

Thomas Russell Infants School

Station Road, Barton-Under-Needwood, Burton-on-Trent, DE13 8DS

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- The school is well led and managed. The co-headteachers, supported by all the staff and the governors, have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have taken action to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- Teaching is good. All staff work well together to help pupils to learn.
- Attainment in Year 2 is consistently above the national average and pupils are now making good progress across a range of subjects in all year groups.
- Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe and the school's work to keep them safe is outstanding.
- Pupils show great pride in their school. They behave well, use good manners and contribute greatly to the positive atmosphere of the school.
- Attendance is above average.
- Parents are extremely positive about the work that the school does with their children and speak highly of the education and care provided by the school.
- Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge for the school. They have successfully developed their skills and understanding and have a clear view of how well the school is doing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding to make sure that all groups of pupils, especially the most able, make rapid progress.
- Marking does not consistently show pupils the next steps they need to take to improve their work.
- Pupils do not always think carefully about their studies and take opportunities to work things out for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 parts of lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the co-headteachers.
- Inspectors also listened to pupils read, looked at their work and observed behaviour at the start of the day, during break time and at lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with the co-headteachers; other members of staff; six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body; a representative of the local authority; pupils; and parents.
- Inspectors looked at policies, self-evaluation and development planning documents, monitoring records related to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, information about pupils' progress and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Responses from 61 parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, letters from parents and the school's own parental and pupil surveys were taken into account.

Inspection team

Simon Mosley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Beverley Strange

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than average-sized for its type.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and, of the below-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritage, very few speak English as an additional language.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Barton Badgers, an external provider, operate before- and after-school care in the school hall. This is subject to separate inspection.
- Since the last inspection, the school is now led by two co-headteachers rather than one headteacher. The former headteacher is one of the co-headteachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - the most-able pupils are stretched and challenged in order to produce their best work, particularly in writing
 - marking in each subject shows pupils what to do next to improve their work
 - pupils think carefully about their studies and try to work things out for themselves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Many children start Reception with skills that are slightly above average for their age. The vast majority make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage due to good teaching and well-planned learning experiences. By the time they move into Year 1, their attainment is above average.
- Children in the Reception classes are provided with a good range of activities, both indoors and outdoors. Staff make effective use of the limited equipment in the outdoor area but there are plans to improve these resources to match the quality of those used inside the classrooms.
- Most children learn to write and read with increasing confidence and accuracy. They develop good knowledge of number and shape, and communicate well with each other and adults.
- The 2013 screening at the end of Year 1 showed that pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters represent (phonics) had improved since 2012. As a result of work with individual and groups of pupils, a very large majority reached the expected standard by the end of Year 2. The school is now using these strategies with younger pupils, and current evidence shows that standards in phonics are improving in Year 1.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Opportunities are provided for pupils to read widely and often. Staff listen to pupils read and there is an expectation that children read to their parents on a regular basis. More-able pupils read challenging books and weaker readers draw on appropriate strategies to help them to work out how to read words and understand texts.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been above the national average every year since the last inspection. As a result of good teaching and positive attitudes to learning, pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- The 2013 teacher assessments show that almost all pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics but a smaller proportion of the most-able pupils make rapid progress in writing. The school's current data on pupils' achievement, observations of pupils' learning and the quality of work in their books confirm that the school's action to improve writing indicates that most pupils are making good progress in all subjects.
- Different groups of pupils, including the few from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well throughout this school. Senior leaders carefully track the progress made by all pupils so that additional support is provided to individuals or groups whenever it is needed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their needs are identified early, their progress is monitored and additional support is provided to help them learn. For example, the school has a 'nurture group' in which selected pupils improve their learning by completing work which is specially designed for them.
- In 2013, there were no pupils in Year 2 eligible for the pupil premium. Throughout the school, however, the progress of eligible pupils is good. The additional funding continues to be used well to boost these pupils' progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across all subjects, including English and mathematics, is good. As a result, most pupils and groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, those for whom the pupil premium provides support and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make good progress. As a result of strategies to improve writing, more-able pupils are now making good progress across all subjects.
- The quality of teaching in Reception is good. Teachers and other adults plan a range of activities that interest children and encourage them to work well with each other. For example, in one lesson the children were engaged by a stimulating animated input before they worked, both inside and outside of the classroom, on subtraction tasks appropriate to their ability.
- Classrooms are attractive learning spaces that use thought-provoking displays well to assist pupils in their work and also celebrate their achievements. However, although used well, the outdoor area for Reception children is less stimulating than other areas of the school.
- Lessons start promptly and pupils are keen to learn. They complete appropriate homework tasks and take pride in their work. This is demonstrated by the quality of presentation in all subjects.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught well throughout the school. Pupils read regularly, and opportunities are taken to carry out writing tasks and develop numerical skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. In addition to this, pupils are encouraged to present ideas to others and talk confidently about a range of subjects.
- Teaching makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils work extremely well with each other, study a range of faiths, consider what is right and wrong and take part in musical, sporting and technological activities in lessons and outside of the classroom.
- Teachers have the skills and knowledge to ensure that pupils can succeed. Teaching assistants provide good support for all pupils, including the most able, those who are supported by the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Staff work very well together. All staff use questioning effectively to help learning, intervene at the right times to improve the progress of groups and individuals, and break tasks down into smaller steps when required.
- Teachers do not always give pupils the opportunity to explore topics in sufficient detail, fully develop their skills, expand their knowledge and think deeply about the areas they are studying. This does not allow all pupils, particularly the most able, to make rapid progress.
- Marking is improving. It is regular and positive but it does not show pupils what steps they need to take to improve work in each subject area. This means that pupils are not always sure what they have achieved or what they need to do next to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of the pupils is good. Pupils feel that the vast majority of other pupils behave well and almost all parents who expressed a view felt that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved. The fact that there have been no exclusions over a number of years and that the school's records show that there have been few instances of poor behaviour indicate that behaviour management is most effective.

- In lessons, pupils behave well, and this contributes to their good progress. They listen carefully, follow instructions, respond positively to clearly established routines and usually complete tasks to the best of their ability. However, they do not always take responsibility for their own learning and, on a few occasions, sit and wait for a member of staff rather than moving on to more challenging work.
- Pupils enjoy school. Attendance is above average for all groups of pupils and they are proud to be members of the school community. They all wear the school uniform with pride and are keen to take responsibilities in the school.
- Pupils are polite, welcoming and friendly. They display good manners and their conduct is responsible and considerate of others. They have excellent relationships with the staff and each other.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Consequently, all pupils feel very safe and almost all parents agree that this is the case. Pupils are taught to stay safe, including when using the internet. They behave in a way that ensures that they all remain safe.
- Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils understand what it means to be unkind to someone and they are aware of different kinds of bullying. They are also confident that staff will deal quickly and effectively with any unkindness if it happens.
- Policies and procedures in the Reception classes ensure that it is a safe and secure environment for learning. Children respond well to high expectations and behave well.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements are strong and meet requirements. Staff and governors have received the appropriate training and, as the school works extremely well with families and other agencies, pupils who are at the most potential risk are very well protected.

The leadership and management are good

- The co-headteachers, supported by the governors and staff, have taken decisive action to improve teaching and achievement. This can be seen in improvements in standards in writing, which for a time were not as strong as they were during the last inspection, and also in phonics in Year 1. School leaders work effectively together to regularly monitor pupils' progress closely to ensure that action is taken to make sure that all pupils make good progress in all subjects.
- The management of teachers' performance is used to improve teaching and achievement. Regular checks on the quality of teaching mean that school leaders know where there are strengths and areas that need further improvement. Where necessary, they have provided additional support and challenge to individual teachers to make sure that their teaching is at least good. Leaders and governors ensure that teachers' pay rises are tied to their performance.
- Training for staff continues to improve teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants have undertaken targeted and quality-assured sessions in order to improve their practice. In addition to this, the co-headteachers know where high-quality teaching takes place and provide opportunities for the best practice to be shared.
- The co-headteachers closely monitor all aspects of the school's work in order to arrive at accurate self-evaluation which informs plans and actions to improve the school further.

- Teachers with responsibilities for particular areas, including staff with responsibilities for the children in Reception classes and individual subjects, have been supported and challenged by senior leaders to make improvements in their areas. The quality of this leadership is good.
 - The curriculum is rich and varied. It contributes to positive attitudes to learning and develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, the pupils had made Diva lamps from clay, and they had been listening to Irish folk music during the week of the inspection. The school hosts regular visits from people from different faiths and backgrounds. The pupils told the inspectors that they enjoyed finding out about people who are different to themselves.
 - The school has used primary sports funding to increase participation in physical activity and sport and to promote healthy lifestyles for pupils and their physical well-being. For example, staff have received training to develop their expertise linked to their physical education action plan. Outside instructors have been used to team-teach the pupils and train the staff, and the school has worked with a number of other schools to improve sporting opportunities in the local area. In addition to this, funding has also been used to help pupils reach the performance levels of which they are capable, as shown by the fact that the school recently won a regional gymnastic competition.
 - The school works very closely with parents. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View indicated that they felt that the school was well led and managed. All would recommend the school. The level of parental satisfaction with the school was illustrated by the comments parents made to the inspectors, both verbally and in writing. The letters to the inspection team contained comments such as, 'Even if I won the jackpot on the lottery, my children would be educated at this school', 'From the moment both my children entered the school, they have loved it and literally skip into class' and 'The children respond in such a positive way to both the heads and class teachers, it makes me proud to be associated with the school.'
 - The local authority provides appropriate support to the school. The most recent report shows a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and indicated action that the school needs to take to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governance is good as the governing body have the skills, knowledge and understanding to support and challenge the leaders of the school.
 - Governors have undertaken appropriate training. They visit the school regularly and demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for the children in the school.
 - Governors play a key role in checking the work of the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use achievement information well, attend meetings and receive regular reports, which they challenge by asking probing questions.
 - Governors have first-hand experience of the quality of teaching and use this when discussions take place about the performance of teachers. They understand how the performance of teachers is managed and how the best teachers are rewarded. They have also managed the performance of the co-headteachers well.
 - Link governors have a clear understanding of their roles. For example, the governor with responsibility for the pupils who receive support from the pupil premium knew all their names and was aware of the impact of the action that had been taken to improve their achievement. In addition to this, the governor with responsibility for primary sports funding had been involved in allocating this funding and evaluating its impact.
 - Governors ensure that the school meets its legal requirements and that the school's finances are very well managed. They also have a clear understanding of their role in keeping children safe and make a significant contribution to the school's outstanding work in this area.

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	124058
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	441265

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Taylor
Headteacher	Lisa Farmer & Suzy Burton (Co-Headteachers)
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2008
Telephone number	01283 239350
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