it is extra vigilance and support from class teachers and teaching assistants, at the other it is highly successful intervention groups for pupils who sometimes find it hard to make sense of learning. Pupils with special educational needs make just as good progress from their starting points as any other pupils.
- Pupil premium funding is being used effectively. It is imaginatively used to provide extra learning support for those who need it, and broadening horizons when this is considered more important. Every pupil in receipt of the pupil premium last year met, at least, the standard expected of all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. There is no significant difference in this school between pupils receiving the pupil premium and all other pupils.
- Additional funding for sports is also being used imaginatively and effectively. It is resulting in more and more pupils becoming involved in competitive sports after school and better training for staff to promote physical activity in school. Quite apart from this, the school subsidises the cost of getting authors to promote pupils' reading and to organise competitions in writing so that pupils, especially boys, realise there is nothing 'soft' about reading books and writing stories.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is solidly good. There is a clear path of improvement in the school on record. When the school was previously inspected, teaching required improvement. Over two years ago, monitoring by the headteacher and the local authority tended to support this view. However, determined efforts to improve teaching by the headteacher, and deputy headteacher, helped by the local authority, have term by term improved the quality of teaching through guidance, support and excellent training.

- Learning is clearly accelerating as a result of improvements in teaching. Attitudes towards learning and attendance are also improving as more and more pupils respond to their teachers' efforts to make learning more interesting and classrooms more stimulating.
- Pupils are responding well to teachers' insistence on high standards of presentation and handwriting. As a result, they are building up bodies of work of which they can be justifiably proud.
- Teachers remind pupils to hold their writing pens correctly and sit up when writing and this has made a huge difference to the quality of pupils' work. Through good teaching the pupils are learning how to use their imagination and make their writing accessible to people who might want to read about their thoughts and learn from them. Clear evidence shows that there have been noticeable improvements in handwriting of Year 3 pupils this year.
- Other good practice helps enormously. Teachers mark pupils' work consistently well. They give pupils good feedback about what they have achieved, where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.
- Much of the work contained in pupils' books is completed to a good standard. When pupils are set work they are expected to finish it. Then it is corrected and then pupils do their corrections. Over the past term there has been a good focus on expecting pupils to correct their spellings and not repeat their mistakes.
- It is clear that most pupils are being suitably challenged and being moved on to harder work as soon as it becomes evident that they can do the work they have been set.
- Positive qualities of teaching are the ways that teachers identify in each lesson how what pupils are learning can be applied to their learning in other lessons and to their own lives. In mathematics, for instance, pupils use television schedules to calculate time differences and in topic work they learn about the history of World War 2 and how events then are linked to significant traditions in their own village and culture.
- Reading is well taught. Dedicated time is spent on reading and discussing with each other and staff what they are learning from their reading. The initiative to get boys reading is hugely innovative and effective.
- Teachers make sure that all pupils share equal opportunities to learn by varying work carefully to meet different needs. They are highly effective in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, not only by teaching them but by being an exemplary role model.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- When children join Thomas Russell Junior, they learn how to value each other, the adults around them and their school community. A strong atmosphere of mutual respect, starting in Year 3 and continuing throughout the school, leads to pupils feeling happy, safe and secure. This is reflected in attendance that is above average and improving.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is consistently good behaviour and there have been very few incidents of disruption in lessons. When they have occurred, they have all been dealt with properly. Pupils report that most pupils behave well most of the time and that any mild misbehaving does not worry them unduly or stop them from enjoying their lessons. A very small

minority of parents are more critical, usually about isolated incidents.

- Pupils respect each other, their staff and visitors. They also respect the cleanliness of the buildings and are excited about the playground equipment that occupies them effectively during lunchtimes. These are yet another addition to the efforts that the school is making to make this a vibrant and enjoyable place for children to attend. There is harmony at playtimes and lunchtimes in the dining room are a civilised pleasure.
- Any low level disruptive behaviour is dealt with effectively by school leaders and teachers. Staff apply the school behaviour policy fairly and consistently. Pupils are fully aware of the high expectations set, because they have contributed to agreeing what is acceptable. However, the school does not always communicate the effectiveness of the leadership of the behaviour policy and other good practice sufficiently well to all parents.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. A lot of work is done to make pupils aware of the risks they might sometimes face. Good teaching and display in communal areas show the work that pupils are doing to gain an understanding of how to keep safe when using computers and phones. The overall standard of display is impressive and shows that pupils are taught with an openness that is refreshing.
- Pupils are very well aware of different forms of bullying; there have been very few incidents of bullying or poor behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that instances of bullying of any kind are extremely rare, but the school is quick to act in such circumstances. The school is very effective at tackling any form of discrimination.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and pupils display enthusiasm to participate in the wide range of engaging and challenging activities provided. Pupils say most subjects are 'good fun'. They enjoy lessons and the opportunities to go and learn out of school. The particularly like the residential visits. The current Year 6 pupils are very excited about their next residential stay in an outdoor education centre in Shropshire.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills in a safe and stimulating environment, both at the beginning and end of the school day, in the breakfast and after-school clubs.

The leadership and management are good

- Credit for the transformation of this school has to go to its leadership, management and governance. The headteacher, ably supported by the new deputy headteacher, deserves special mention for their single mindedness to promote improvement. Staff and pupils are already on board. A very small minority of parents remain critical and expressed concerns about how effectively the school leadership responds to their concerns.
- Leaders and managers fully recognise that the success of the school relies on the effectiveness of teaching. To this end, there has been a relentless drive to improve it. With good support from the local authority and with the drive and inspiration of the senior leaders all aspects of teaching are getting better; although opportunities for staff to fully share and learn from the outstanding teaching already evident in the school are not frequent enough.
- Improvement is gathering pace because the team currently responsible for teaching pupils, including long-term temporary staff, is benefiting from good training opportunities and support.

The checks on teachers' performance are clearly linked to pupils' progress. Where any weaknesses in teaching are identified, effective support and coaching are given and improvements are expected and checked closely.

- While teachers readily and effectively take on responsibilities, some subject leaders do not have a detailed enough knowledge of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning throughout the school to bring about further and rapid improvement in their subject. This is what prevents leadership and management from being outstanding.
- Leaders, managers and governors feel they do everything possible to keep parents 'in the loop' about how their children are getting on and welcome parents into the school. Even so, a few parents still express concerns. Most parents who responded to the Parent View survey agree that their children are happy at school, feel safe and are well looked after. Pupils and many parents are jointly involved in a wide range of educational and social activities that support well pupils' achievements and personal development.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has given the school considerable support. This has been greatly appreciated by leaders, managers and governors. A good working arrangement between the school and the local authority has ensured that what has been useful has been built upon and what has not been useful has been discarded.
- The range of subjects taught provides a broad range of creative and interesting learning opportunities for the pupils. The good curriculum promotes literacy at every opportunity. It connects subjects and areas of learning through imaginative approaches, which support pupils' understanding and love of learning. Through the activities provided, and the values of the school, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of the pupils has developed extremely well. The school ensures there is no discrimination and all pupils have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can.
- The skills and expertise of the senior leaders and other experienced staff are used as part of the training of new teachers from Derby University.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The headteacher appreciates that the governors are 'always there'. Through training, governors are becoming more effective as they learn about the responsibilities of governance. At the moment, new members of the governing body rely heavily on the expertise of a few of their colleagues. The headteacher and the governor with the link to assessment tells them about the progress pupils are making, but they recognise this is a relative weakness and are getting increasingly involved in visiting the school and joining in with activities. For example, a governor accompanied Year 5 pupils on a recent residential trip. They have had support from the local authority aimed at helping them to understand data about pupils' attainment and progress. Governors keep a close check on the headteacher's performance and set her realistic targets for improvement. They also play a significant role in making sure that pupils are properly safeguarded. Governors have a secure understanding about how effectively extra funding is having an impact on pupils eligible for the pupil premium and promoting greater participation in sport.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124150
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	442568

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Wells
Headteacher	Shelley Sharpe
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2012
Telephone number	01283 239360
Fax number	01283 239362
Email address	office@thomasrussell-junior.staffs.sch.uk

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