

Thomas Russell Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124058
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314792
Inspection date	9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Owen
Headteacher	Lisa Farmer
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Station Road Barton-under-Needwood Burton-on-Trent DE13 8DS
Telephone number	01283 239350
Fax number	01283 716834

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the differences in performance of boys and girls in reading, writing and mathematics; the consistency of teaching throughout the school; the use of assessment to move different groups of pupils on in their learning; and the effectiveness of leadership and management in implementing strategies to improve the quality of provision.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, analysis of school's tracking and assessment data and discussions with the headteacher, staff, governing body and pupils. The views of parents were gathered through discussions and analysis of the high volume of questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate.

Description of the school

The school is a two-form entry school drawing approximately one third of its pupils from outside the immediate area. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award, Dyslexia Friendly Status and Silver Status Eco 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

The school provides an outstanding quality of education. This view is shared by pupils and the majority of parents. Pupils are confident, very well educated, polite and caring and are true ambassadors for their school. 'We are extremely pleased with all that the school offers. Our children love coming' said one parent, speaking for many. Pupils cannot wait to see their teachers and their friends and are very happy to come to school. They love learning, have very good attitudes to their schoolwork and behave in an exemplary fashion.

Standards are exceptionally high in reading, writing, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is outstanding. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve very well. This year's test results show that the strategies introduced to raise boys' achievement are working. Throughout the school, boys and girls are making equally good progress. In the Reception Year, children make outstanding progress from a starting point which is just below expectations. Outstanding provision ensures that the vast majority of children exceed the expected standards in all areas of learning by the end of the year.

Teaching and learning are outstanding throughout the school. All teachers have very high expectations of their pupils, and encourage them to 'reach for the stars'. Pupils consistently exceed their targets and the school is reviewing its systems to make these even more ambitious. Teachers use an effective range of teaching strategies and give very good explanations. They mark work regularly but, too often, they do not inform pupils what they need to do to improve. Furthermore, pupils' recorded work is untidy, especially in mathematics.

Partnerships with parents, agencies and local schools are outstanding. This contributes to the very good progress pupils make because they are safe and secure in their learning. Teamwork and relationships throughout the school are exemplary. Staff act on the headteacher's advice and are keen to develop their skills. 'We never stand still in this school' said one member of the senior leadership team 'there is always room for improvement.' Learning throughout the school is characterised by a purposeful buzz of activity. This was apparent as pupils came to school armed with mini beasts that they had collected with their parents and eagerly chatted about the weekly mathematics challenge completed for homework.

The curriculum is outstanding. It fully reflects the pupils' needs and interest levels. They love learning about dinosaurs, sea urchins, pirates and bats. Pupils' experiences are extended through a very broad range of extra-curricular activities, clubs, visits and visitors. Staff capitalise on pupils' curiosity and develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in all subjects. 'Our teachers make learning fun, they keep explaining things in many different ways until you get it' said one member of the school council. Another quickly followed with 'We are helped to think about how well we have done and what we need to do to improve.'

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils help one another in class and work well together. At break and lunch times, the school council ensures that nobody is left out. Council members are very proud of their contribution to school life, such as being involved in the appointment of staff. Pupils know about the 'five a day' contribution to healthy eating, and understand that sugary foods are not particularly good for you. They take regular exercise and a high proportion walk to school. Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of how to express feelings appropriately. Small group support is very effective for those who need extra help to develop

their social skills. As a result of the very high academic standards, pupils are well prepared for junior school. Their very good skills in working as a team put them in good stead for the future world of work. This was evident in the mini enterprise week where pupils worked together to plan, design, make, market and sell products. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community by taking part in a wide range of activities such as country dancing and pancake races. A particular strength of the school is pupils' ecological awareness and care for their immediate environment.

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are excellent. All staff have received safeguarding training and know their pupils and families very well. Support staff make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning because they are very vigilant to their emotional and academic needs.

At the heart of the school's success lies the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and governing body. Governors are vigilant in their duties and ensure that every aspect of school improvement planning is continually monitored and evaluated. School self-evaluation is accurate and ensures a very clear educational direction. The school has outstanding capacity to improve because of its success in maintaining exceptionally high standards.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Very good teaching and an outstanding curriculum enable children to use all of their senses in exploring the world around them. Children make an excellent start as a result of the very good transition procedures. Staff visit all nursery settings and develop excellent relationships with parents, drawing on their knowledge of their children's likes and interests. As a result, children feel very safe and the attention to their welfare is outstanding. The teaching and learning of the basic skills of reading, writing and number are very good. Children make very good progress in linking letters to sounds and the vast majority can write a simple sentence on entry to Year 1. Very detailed observations are undertaken of children's learning and staff know exactly what to do to ensure that they are confident learners. Children develop outstanding attitudes to learning and behave very well in lessons. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent. All staff, including teaching assistants, work as a purposeful, dedicated team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking informs pupils of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve pupils' presentation of work, especially in mathematics.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well 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 the 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

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Russell Infants School, Barton-under-Needwood, DE13 8DS

Thank you for giving up your time to talk with me. Yours is a fantastic school and you learn exceptionally well and achieve very high standards. Well done! I was particularly impressed with your information and communication technology (ICT) skills. You do things that I usually see much older children do such as importing images into text.

You are happy, confident learners who have very good attitudes to learning and behave exceptionally well. You are a credit to your parents and your school. I am so pleased to see the way that you work with your parents in improving the school grounds. Your knowledge of recycling is amazing. I really love the plants you planted in boots, lorries and footballs!

I agree with you that your teachers are fantastic and learning is fun. Your headteacher really helps you to become the very well rounded individuals that you are. You were right, your school lunches are very healthy and yes, I did have some salad from the salad bar. Thank you for recommending it to me.

I have asked the staff to improve a few things to make your school even better. You can help by asking your teachers what you need to do to improve when they have marked your work. You can also help by presenting your work neatly, especially in mathematics.

I do hope that you enjoy junior school as much as you have enjoyed your infant years. Your school has very good relationships with the junior and secondary schools and I am sure that you will feel at home when you move on.

Please thank your parents for replying to the questionnaires, I am very grateful for their views.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley Lead inspector