

Inspection of Thomas Russell Infants School

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

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Each morning, pupils arrive at Thomas Russell Infants school happy and eager to learn. Warm and appropriate relationships with adults help them to feel cared for. Leaders and teachers put the needs of pupils first and care deeply for all of them. Pupils feel safe in school and say, 'There are nice people here: no bullies, just good friends.'

Leaders have developed an exciting and ambitious curriculum. They want all pupils to achieve well. For most, this ambition is realised. However, for some pupils, expectations are too high or not challenging enough. This leads to a small number of pupils having to spend time waiting for others to catch up and some not being able to complete learning activities.

Pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. They move around school in a calm and sensible way. Pupils take it in turns to be play leaders and carry out their roles responsibly. Leaders teach pupils to be responsible citizens of the future. They are confident and are keen to talk about school life. The variety of clubs on offer enable pupils to develop a wide range of interests and talents that extend beyond the classroom.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders prioritise early reading. The phonics programme is relatively new, but thorough training and feedback ensures that all staff deliver it with expertise. As a result, pupils achieve very well. Pupils read books that match the sounds they have learned. They can apply strategies they have learned in phonics to read unknown words. Leaders do all they can to develop pupils' love of reading. Teachers read exciting and varied texts to the pupils that they talk about with enthusiasm. Pupils can borrow books from the school library and are encouraged to use the 'book swap' that is available for them and their families.

The design of the curriculum allows pupils to regularly revisit previous learning. This helps them to know and remember previous learning. This is particularly evident in mathematics. 'Fluency Fridays' support pupils to recall important mathematics facts. This allows most pupils to solve problems accurately and efficiently. However, occasionally teachers provide pupils with activities that are not matched precisely enough to their needs. Some pupils rely heavily on the support of additional adults. This is more often the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND but staff do not use the information about their needs well enough to adapt the learning. These pupils do not always have learning activities broken down into smaller steps that allow them to achieve success. This leads to some pupils not being fully engaged with their learning and not making as much progress as they should.

Leaders are proud of how they develop the character of all pupils. The personal, social, health and economic education teaches pupils to be kind and to care for the world they live in. This is clear to see in how the pupils speak to and play with each other. Learning is enhanced with trips to places of interest. Pupils talk about these with excitement. Pupils are less clear on the wide variety of cultures and religions that exist in modern Britain. The curriculum does not fully teach pupils about lives and beliefs that are different to their own. This means they are not as fully prepared for life beyond their small community as well as they might.

Children get off to a very good start in the early years. The school's values of 'excite, excel and explore' start here with earnest. Highly skilled staff engage children with activities that develop their interests and promote independence. Adults know when to intervene to both support and extend prior learning. Children play cooperatively, eagerly taking up the many challenges set for them. These enable them to practise skills they have learned in a variety of different contexts. Communication and language is a focus and it is evident in the way pupils talk to each other and to adults.

Governors understand their responsibilities and are passionate about the work of the school. They visit regularly and are very knowledgeable about what is going well. Support from the trust helps to drive continuous improvement.

Staff report that they feel very well supported by leaders. They know leaders care about their well-being and do all they can to manage their workload. Senior leaders lead by example. They do all they can to ensure every pupil will 'blossom through nurture and challenge'. Every adult associated with the school is proud to be part of the Thomas Russell family. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the education and care provided.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding. All staff and governors receive regular training to ensure that they are able to spot any concerns and respond to them. Leaders act on all incidents in a swift way, with advice sought from external agencies where necessary. They are determined to do all they can so that pupils and their families receive the support they need. Leaders make all of the necessary checks on new and existing staff to assure them that all adults are safe to work with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs, particularly pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils spend time waiting in lessons or not being able to complete work provided because it is too difficult.

Leaders need to provide further support and development to ensure that teachers adapt and refine the curriculum effectively, to enable all pupils to achieve well.

- Pupils struggle to recall parts of the curriculum that develop an understanding of different cultures and fundamental British values. Their knowledge of these concepts is not developed well enough. As a result, they do not have secure understanding of life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values and the many different cultures that exist outside of their community.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	142748
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10211998
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	182
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Colin Hopkins
Headteacher	Suzy Burton and Tracy Moore
Website	www.thomasrussellinfants.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized infants school.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a before-school club and an after-school club run by external providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteachers and senior leaders. The lead inspector also met with the SEND coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum

with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work in a range of subjects, including geography, English and religious education.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with three governors, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with leaders about the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff about pupils' safety.
- The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information on the school's website.
- Inspectors talked informally with pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. In addition, they took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's, pupils' and parents' views.

Inspection team

Keri Baylis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Janet Tibbits

Ofsted Inspector

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