

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THOMAS RUSSELL JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Barton-under-Needwood

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124150

Headteacher: Mrs G Roxburgh

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Moore  
8710

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2002

Inspection number: 243885

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Gilmour Lane Barton-under-Needwood Burton-on-Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	DE13 8EU
Telephone number:	01283 713450
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Seamus Treanor
Date of previous inspection:	8 <sup>th</sup> September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8710	Julie Moore	Registered inspector	Mathematics Physical education	Characteristics of the school Standards, the school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management What the school should do to improve further
3129	Kevern Oliver	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well does the school work in partnership with parents
20007	Trevor Neat	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology History	Curricular opportunities
8326	John Stringer	Team inspector	Design and technology Geography	
28686	Elizabeth Walker	Team inspector	Art and design Religious education	
3751	Trudy Cotton	Team inspector	English Music Equal opportunities Special educational needs English as an additional language	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Thomas Russell Junior School is situated in the large village of Barton-under-Needwood, near Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire. This is a pleasant village with a range of privately owned and rented houses. Pupils at the school are aged between seven and eleven, and there are 141 boys and 112 girls on roll. This is about the same size as other schools with pupils of similar ages. When the pupils join the school most of them achieve average standards in their work in the main subjects of English, mathematics and science. Around 17 percent of all the pupils have special educational needs, and this is below average. Their special needs include specific, moderate and severe learning difficulties, hearing impairment, and some other problems. Three pupils have statements of special educational need. A very small percentage of pupils speak English as an additional language. Six pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is low. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Thomas Russell Juniors is an effective school. Since the last inspection standards are rising, and higher proportions of pupils are now achieving higher levels in their national tests when they are eleven. Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for, and they make good progress, as do the pupils who speak English as their second language. All pupils are fully included into every aspect of the day-to-day life of the school; pupils from all ethnic backgrounds get on well together. Teaching is good overall, with some very good features in almost every subject. The headteacher's leadership is very good; and she is ably supported by her deputy, the senior staff and the governors. The school is very well managed; there is a strong team spirit and everyone works together successfully. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The pupils make good progress because they are well taught. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6.
- The school is led and managed very well.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for and they make good progress, like their classmates.
- Pupils are keen and eager to learn and they want to do well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- The very highest attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by their work.
- Pupils do not have enough time to carry through their ideas into longer pieces of high quality written work.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress in tackling the issues identified in the previous report in 1997. It is well placed to improve even further. The school's development plan now has specific targets. Standards in design and technology and information and communication technology are satisfactory. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs, and the higher attaining pupils are generally challenged by their work. Assessment arrangements are greatly improved, and all pupils now have individual targets to achieve in the main subjects. Homework extends the pupils' learning successfully. The library has been improved, although there are some improvements that have not yet been completed. The spiritual and cultural development of the pupils is now much better than it was in 1997.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	B	C	B	C
Mathematics	C	C	B	C
Science	C	E	B	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards are rising, and this is due to good teaching. The vast majority of pupils make good progress, except in writing where their progress is satisfactory. Most eleven-year-olds achieve above average standards in the national tests, and the inspection findings agree with this. When compared to similar schools<sup>1</sup>, standards are average. However, greater proportions of pupils at Thomas Russell are attaining higher standards than they were previously. The only exceptions are the very highest attaining pupils, which is about two percent of the pupils on roll. The main area for future development is in English. Pupils' basic writing skills are good, but their finished pieces of work are only satisfactory. This is because the pupils do not have enough time to produce high quality written work. Standards in speaking and listening and reading are very good. Attainment in the majority of other curriculum subjects is above the expected standard by the time the pupils reach the end of Year 6. The only exceptions are design and technology, information and communication technology and religious education, where attainment is average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do those pupils who have English as their second language. The school knows that boys do less well than girls. Staff have adopted a range of strategies to overcome this, and boys are now doing better. Last year (2001) the school just missed its challenging targets in English and mathematics. They were met in science.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Boys and girls are keen to do well, they try hard and they want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils behave well during lessons and when they are outside. Two pupils were temporarily excluded from school last year.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are always encouraged to help one another and they do this successfully. They get on well together and relationships are very good. Personal development is very good, and this helps the pupils to learn well.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance levels are very high and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<sup>1</sup> Those schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching is good, with many strengths, and there was very good teaching in most subjects. Three out of four lessons were good or better, and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as their second language are well taught, and they make good progress like everyone else. Teachers know their subjects well. They teach them confidently and this helps all the pupils to learn and to make good progress, both in lessons and over longer periods of time as well. Teachers are successfully using a range of strategies to make sure that the boys achieve well. Lessons are interesting and challenging, encouraging all the pupils to want to learn and to succeed. The teaching in English and mathematics is effective because teachers have high expectations of what their pupils are capable of achieving, and the pupils rise to the challenges set for them. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are taught and learnt systematically, but the pupils need more time to produce longer pieces of written work if they are to make the best use of their good writing skills. There are many planned opportunities for the pupils to use their basic skills across the other curriculum subjects. For example, in history the pupils successfully write about an experience as an evacuee, and in geography their knowledge of co-ordinates is used to plot a position on a map. Tasks are planned at the right levels because the teachers are better than they were at assessing what the pupils have learnt in previous lessons. The only exceptions to this are the very highest attaining pupils, who are not always challenged sufficiently. When this happens, their learning slows and then standards are not as high as they could be. In a very small minority of science lessons there were not enough opportunities for the pupils to *investigate* and to *research* for themselves. This limited their learning as well as the standards reached.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a strong focus on literacy and numeracy. Every pupil has full access to the curriculum on offer, but the curriculum does not always challenge the very highest attaining pupils. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' special needs are identified accurately. They are very well supported, and they are making rapid progress towards achieving their targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Effective support from teachers and classroom assistants means that the group makes good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Most pupils are aware of the wonderful world they live in. They know what is right and wrong, and they work and play together successfully. Pupils are very good at supporting each other and raising funds for charity. They have a very good understanding of the richness and diversity of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Every pupil is well cared for in a safe and secure environment.

The school works well with parents, encouraging them and welcoming them in school. Parents are successfully involved in supporting work in the classroom, accompanying school visits, helping with productions and raising funds. All of this helps the children to learn effectively.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is determined to push up standards even further. She is fully supported by her deputy, staff and governors. The school is managed very well indeed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very clear about the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They are fully involved in planning the way ahead, and they are not afraid to ask critical questions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school is much better than it was at analysing all the data about its work, planning what to do next, and making sure that improvements are made. There are effective systems for monitoring performance, but the highest attainers are not always challenged as well as they might be.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Governors and senior staff manage the budget effectively. The 'best value' principles are always followed when deciding how to best achieve high standards and a quality education for all the pupils. The school gives good value for money.

The school is well staffed. The high amount of money that is carried forward to next year is because of unpaid bills, and planned savings to pay for additional classroom assistants. Accommodation is good and the school is well resourced, except in ICT where the classroom computers are not capable of running the programs that are needed.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching is good, and the staff have high expectations of what the children are capable of achieving.</li> <li>They are comfortable about approaching the school to talk about their children.</li> <li>The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A small number of parents feel that the school does not work closely with them.</li> <li>There are not enough interesting activities.</li> </ul>

The inspection team fully support parents' positive views. They do not agree with parents' negative views. Inspectors judge that the school works closely with parents, and there is a wide range of interesting activities both during the school day and after school as well.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in pushing up standards. Greater percentages of pupils are now achieving higher levels than they were. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, like their classmates. The pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress, and are working at the same level as their friends who are the same age. The main reasons for these improvements are;
  - ❑ a strong determination to achieve high standards through effective teaching;
  - ❑ close monitoring of pupils' progress to ensure that standards do not slip;
  - ❑ taking effective action when weaknesses have been identified;
  - ❑ keeping a regular check on attainment trends, as well as carefully analysing all the data about the work of the school and pupils' attainment.
2. In the most recent national tests for the eleven-year-olds standards were above average in English, mathematics and science. Inspection findings agree with this. When compared to similar schools standards are average. What all of these results mask is the higher proportion of pupils at Thomas Russell who are now achieving the higher Level 5. Trends over time show an increase in standards overall, with a significant increase in science. There have been some variations in standards over the last few years. Consistently stronger teaching across the entire school is ensuring that pupils are challenged in their learning, and are making good progress. The only exception is the very highest attaining pupils who are not always identified accurately, and when this happens their needs are not met. Boys do not achieve as well as girls. The school knows about this and is making sure that teachers use different strategies to help the boys to do better, with some success.
3. The school is much better than it was at assessing what the pupils know and understand and setting appropriate targets. The literacy and numeracy strategies have had a significant impact on boosting standards because the teaching is clearly focused. Strengths and weaknesses are quickly identified and tackled effectively. Standards are well above average in speaking and listening and reading. They are average in writing and could be better. Pupils do not have enough time to develop their ideas in longer pieces of written work and this holds them back, despite their writing skills being good. That said, pupils use their literacy skills very effectively across the entire curriculum, for example, in history when writing accounts, in science when writing about investigations, and in religious education when describing religious symbols following a recent visit to the local Catholic church.
4. Standards in mathematics are above average. Pupils work in different sets according to their capabilities. The teachers are able to focus their teaching very specifically, pushing up standards and accelerating progress. Eleven-year-olds are becoming increasingly competent at mathematics. They have a growing adeptness at mental mathematics, and they do well when working out problems. Mathematics is used consistently in other subjects, such as measuring in design and technology and working out co-ordinates in geography.
5. Science is enjoyed by all the pupils, and standards are above average. Pupils in Year 6 perform well in all aspects of science. They clearly understand the principles of 'fair testing', and they know that investigations must be carried out in a way that can be shown to be fair. Attainment is good in the other curriculum subjects, and is above the expected standard. The only exceptions are in ICT, because of the limitations of the school's current computers, design and technology and religious education, where attainment is average.
6. There is a high level of quality support within the school for pupils with special educational needs. This is successful as it enables this group of pupils to progress well. The strong knowledge and

expertise of the co-ordinator (SENCO), as well as the learning support assistants who provide regular help for these pupils, means that the targets set in pupils' individual plans (EPs) are followed through effectively. Work is at the right levels for all these pupils, and is well matched to their needs. This in turn ensures that they make good progress with their learning. Pupils who speak English as their second language are also well supported by teachers and other adults. They are rapidly developing their spoken English, and are working at the same levels as many of their classmates. Like them, they are making good progress.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

7. Thomas Russell Junior's pupils like their school. For them it is a happy and secure place in which they are able to enjoy learning and playing with their friends. The overwhelming majority of parents, who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire, attended the parents' meeting, and had discussions with the inspection team, agreed with this judgement.
8. Throughout the day the school hums with activity as pupils learn and play together. In lessons they work hard both on their own and in groups. A member of Year 3 group, in the middle of a session with computers said, 'I love it'. In a Year 4 history lesson on Celts and Romans, for example, part of the class quietly and conscientiously got on with book-based research whilst the rest used an original recipe to prepare Roman-style bread.
9. Pupils know and accept the school's code of conduct and behaviour system and the overall standard of behaviour, which also was praised during the previous inspection, is good. This, combined with pupils' obvious enjoyment of their lessons, means that they and their teachers can get on with the business of learning and teaching. Everyone is able to make good progress for most of the time.
10. Pupils get on well with all the adults who work with them and with each other. They are polite and respond well to responsibility. They fetch and carry registers and help their teachers to keep their classrooms tidy, move equipment around the school and prepare for lessons. Older pupils run the 'milk shop' and the lunchtime 'red caps' treat their roles as helpers very seriously. The school council, which is made up of elected representatives from each year, meets regularly and gives its ideas and opinions on a wide range of matters such as safety, how best to organise lunchtime games and how to improve the school environment.
11. The playground is a happy and hectic mixture of running, chasing, and ball games, with ample space for those who want to be quiet or just sit and chat. Pupils are kind and look after each other and quickly seek help from their lunchtime supervisors if someone is upset or falls over and hurts himself or herself. Absolutely no bad behaviour or bullying was seen at playtimes during the course of the inspection.
12. Pupils understand each other's needs and in mixed ability sessions such as a Year 4 lesson on solids and liquids the more capable willingly helped their less capable partners to learn. Another example of this kind of mutual support is the way that pupils have gone out their way to help a newcomer pupil, for whom English was not the first language, to settle and quickly acquire the language skills that he needed.
13. Pupils enjoy seeing each other succeed. In a Year 5 outdoor games session for example, pupils congratulated each other as they steadily improved their ball and racket skills. The weekly whole school praise assemblies are happy celebrations of the successes of both individuals and classes. The applause is long and warm when certificates for effort, achievement, progress, and contributions to the life of the school, are given out.
14. Attendance is very good; it is well above the national average. Pupils are punctual. Their lessons and other school activities start and finish on time. There were two temporary exclusions during the last school year.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

15. The teaching has improved since the last time the school was inspected, and this time there was no unsatisfactory teaching. There was some very good teaching in almost every subject. Three out of four lessons were good or better. There is a consistency to the teaching, and this is because the staff have been well trained. They make better use of assessment information, modifying their plans if pupils have not understood an aspect of the lesson. This was well demonstrated in a mathematics lesson where the teacher felt that the pupils needed some extra time to consolidate their work on angles. Boys and girls are making good progress, and more pupils are achieving higher levels than they did before. The school now needs to sharpen up its approach to meeting the needs of the very highest attaining group.
16. Tasks are pitched at the right levels in every class, so that the majority of pupils are challenged and extended in their learning. Teachers are good at using effective questions, either to check how much the pupils have understood or to take their learning on a little bit further. In one history lesson, the pupils were researching various aspects of Roman and Celtic food. The teacher's specific questions 'Where did the food come from?' 'How do the Romans get their food?' 'What are the differences between the food of wealthy Romans and poor Romans?' challenged one group. The pupils' inability to respond fully to the questions gave the teacher an instant assessment of their limited understanding, so that she could then reinforce her earlier teaching.
17. Another strength is the high expectations that teachers have for their pupils, who rise to the challenges set for them. In a Year 5 art and design lesson, the pupils were designing and making a container, using clay. The teacher's high expectations about the quality of their designs meant that all the pupils made gains in their learning. Their skills were improved and they enjoyed the lesson, getting positive satisfaction from their achievements. Teachers also have high expectations about good behaviour. This sets the tone for the lessons, making sure that learning is productive and lessons are orderly. Lessons are interesting and challenging and they move forward at a good pace so that time is not wasted. This keeps pupils interested and encourages good concentration.
18. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught and learning is effective. The pupils are taught in different sets according to their capabilities for numeracy. This helps teachers to target their teaching very specifically so that all pupils have the right kind of support, enabling them to make good progress. Planning for both literacy and numeracy is good, and is refined when teachers' assess that a particular learning point has not been understood, or pupils need more time to consolidate their learning. Work is generally pitched at the right levels, although the very highest attaining pupils are not always challenged as well as they could be. There is a weakness in English. Pupils' writing skills are good but they do not have enough time to write and refine longer pieces of written work. This limits the standards that can be achieved.
19. Teachers capture pupils' attention right at the start of literacy and numeracy lessons by having a brisk question and answer session, so that learning is checked out quickly and no time is wasted. This readily leads into new learning because the teachers are skilled at using specific questions to extend learning as well as to probe understanding. Boys are immediately targeted, and they are drawn into the lesson straight away. Boys also get extra support so that their learning maintains its momentum and there is no slippage. Pupils with English as their second language are given extra help from classroom assistants and teachers. This helps them to progress at the same rate as their classmates.
20. The literacy and numeracy strategies have given staff confidence. They know the subjects well, and they move the pupils' learning forward in a structured way so that standards continue to rise. At the end of lessons the main learning points are highlighted and emphasised, successfully helping the pupils to remember. All the time pupils' learning is progressing very well and standards are improving all round. Homework is an important aspect of life at Thomas Russell. Work is carefully planned to support or extend class-work, which it does effectively.
21. There are few weak features to the teaching. The main ones are:

- ❑ the highest attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. When this happens their work is too easy for them;
- ❑ there is not enough time for the pupils to produce and refine longer pieces of written work. This lowers the standard of their finished pieces of work.

Less significant weaknesses focus on the occasional instance when pupils in science lessons did not have enough opportunities to investigate for themselves. When this happened their learning was limited, and standards lowered.

22. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, and their progress is good. They work alongside their classmates in every day lessons and also have extra help in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Support is well targeted in literacy and numeracy lessons, where pupils have work which is well matched to their learning needs.
23. The SENCO works with pupils on an individual and group basis. She provides high quality support, alongside that of the learning support assistants, to make sure that every pupil with special educational needs has the right type of support that effectively meets their needs. Pupils are aware of their targets and assess their own achievement and progress. This in turn is motivating them to learn, and they work hard in school and at home. The SENCO makes clear assessments of what has been achieved and this is guiding the next stages in planning effectively.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

24. The curriculum is better than it was in 1997. Since the last inspection, the weaknesses in the programmes of work for information and communication technology and design and technology have been addressed. The provision of extra-curricular activities and the links that enrich learning have improved significantly. The school makes very good provision for the pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; another good improvement on the findings of the last report.
25. The school goes to considerable lengths to provide a rich range of interesting learning opportunities for all its pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as a second language. It is successful. This broad and balanced curriculum contributes well to the standards that pupils achieve. Statutory requirements to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are met. Good provision is made for personal, social, health and citizenship education. Appropriate arrangements are in place to give pupils sex education and to raise their awareness of the dangers of drug abuse. The school has devised good strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills, to enable pupils to learn all subjects effectively. More could be done to ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to write at length.
26. The school successfully manages the provision for pupils with special educational needs so that there is a balance between work in the classroom and work in small groups. The SENCO effectively monitors the provision, and ensures that support is linked closely to everyday lessons. For instance, pupils with special educational needs in Year 4 work on a similar text level and follow a similar literacy hour pattern, but work at word and sentence level is modified to meet their needs. At present, the provision for special educational needs is meeting the pupils' specific learning needs well. The school is on track to have the new arrangements for pupils with special educational needs in place next term.
27. The experiences offered to pupils are greatly strengthened by the very good links that the school has developed with the community, partner schools and colleges. These take a great variety of forms, from holding the school's carol concert in the village church, to tree planting in the National Forest. Inspectors attended a meeting of the very successful after-school community science club. The very good working relationships with local schools result in many opportunities, such as those for competition through membership of the Dove Valley Sports Association. Another very successful part of this provision, seen during the inspection, was the

- gymnastics club run by a member of staff and a visiting teacher from the nearby secondary school, assisted by some of his pupils.
28. The curriculum is further enriched by educational trips to many places, including Cannock Chase and a museum in Stoke on Trent. Links with businesses also contribute well, allowing the school, amongst other things, to visit a nearby power station and to take part in challenges involving problem solving. The good provision of homework in a variety of curriculum subjects gives very valuable reinforcement to the learning done in lessons. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, such as clubs, adds further to the opportunities on offer.
  29. Overall the school works well to ensure that all pupils are included and have equal opportunities to succeed. The teaching of mathematics to groups of pupils of similar attainment is one way in which it does this. In their lesson planning, teachers set out separate expectations for the learning of pupils who are at different stages of development. However, the school has yet to identify and make provision for its highest attaining pupils, although this is planned. ICT is used to support learning across the curriculum, but there are limitations caused by the lack of up-to-date computers in the classrooms.
  30. The provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. There is clear guidance through the subject areas where opportunities are given to pupils to reflect, consider and experience a variety of emotions and situations. This extends their understanding of spirituality very successfully. For example, as a prelude to an act of collective worship, pupils listen to a visiting pianist. She plays to concert standard two evocative pieces of music. They listen intently and watch her technique as she plays. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils reflect on and put themselves into a situation where they discuss conflict and ways to counter verbal aggression. The teacher uses a range of skilful questions and poses a variety of situations where the pupils react sensitively and with maturity of thought to describe ways of removing the aggression. They role play both aggressor and victim, empathising with both and understanding the emotions they experience.
  31. The pupils have a very clear understanding about how to behave, and a knowledge of right and wrong. Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations about good behaviour. Teachers share reminders and targets with their class, and these are used effectively. The respect and care the pupils have for each other is a very good feature of school life. The pupils co-operate well and encourage each other to achieve good standards. In a Year 6 design and technology lesson pupils work in groups and they all contributed well to the design in order to make a fairground ride; they work harmoniously modifying each other's ideas, and using the suggestions and tools in a very effective and caring way. Behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils are very considerate, courteous and well mannered.
  32. Pupils have many opportunities to work and play together, guiding their social development forward so that it reaches very high levels. Their involvement in the school council enables them to play a full part in decision making about aspects of their school life. This is good preparation for their role as future citizens. They enjoy a wide range of opportunities and take part in a variety of team games. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 share their skills and play well together as a team against other schools, showing a positive sporting attitude and enjoying the game, doing their best to win but accepting defeat gracefully. Pupils from across the school, together with pupils and staff from the local high school, share in a gymnastics club. The older pupils enable younger ones to achieve good results and sophisticated routines when they demonstrate, assist, and encourage them to achieve higher standards. The interaction between all the pupils is very good. It is a similar picture in the band rehearsal when pupils and adults meet to make good music.
  33. The school values and celebrates pupils' achievements at the weekly award assembly. This recognises both the individual and corporate effort and is a very good system of reward for pupils' efforts. Pupils take part in a range of activities, which support a number of local and national charities.

34. Pupils have the opportunity to experience and learn from first hand experience about other faiths and cultures, extending their knowledge and understanding successfully. They study in some detail both the Islamic and Hindu faiths. Visitors to school explain the customs and traditions of both these and the Jewish and Christian beliefs, giving pupils the opportunity to explore the history and practices, both in their own locality and further afield. The school has a wide range of good artefacts which pupils absorb and handle sensitively, aware of the sacred nature of the Qu'ran and the Bible to those beliefs. Pupils visit the local Catholic Church and through the support of the business link programme will visit the mosque and temple in Derby. In addition there is a range of visits to local museums. This is a good improvement since the time of the last inspection when it was considered pupils did not have a sufficient awareness of the cultural issues, which are part of their lives.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

35. Thomas Russell Junior takes good care of all its pupils. The school is a safe place and pupils are closely supervised throughout the school day. The headteacher, the rest of the staff and the Governors pay great attention to all health and safety matters. There are, for example, two fully qualified first-aiders on site throughout the school day and whole-school evacuation drills are regular features of school life. The Governors, headteacher and caretaker carry out regular safety inspections of the whole site and work closely with the local authority to ensure that all is well. Good child protection procedures, which include links with the appropriate local authorities, are in place.
36. The school's systems for monitoring and encouraging attendance are very good. On the rare occasions when there are problems with a particular pupil's attendance, the school and the local education welfare officer work sympathetically and supportively with the parents concerned in order to sort things out. A small number of parents take their children away on holidays during term time. The school does what it can to discourage this practice and always reminds parents of the detrimental effect that absence has on their children's education.
37. Good behaviour is the norm at Thomas Russell Junior. Everyone is expected to follow class rules and the school's golden rules, which are posted at strategic points around the building. Bad behaviour, which distracts teachers and pupils from the business of teaching and learning, is rare. When it does occur it is dealt with promptly and fairly through a well-established system of rewards and sanctions that includes, where necessary, exclusion from school. The result of this successful approach is that teachers and pupils are able to get on with the business of teaching and learning without the time wasting distractions that come with bad behaviour.
38. Thomas Russell Junior's teachers and support staff get on well with their pupils. Relationships during lessons, breaks and lunchtimes, in the playground and in after-school activities such as football, netball and the year 4 community science club are very good. Teachers and learning support assistants are well aware of their pupils' strengths, weaknesses and learning needs and, where possible, respond accordingly. A Year 3 numeracy group, for example, the majority of whom had special educational needs, made very good progress in a lesson on addition and subtraction because their teacher understood their particular learning problems and was able to work with them until they were solved. Unfortunately similar systems for identifying and supporting the very highest attaining children are not yet in place.
39. Pupils are encouraged to work hard and do well. House points, stickers, the weekly 'names in the frames' certificates and the 'superclass' award are used to reward individuals' and groups' successes. The whole-school praise assembly is a highlight of the school week. It celebrates major achievements, at all levels of ability, by both individuals and groups of pupils and ensures that everyone feels that they are valued members of the school community.
40. Good procedures for assessing pupils' work and for matching teaching to this are in place. This includes pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as their second language. The school has identified that boys are doing less well than girls. Strategies are in place to overcome this, and successes are starting to emerge. Careful tracking means that the

school knows what progress is being made, and can take steps to deal with any weaknesses. The very highest attaining pupils are not always identified accurately. When this happens they are not challenged by the tasks and their learning slows.

41. Assessment procedures in the main subjects are developing well, and in English and mathematics they are good. Assessment has been a priority for the school, and good progress has been made since the last inspection. Regular reviews of pupils' progress in the main subjects mean that the school now has accurate up-to-date information about standards and the rate of progress. Personal development is well monitored, and parents are kept fully informed of all aspects of their children's work and attainments in school. Improved systems for assessing and marking work means that pupils are much clearer about what has to be done if standards are to improve. Provisional targets are set and progress towards the targets is carefully monitored. Quick action is taken where there are slippages.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

42. A significant number of parents are pleased to send their children to Thomas Russell Junior school. Those who responded to the inspection questionnaire believe that it is a good, caring place which sets high standards and which is helping their children to learn and develop. They are pleased that their children like school and are expected to work hard.
43. Regular newsletters and notice boards keep parents in touch with what is going on in the life of the school. The current edition of the school's brochure contains much relevant information but it does omit statutory information about the school's attendance rates. The Governors' annual report to parents is informative and meets statutory requirements.
44. Parents approve of the school's homework schemes, and the well kept and up to date homework diaries are an important part of home-school communications. They find the headteacher and staff very approachable and appreciate the way that they are available for informal discussions at both ends of the school day.
45. Formal arrangements for keeping parents in touch with their children's progress include one-to-one consultation meetings with the class teachers. Thomas Russell Junior makes special arrangements to see parents who are unable to attend these scheduled meetings. There are also open evenings when parents get a chance to see all aspects of school life and occasional briefing sessions about the curriculum. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are kept in close touch with their children's progress and are always involved in the preparation of individual education plans. Care is taken to ensure that parents for whom English is not a first language understand all aspects of their children's education.
46. The end of year reports cover pupils' achievements during the school year, but they provide little guidance on what pupils need to do next. The school is aware of this shortcoming and, in response to parents' wishes, is preparing a new format.
47. Parents provide a great deal of day-to-day support for the school. Up to fifteen regularly come into school to work voluntarily with teachers in the classroom, listen to children read and help supervise swimming lessons. Individual parents also contribute their time and particular talents by, for example, giving a short piano recital for a whole school assembly. Many of these helpers are attending an innovative helpers' training programme, which is being run in collaboration with Thomas Russell Infants' School.
48. Parents also help with one-off events such as sports day and various school trips. Out of school activities are also very well supported. More than twenty parents and other helpers turned up to join in the Year 4 community science club. A similar number cheered on the school's teams in an inter-school football competition and the local 'High fives' netball tournament.
49. The Friends' Association is a very successful part of school life. It organises social events throughout the school year and raises significant funds for school developments. Recently it has

raised a considerable amount towards the cost of new classroom computers and has helped to develop the new quiet area on the edge of the school playground.

50. Thirty five percent of the parents who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire tended to disagree with the statement 'the school provides an interesting range of outside lessons'. The inspection team looked into this issue and concluded that the school does in fact provide an outstandingly good range of activities such as: drama and gym clubs, educational visits, adventure week, various music groups, competitive sports and the community science club.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

51. The standards reached at the last inspection have been improved, and there have been significant improvements in many other aspects of the school's work. Everyone connected with the school works together very well indeed. There is a strong team spirit, which creates a purposeful atmosphere and a positive ethos for learning. The headteacher provides very good leadership, with a strong team of teachers, support and clerical staff, lunchtime supervisors and caretaking and cleaning staff. All of them contribute to the efficient day-to-day running of the school, which is very well managed. Governors are experienced, and they bring a wide range of expertise to the management of the school. Their role as 'critical friends' means that they are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know what has to be done to make the school even better than it already is.
52. The headteacher and her senior team have a clear vision of the way ahead. They are determined that every pupil will achieve his or her personal best in every aspect of the curriculum, and they are well on the way towards achieving this aim. The only areas still to be tackled are linked to challenging the highest attainers, improving the overall standard of extended pieces of written work, and replacing the old computers in the classrooms. The school is fully inclusive and every pupil is involved in every aspect of the school's day-to-day life. Systems for monitoring the work of the school are good, and the senior staff and governors are much better than they were at analysing all the data and information about the school's work. They are adept at developing successful strategies that continue to bring significant improvements to standards, teaching and learning.
53. Progress towards the school's targets is regularly monitored, as is progress towards individual and group targets. The entire process successfully focuses teachers on the performance of their pupils and contributes very effectively towards improving standards and accelerating progress. Teaching and learning are monitored in the main subjects of English, mathematics and science by the subject co-ordinators. In the other subjects the co-ordinators monitor teachers' plans, as well as giving training, support and guidance to staff. The headteacher and staff are effectively involved in analysing and managing their performance. All of this contributes very well to the overall performance of the school, which is improving at a steady pace.
54. Governors are fully involved in setting the budget against the priorities that have been identified in the school improvement plan. The plan is carefully costed, time-scales and personnel are identified, and everything is focused on improving what the school does for its children. Governors have taken a decision to employ more learning support staff so that pupils who have difficulties with their learning can have additional support to make sure that their standards do not slip. Monitoring is showing that standards are improving for the pupils involved, and their progress towards their targets is speeding up.
55. The governing body fulfils all of the statutory requirements effectively. Many governors visit the school regularly to keep themselves fully informed about specific aspects of the school's work. They are well organised and they understand the issues that affect the school. Responsibilities are undertaken conscientiously, and governors assist the school in developing and maintaining its links with the community. They are clear about the standards the school achieves and are fully involved in setting targets for the school and its pupils. Governors know how the school performs against national standards and those of similar schools. This information helps them when they are setting targets for improvements.

56. Governors and senior managers look after the school's budget very well indeed. Resources are very carefully managed, and spending decisions are always balanced against possible outcomes indicating how standards will be affected. The principles of best value are always considered and implemented. Priorities are firmly based on the school development plan, and budgets are allocated accordingly. Subject co-ordinators manage their own budgets very effectively. The significant under-spend in last year's budget is because of unpaid bills, some of which can only be paid annually, and planned savings to support the work of pupils with special educational needs. Governors have committed significant additional funds for special educational needs, which was an issue at the last inspection. As already mentioned earlier in the report, this spending decision has enabled extra staff to be appointed and trained. Their work is ensuring that pupils have extra support, so that their progress accelerates and good progress is maintained. The SENCO has worked hard to improve the quality and the amount of provision for pupils with special educational needs. She is successful.
57. The overall standard of accommodation is good, and there are several well-equipped rooms set aside for small group work. There is also a library and a computer suite, which has been developed since the time of the previous inspection. All of this successfully creates a positive environment for learning. Extensive grounds, with well-planned quiet areas and an outdoor swimming pool, add an extra dimension to an already positive environment.
58. The Governors and head teacher believe that their staff are their most important resource. As a result there are sufficient teachers and non-teaching staff to ensure that the entire curriculum is properly delivered and that all pupils are well looked after. The staff are well qualified and there is a very good team which is dedicated to the needs of pupils who have special educational needs. Everyone has a job description and an up to date training and development plan which enables them to keep abreast of developments and further improve standards in their specialist areas. Innovative training arrangements extend beyond staff to the volunteer in-school helpers. They attend an extensive certificated course, which is run in conjunction with Thomas Russell Infants' school and a local College of Further Education.
59. The school's teaching and learning resources are satisfactory overall, except for ICT. Since the previous inspection, when the resources for ICT were criticised, the school has developed an up to date computer suite that all pupils use regularly. In-class computer provision is, however, still unsatisfactory because the equipment is out of date and not capable of running many of the programs which teachers and pupils need to use.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

60. Thomas Russell Junior School has made good progress since the last inspection. To improve standards further the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) Accurately identify the very highest attaining pupils and make sure that teachers plan and implement challenging work for them, especially in English, mathematics and science.

*Paragraphs 2, 15, 18, 29, 52, 72, 74, 77*

- (2) Provide additional curriculum time so that the pupils are able to produce, and complete, longer pieces of written work across subjects.

*Paragraphs 3, 18, 25, 52, 62, 69*

A less significant issue is:

To Improve the quality of the classroom computers.

*Paragraphs 5, 29, 52, 59, 75, 102, 105*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	82
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	17	44	19	0	0	0
Percentage	0	21	55	24	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y3 - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	253
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	43

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	43	35	78

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	31	29	40
	Girls	31	30	35
	Total	62	59	75
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (77)	76 (67)	96 (74)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	34	39
	Girls	31	29	35
	Total	61	63	74
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (79)	81 (78)	95 (81)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	247
Any other minority ethnic group	5

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y3-Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21:1
Average class size	28

#### **Education support staff: Y3-Y6**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	81.25

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	472,970
Total expenditure	467,071
Expenditure per pupil	1,680
Balance brought forward from previous year	35,520
Balance carried forward to next year	41,418

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.52

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

253
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Number of questionnaires returned

98
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### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	50	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	55	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	54	8	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	66	9	2	0
The teaching is good.	34	62	3	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	61	17	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	32	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	46	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	56	16	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	39	53	2	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	57	1	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	46	22	2	6

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

61. Over time, standards in the national tests in English have been either similar to, or above, those found nationally for eleven-year-olds. Present inspection findings show that pupils are reaching above average standards in English by the end of the junior school.
62. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening and reading are very good, and contribute well to their learning in English and in other subjects. Pupils talk confidently and explain their ideas clearly. Listening skills are very good. Attainment in writing is average and standards are rising. Pupils join the junior school with higher skills in reading than in writing. Their work in the junior classes provides a clear focus for teaching and learning the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The teaching of spelling, grammar, and the structure of written work also contributes very well towards improving progress overall. Greater proportions of pupils are on course to achieve higher levels in writing by the end of Year 6. As yet, however, pupils do not have enough time to write longer pieces of work and to carry their ideas through to completion. This limits the standards some of them are capable of achieving.
63. The school has worked steadily at improving the issues identified in the previous inspection report. It has looked at how reading is taught in the nearby infant school, as well as how it is taught at Thomas Russell Junior. This exercise has resulted, in particular, in improving the choice and range of books for boys. A wider range of books has helped to awaken an interest in reading and has motivated more boys to read independently. However, the school still has some way to go to improve the library as a learning resource, although plans are firmly in place ready for an imminent start. Although younger pupils understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction books, there is still a small minority of pupils who are less clear about using the school's system of classification.
64. Basic skills are taught well in each year group, and this is enabling pupils to write sentences that make sense and to use grammar and punctuation effectively in their work. There is focus on enriching written work through the use of lively vocabulary and interesting descriptive language, and this is improving the overall quality of finished pieces. Work in Year 4 provides a good example of how story settings can be brought to life, when one pupils writes, 'In the distance there appeared a city in ruins, with shadows leaning over the mist'. Teachers plan lessons clearly in the literacy hour and so word and sentence work in class lessons progresses well year on year. Effective questioning by teachers, and the high quality of pupils' responses, successfully moves learning on. This is evident when pupils in Year 3 identify the need for capital letters in sentences and understand how to use exclamation marks to give emphasis. Some successful links are made with other subjects, such as history, when pupils consider the power of the spoken word in propaganda posters or write about the plight of evacuees.
65. The school works hard to provide the opportunity for all school groups to learn and work together successfully. Pupils from minority groups speak and read English confidently, as do those pupils who speak English as their second language, and they all make similar progress to their classmates. Pupils with special education needs also make good progress, as they work in small groups or on a one-to-one basis with individual work. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls has narrowed and there is no marked difference in their learning. Both can be found contributing effectively in lessons and working in a similar range of ability groups in reading and in the literacy lessons.
66. Pupils' speaking skills are of a high standard. The careful way in which pupils listen in lessons and their competent spoken response enables teaching and learning to flow at a good pace. Teachers build upon this strength well by nurturing the pupils' interest and enthusiasm through their questioning. Asking a Year 4 class how a Roman soldier would react to life in their school, produced some imaginative responses, such as, 'I am Julius, Emperor of Rome. Get rid of all

that rubbish in the cloakroom - you need swords and shields'. By the end of the junior classes, the vast majority of pupils are able to empathise, add to discussions and put forward their own point of view.

67. Standards in reading are well above average by eleven years of age. Pupils have a genuine enjoyment of reading and exploring books. At the start of the junior classes the vast majority of pupils read in an accurate and fluent way. They are starting to read with greater expression and begin to understand more about character and plot. Very good skills with speaking enable pupils to explore and share books with enthusiasm. Older pupils bring their favourite books from home and by eleven years of age the vast majority make choices of author and compare style and genre. This is evident when Year 6 pupils discuss what books boys and girls like to read. They identify the adventurous, bold writing of Roald Dahl, compared with 'everyday life' depicted in Jacqueline Wilson's books. The attainment of average readers and those reading at a faster rate is similar. By the end of the junior classes, pupils in both groups are reading in a mature and competent way. They achieve well, attaining above expected standards.
68. Pupils who have difficulty with their reading have first-rate support and so they make good progress. They have work targeted to meet their individual needs, and achieve well as they develop skills with recognising words by sight and linking words with their sounds. Discussions with pupils in Year 5 and Year 6, show how improvements in the range and quality of fiction books has whetted their appetite to read. Nevertheless, a minority of pupils felt that the way in which the school assesses 'free readers', checks their own keenness as readers. Pupils found the choice of books they read, prior to this assessment, are too easy and not very exciting
69. By the end of Year 6, standards in writing are similar to those attained nationally. An emphasis on developing the structure of story writing is paying dividends. Effective teaching enables pupils to consider other points of view, as they reconstruct traditional stories through the eyes of minor characters. The opportunity to edit and read through work ensures this work is of a good standard. Very often, creative and imaginative ideas are used well. Year 6 pupils create their own poems showing a wide choice of descriptive vocabulary. One pupil describes a tornado as 'a boisterous twirl; a mighty whirl; a crushed street, a heartless beat'. Teachers' model writing well. They provide time to plan story beginnings, middles and endings. As yet, pupils have few opportunities to write longer, original pieces of writing, which allow them to carry their ideas through to a satisfactory conclusion.
70. Handwriting can vary from class to class, and is satisfactory overall. Handwriting skills are being taught consistently throughout the school and there are signs of improvement over the year. In a similar way, spelling is taught regularly and correct spellings are used more consistently in pupils' written work. Effective marking is helping with this improvement, alongside regular homework that is related to learning to spell new words.
71. In literacy lessons, pupils are very well behaved and keen to learn. They work well in different collaborative groups and value the contributions of others. This means that lessons move at a good pace and that the classroom is a pleasant place in which to learn. Pupils are keen to study at home and draw on their skills with the computer and Internet to research topics of study and share their findings in class. All of this supports and extends their learning effectively.
72. Teaching is good and this is helping pupils to achieve well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they effectively use class time and the plenary (feedback sessions) in the literacy hour, to share learning and to check that targets have been achieved. This helps all the pupils to keep track of their own learning. Work is planned for different levels of ability. Whilst there is a good match of work for pupils with special needs, work is not planned specifically enough to meet the needs of pupils who achieve at the highest levels. In all the year groups, teachers' good questioning skills are opening up discussions, which include all the class groups. This means that pupils are confident to contribute in lessons, because they feel that their input is valued. Work is regularly marked and, at its best, offers encouragement and guidance with improving literacy skills. Teachers track progress year on year and quickly identify anyone needing extra help with their learning.

73. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and manages the subject well. Plans are already in place to raise standards in writing and to enable pupils to write at greater length. Resources for reading in guided group work are effective, whilst those in the library need an update.

## **MATHEMATICS**

74. Standards in mathematics are above average for the eleven-year-olds, as they were at the previous inspection and in the national tests last summer. There has been some variation in standards over the last few years, and this has been because of higher proportions of pupils with special educational needs in some year groups. Pupils are taught in different sets according to their capabilities. This is successful as it enables all the teaching to have a crisp focus, allowing teachers to pitch work at exactly the right level for their pupils. Attainment trends are moving steadily upwards. Staff are much better than they were at assessing what the pupils have learnt, and the quality of teaching has improved and is now good. Boys do not do as well as girls; the school has identified this and teachers use a range of strategies to encourage boys to improve their performance, with some success. The other area for improvement is to provide greater challenges for the very highest attaining pupils. This group is not always extended as well as they could be.
75. Learning is effective because the teaching is good, and this where the co-ordinator has had a significant impact. Detailed analysis has shown that the weaker areas in mathematics were in mental recall and problem solving. These have been successfully targeted with a range of teaching strategies in place. Current assessments are now showing improvements across the school. In one Year 6 lesson, pupils were extending their understanding of calculations involving the Euro and a range of European currencies. They had to interpret information in a variety of forms, working out currency conversions to two decimal places, as well as working out one month's pocket money as a percentage. In this lesson the highest attaining pupils were challenged successfully, not only by the tasks they were given, but through the teacher's probing questions that took their learning on just that extra bit further. ICT is used well in many lessons, but the age of classroom computers limits what can be achieved.
76. Teaching is good and teachers are secure when they are teaching the numeracy strategy. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as their second language, are taught as well as their classmates and they make good progress. Lessons start with a brisk question and answer session, and practice of number facts. This enables teachers to see which pupils are having difficulties and which are secure in their understanding. Teachers use this time effectively to assess how well pupils understand the work. They successfully adapt their questions and explanations to match different levels of understanding and ability. The pace of lessons is good so pupils maintain good concentration especially during the oral mental mathematics time. The most capable pupils are challenged well to extend their understanding and tackle more complex questions. Pupils are given opportunities to devise their own methods of working and explain how they arrive at their answers. This helps them clarify their thinking. Pupils enjoy their mathematics, and this is well demonstrated by the way they concentrate hard, as in a Year 3 lesson where they were adding together two and three digit numbers. Their eagerness to explain their different strategies, as well as clearly identifying why they preferred a particular method, raised everyone's enthusiasm in this successful lesson.
77. Teachers assess pupils' attainment regularly, including tests of number bonds and times tables facts. This helps them to chart pupils' progress accurately, as well as making sure that their work is at the right level for them. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls are being tackled successfully, and the only other area for development is to sharpen up the identification of the very highest attaining pupils so that they always have challenging work. The results of formal testing are carefully analysed to monitor the progress of individual pupils and year groups, as well as by gender. Results are used to set targets for individual pupils and groups, and these are linked to National Curriculum attainment levels. Annual reports keep parents fully informed of their children's progress, and every effort is made to keep parents fully involved in their children's

work. All of this provides accurate and up-to-date information about how well pupils are achieving, successfully enabling the school to meet the needs of the majority of its pupils.

78. The co-ordinator has worked hard to improve standards overall, as well as to improve areas of weakness. She has been successful, especially in enhancing the standards and accelerating the progress of the lower attaining pupils. Significantly more pupils achieved Level 5 in the tests last year, and this is a marked improvement. Teaching and learning are effectively monitored, and this has had a positive impact on pushing up standards across the board.

## **SCIENCE**

79. The results of the national tests in 2001 showed that standards in science were above average compared with other schools nationally. This was the case at the time of the last inspection. Over the last four years standards have risen at about the same rate as the national trend. Inspection evidence reflects the test results and indicates that pupils achieve well as they pass through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as their second language, make similar progress to their classmates.
80. Pupils in Year 6 perform well in all aspects of science. They clearly understand that scientific judgements are based on evidence and that experiments must be carried out in a way that can be shown to be fair. Higher attaining pupils can explain terms such as 'variable' and 'control'. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for doing tests, but do not always predict the likely outcomes when it would be appropriate to do so. They classify different creatures that depend on each other for food into groups such as 'lower carnivore' and 'omnivore'. They recall the three states in which matter exists. The pupils know about particles and one explained in his written work that gas is 'hard to control'. They know too that some changes to materials can be reversed and others cannot, but they do not yet use their knowledge to predict which category other changes will turn out to belong to. Ideas about physical processes are also developed well. In a lesson seen during the inspection they successfully learned what happened to light when it strikes the surface of a mirror.
81. Good teaching is the main reason for pupils doing well in science. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. Good subject knowledge allows teachers to adopt a rigorous approach and have high expectations. Teachers try to add interest and variety to lessons. As a result, pupils are keen to learn. In a lesson for Year 6, they were eager to start activities to which the teacher had given names such as 'Spy Hunter' and 'Hit the Bull's Eye'. Teachers tell pupils what they are expected to learn and explain ideas clearly. The pupils play their part well by listening carefully and discussing work productively with their partners. Occasionally teachers do too much for their classes and a lack of opportunity for pupils to set up investigations limits learning. The scrutiny of pupils' written work shows that they sometimes copy what the teacher has provided rather than recording factual information in their own way. Pupils' very good attitudes and very good behaviour in lessons contribute significantly to the progress they make. However, most do not take enough pride in the appearance of their written work.
82. The subject is led well by the co-ordinator. Her work in providing guidance to help teachers to plan more effectively, and in analysing the strengths and weaknesses of what pupils know, understand and can do, has a positive effect on standards. She has not had enough opportunities to check the quality of teaching and learning, although this is planned.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

83. The pupils' standards are above the levels expected at the age of eleven. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Art and design have a secure place in the life of the school, and the pupils achieve well. Work is displayed attractively, it is frequently discussed and evaluated, encouraging the pupils to try out, and experiment with, new techniques.
84. The policy and scheme of work are based on national guidance and are modified so that the needs and capabilities of all pupils are taken into account. This has helped staff with their

planning, so that work is challenging and interesting for pupils of all capabilities. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are always very well planned and prepared, helping learning to be productive. This holds good for those pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as their second language. Year 5 pupils studied different packaging and containers. Their brief was to design and make their own container from clay. The teacher demonstrated how to prepare clay and format a pot very effectively. The skilful use of suggestions, and quality of the demonstration outlining specific techniques, enabled all the pupils to successfully design and make exciting pots, modifying their own individual designs to improve the aesthetic appearance or to improve the function.

85. Close links with other subjects enable the pupils to use their creative skills effectively. There were many examples, such as in science when drawing what happens when substances dissolve in water, or in an English/photographic project. This enabled the pupils to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills when they considered how to compose the detail, take the photograph, and provide a relevant caption to attract and appeal to a wider audience. A well attended lunch time club skilfully explored the use of computer graphics, using the expertise of older pupils and teachers. In lessons, the pupils successfully refine their design skills and improve their computer skills. All of these activities extend the pupils' skills and understanding very well indeed.
86. Throughout the school the pupils successfully and competently use a range of media. Close observational skills are developed well across the school, resulting in Year 6 pupils completing detailed drawings of the human body which are in proportion, as well as giving depth to the movement in the picture. They are taught techniques to provide the proportions required and use a range of pencils to indicate light and shade. Pupils build on the knowledge they acquired when they were younger and use a wide range of tools and media, so that by the end of Year 6 they produce high quality work. The pupils speak knowledgeably about their work and work in a careful and thoughtful way. They study a range of artists and their work and translate some of the impressions into their sketch books for future reference. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work. They work hard and produce high quality work in all they do. They persevere with their task and are very good at evaluating their work and that of others so that everyone's standard improves.
87. The co-ordination of art is good. The subject is monitored termly through a class portfolio. Standards of work are evaluated, which together with teachers' planning, ensures very good coverage of the subject. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, giving helpful support to her colleagues, but has few opportunities to monitor teaching, although this is planned. Assessment opportunities are not yet fully developed, however, sketch books are matched to national standards so that pupils' progress can be assessed on an annual basis. There are good quality resources in the school and they are used effectively by the staff.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

88. Standards in design technology are satisfactory at the end of the junior years, but links with ICT are under-developed. The school policy is clear and practical, giving suitable guidance about planning, teaching, learning and expected standards. Boys and girls of all capabilities are making satisfactory progress overall, and this includes those pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as their second language. Teaching is good. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection, when standards were unsatisfactory.
89. Year 6 pupils remember past projects with interest and enthusiasm, including designing, making and modifying model temples, cars and lighthouses, posters, aprons and masks. Year 5 pupils have planned, prepared and packaged their own biscuits. In a project to make money containers, Year 4 pupils considered the needs of the users, experimented with different ways of joining materials, and made individual products. Pupils are adept at handling tools and materials with confidence, and in some good examples produced individual pop-up books. Pupils work well together, negotiating the aims of their project and the use of materials, sharing ideas and

agreeing on the best approach. The subject is enjoyed, and pupils eagerly talk about present and past work, demonstrating pleasure and enthusiasm as well as demonstrating their skills.

90. Good learning takes place where teachers teach the basic skills like cutting and joining materials, making moving joints of different sorts, and where they offer a choice of outcomes, for example, different types of puppet at Year 6. Pupils enjoy making things for an audience, for example, picture frames for their family at Year 3.
91. The school policy for design and technology is comprehensive and well structured, with a project for each school term. It is informed by links with local education advisers and the Design and Technology Association. Design technology is in evidence in displays and activities around the school, notably the after-school science club, where adults and children happily and successfully collaborated to make balloon-powered buggies. The co-ordinator monitors both teacher planning and pupils' products, adapting the scheme to experience. For example, a successful Year 6 project on making slippers was replaced with one on puppets that boys found more stimulating. Greater use could be made of information and communication technology, for example in designing products and the computer control of models. The subject is well-resourced, and the planned acquisition of portable work-benches should enable pupils to tackle more ambitious projects.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

92. Pupils of all capabilities make good progress in lessons and over time as well. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as their second language. Overall attainment at the end of the junior years is above the expected standard, as it was at the last inspection. Pupils' range of experiences in geography include a residential visit in Year 5, and involvement with local developments like the marina. As they move through the school pupils' learning widens from their village to the county, then their own country, and finally overseas. The county's special link with Malawi is well exploited. All of these activities successfully extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, guiding them towards a love of the subject and encouraging their interest and involvement. Geography is well taught throughout the school with the aim of presenting real people living in real places.
93. Children in Year 3 learn about their village through the effective use of maps and aerial photographs. The more capable can confidently direct a visitor around the village using a map, but some of the lower attaining pupils find this more difficult. Children in Year 5 successfully compare schooling in Malawi and Staffordshire using video and quality photographs. They devise their own recording systems for similarities and differences, and use them well, especially where they are taught how to interpret photographic clues. Knowledge is enhanced by attractive displays of artefacts from other countries. They are enthusiastic about their work, and answer questions confidently. Plans are in place to develop computer technology – for example the use of digital maps. It is expected that this will enhance the good quality learning that is already in place.
94. The school's successful involvement in a wider range of activities, such as a global awareness week, enables the pupils to have a greater understanding about how world-wide decisions can affect people's lives in different countries. Year 5 pupils enjoyed a residential visit to Chasewater, and links with the marina and its architect have helped them to understand about issues of sustainability and environmental impact. Year 6 pupils have planned a day out in Staffordshire for a range of families with unique needs, and effectively modelled the county's contour lines. Pupils' geographical skills are successfully extended by these activities, as well as their understanding of people and places.
95. Geography is well-managed by the co-ordinator who has provided useful resources – for example, a local visits' pack – and develops the geography policy using feedback from staff. Teachers and support staff are all well-informed, and this is one reason that teaching is good. The co-ordinator

has a clear and practical list of priorities for the future development of the subject. Her policy declares that 'geography is the best subject on earth'.

## **HISTORY**

96. Standards are above average. They are higher than when the school was last inspected. At that time they matched the standards normally found. The main reason that pupils attain well is that the teaching is now good. The weaknesses found at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed successfully.
97. Since they had only just started work on history, having studied geography last term, there was little work completed by Year 6 pupils. The scrutiny of their exercise books and folders from last year shows that they develop a good understanding of the passage of time. In work on the Aztecs, they record dates such as the founding of the city of Tenochtitlan and the completion of the Spanish Conquest. They are good at researching, especially in their study of the Tudors, in which the life of each wife of Henry VIII is recorded in detail. Discussions with them indicate that they are able to link causes and effects, and explain them and their results. For example, in their current study of World War 2 they understand why ports were bombed, and the changes that resulted in many more women working on the land.
98. Strong features of the teaching include the very good development of pupils' ability to write as though they had been present in times past. A good example of this in relation to evacuees was seen in Year 6 during the inspection. The productive use of first-hand observation in studies of the village, and valuable links with other subjects such as geography, also enhance pupils' progress. In the lessons seen, skilful questioning and clear instructions also helped. Most of the lively and often rigorous teaching motivates boys and girls very well. Just occasionally, teachers do too much for pupils in telling them how to they might do something, rather than questioning them to decide for themselves. Behaviour is very good and pupils are excited about learning. They discuss issues animatedly and negotiate well to choose their course of action.
99. The subject co-ordinator works hard and effectively. Her efforts in developing the history policy and adapting the national planning guidance to create the school's own programme of work have had a strong influence on standards. Her checking of the quality of pupils' work, teachers' planning and the effectiveness of teaching and learning, have also helped. Visits and visitors significantly enhance the progress that pupils make.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

100. Pupils attain average standards. This is a clear improvement since standards were unsatisfactory when the last inspection was carried out. Since that time, both the present and the previous co-ordinators have worked hard to address all the weaknesses identified.
101. The opening of the new computer suite, the purchase of the new equipment it houses, and the completion of government funded training for teachers have helped greatly in raising standards. Whilst overall pupils' achievements are satisfactory, their rate of progress is significantly slowed because the opportunities to practise their skills are restricted by a number of factors. The computers in classrooms are old, and of limited usefulness. Also, there are not enough computers in the suite to cope with the number of pupils in most classes. Often more than thirty pupils will share twelve machines, so frequently three will need to share a computer. The Internet cannot currently be accessed from the classrooms. The school is acutely aware of the problems and is working with the very supportive friends and parents of the school to raise funds to solve these problems.
102. Year 6 pupils seek information using computers, for example, for work in geography about places to visit in Staffordshire. They are particularly good at developing ideas that make use of several features such as images and text. Both Year 6 classes were observed producing their own web page, which incorporated animated images of their choosing. Technical problems have prevented

classes making full use of exchanging information by e-mailing. Pupils are good at reviewing and modifying their work as it progresses. Those in Year 3 were seen discussing how best to instruct a train on screen to follow a given path.

103. The quality of teaching, which varied in the inspection of 1997, is almost uniformly good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. This is one of the main reasons why pupils make satisfactory progress as they pass through the school. This includes pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is a second language. Teachers question skilfully and give clear instructions. Pupils respond very well to this by listening closely and discussing ideas constructively. The teachers also plan well, show enthusiasm for the subject and check diligently how well pupils are learning as the lesson goes on. Consequently, pupils are very keen and often are excited about using computers. Two girls were asked by an inspector whether they liked working in the computer suite. Their emphatic reply was 'We love it!'
104. The co-ordinator has only been in post for a relatively short time, but her work has already had a positive impact on standards in a number of ways. These include action planning, improvements to the assessment and recording of pupils' attainment, and the checking of both standards and teachers' planning. She is aware of the need to increase the provision of software and written guidance for teachers, to ensure that the use of computers in other subjects continues to develop.

## **MUSIC**

105. By the age of eleven, pupils achieve above the levels expected for their age and enjoy their music making activities. The good standards identified in the previous inspection report have been maintained. A number of teachers in the school have musical expertise and so provide the skills and enthusiasm to make lessons lively and challenging. The chance to listen to musicians perform in school, and to benefit from peripatetic teaching in strings, brass and woodwind, is enabling good standards to be achieved.
106. Pupils enjoy listening to music and compose simple pieces of their own. In Year 3, they learn how to keep a steady pulse beat and to create and add different rhythmic patterns with voice and instruments. Good teaching ensures that all pupils achieve their best, so that by the end of the lesson the whole class can perform a three-part round very effectively.
107. In Year 5 and 6, skills with performing and composing are developed well, as pupils are encouraged to use and experiment with simple notation in their work. They evaluate and improve their own 'group performances' and listen carefully to the performance of others. Individual contributions are valued and so all class groups work confidently. The quality of singing is good. Pupils sing their favourite hymns sensitively and are able to follow accompaniment well and enter on cue. In Year 6, pupils develop a greater awareness of the use of dynamics and learn how to improve their diction by singing 'War time' songs with great enthusiasm.
108. Behaviour is good in music lessons, because pupils enjoy singing and creating music, and lessons are well planned, moving forward at a good pace. Instruments are shared amicably and there is no marked difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, similar to the rest of their classmates.
109. In the lessons observed, teaching is good. Teachers are confident when teaching music and they join into the spirit of 'music-making' themselves. Lessons offer challenge and the opportunity for pupils with higher musical skills to act as 'experts' and guide others who are less sure. As yet, teachers are not assessing and recording clearly enough, and this limits the information that is available to them when planning the pupils' next work. Extra-curricular activities, such as choir and band practice, are well taught and popular with pupils.
110. The co-ordinator manages the subject well, and has the expertise and commitment to carry out future improvements. Resources are appropriate to meet the pupils' learning needs, but are being

added to regularly. Learning is also enhanced by high quality support from visiting music teachers.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

111. The eleven-year-olds achieve above average standards, as they did at the last inspection. Teaching is good, and on occasions very good, and all pupils make good progress as they move through the school. A common factor in all lessons is the pupils' willingness to try hard and to achieve high standards. In a Year 5 lesson, the pupils were developing their skills to play net and wall games. Boys and girls learnt how to combine throwing and hitting the ball, ready for playing volley-ball, as well as developing team strategies. Their skills were well developed and honed through the teacher's clear demonstrations, as well as his high expectations of accurate positioning. Pupils expressed great delight at their own performance, as well as enjoying evaluating each other's performance. Without exception, everyone tried hard to do well, with many examples of higher attaining pupils helping less capable classmates.
112. The consistent approach to teaching PE helps boys and girls of all capabilities to learn effectively. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Teachers capably demonstrate specific skills, such as accurately throwing and passing footballs and using different grips for a tennis racquet. Correct footwork and strategies are highlighted and discussed, so that pupils are clear about the standard they are aiming for. This was well demonstrated in a Year 6 games lesson when the pupils worked in groups of three, with one defender and two attackers positioning and controlling the ball. The two attackers successfully employed the tactics and skills they had learnt, challenging the defender successfully, and retaining the ball. These new skills were then used very effectively in the team game that followed. Boys and girls were keen to develop their personal skills, and they all tried extremely hard to improve their own performance, with good success. The very good lesson planning clearly showed how the range of activities increasingly challenged the pupils. Without exception, they rose to the challenges set for them, achieving higher than average standards. Dance is also very well taught and enjoyed and standards are good. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils competently performed a range of movements and patterns in their Caribbean dance, successfully creating a dramatic and powerful climax.
113. Standards in swimming are also good. The school is fortunate in having its own outdoor pool, which is used in the summer months. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their swimming, enjoying the challenge of gaining certificates and awards.
114. The school takes an active role in competitive sports, with regular fixtures in the Dove Valley League. These provide boys and girls with a wide range of competitive sport, which contributes substantially to the school's physical education programme.
115. The subject is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator has a wide range of knowledge, skills and expertise that he successfully brings to the role. Staff are very well supported, resulting in strong teaching and learning. The next stage is to firm up the arrangements for assessing pupils' progress and attainment so that standards can be even higher.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

116. Standards in religious education are in line with those expected for pupils aged eleven, as they were at the last inspection. Religious education is taught in accordance of the locally agreed syllabus for Staffordshire. Pupils' make good progress in lessons and over time, and there are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.
117. The curriculum follows a well-defined programme of study. There are good links with the personal, social and health education programme, which enhances the pupils understanding of issues that affect their lives. Pupils have regular opportunities to learn about major festivals and the key elements of the Christian faith. Pupils in Year 4 visited the local Catholic church and effectively learnt about the symbols that are important to a Christian and the part the church plays in the

local community. The good use of questions by the priest and the teachers, enabled pupils to understand why the church is important and how it is used by the community. They were able to discuss the significance of the objects and how they related to the Easter and other Bible stories they have heard in earlier lessons.

118. Pupils explore various traditions and are able to recognise similarities and differences between the Hindu, Islamic and Christian faiths. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 explore in some depth the teachings of Islam and Hinduism and are able to discuss the similarities and differences between them. Pupils have learnt that different faiths share the belief in God as a supreme being, but that He is worshipped in different ways.
119. The pupils make good progress because the lessons are well planned and interesting. The variety of approaches and the use of real experience enthuses them so that all pupils take part in the lesson. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils are encouraged to discuss their feelings. They explore a situation involving conflict and the teacher's use of challenging questions and pupils' responses enables them to understand how to begin to resolve a potential conflict and relate it to their own situation.
120. There are continuing links with other subjects and pupils' writing and literacy skills are developed through using the similarities between a fable and a parable. The pupils write about the stories they have heard, using a range of vocabulary and in a variety of styles; however these are often limited and do not extend pupils' writing opportunities sufficiently. When higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are given the opportunity to develop their thoughts, both orally and in writing, they produce sympathetic and interesting accounts. The links with the themes for collective worship are good, and extend the spiritual aspect of religious education. The collective worship themes are thoughtfully prepared and provide the opportunity to link with religious education using stories from the bible and those from other faiths.
121. Co-ordination of the subject is good, and the co-ordinator gives advice and support to staff through discussions and sharing ideas. Teaching plans and standards are monitored effectively, and work is regularly assessed, making sure that progress is maintained.

