



# Thomas Russell Junior School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124150  
**Local Authority** Staffordshire  
**Inspection number** 292905  
**Inspection dates** 24–25 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Ted Wheatley

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Gilmour Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Barton-under-Needwood
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11		Burton-on-Trent DE13 8EU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01283 239360
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	271	<b>Fax number</b>	01283 716403
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Seamus Treanor
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Alan Brandrick
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 January 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 7–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 24–25 January 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 292905
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school is larger than average and pupils come from mainly White British backgrounds. A very small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few are in the early stages of learning English. Children come from a broad range of backgrounds and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. Attainment on entry is above average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and statements of special educational need is broadly average.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a school that is highly regarded by parents. It provides a satisfactory standard of education and it is improving. Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is broadly satisfactory but a small proportion of pupils, most noticeably some of the most able pupils, do not make fast enough progress. This is because work is not consistently challenging enough for them. This is improving as teachers increasingly use assessment information to plan work closely matched to pupils' needs, but there is still room for further improvement and consistency in assessment.

The school knows the broad areas it needs to work on to bring about improvements in standards and achievement. However, its own evaluation of teaching and learning does not always give clear enough direction about what it needs to do to improve and as a consequence the pace of improvement is slow. Nevertheless, there are improvements; identified weaknesses in English and mathematics are being dealt with and achievement is better than it was. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the governors support the school well in its efforts to improve. The school has good links with a range of outside bodies, such as other schools, social services and sports organisations that support its work. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Teaching is satisfactory with significant strengths in the relationships between teachers and pupils that make an effective contribution to pupils' good personal development. Pupils are enthusiastic about school; they work hard and have very positive attitudes, taking on responsibilities willingly and maturely. However, on some occasions teachers do not manage the inattentive behaviour of a small number of pupils well enough and this slows the pace of learning. Pupils have a very good understanding of the benefits of healthy lifestyles and take an active part in the wide choice of out of school activities. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with a good range of activities to make it interesting, but there are not quite enough planned opportunities to consistently meet the needs of the most able pupils.

Care, support and guidance as a whole are satisfactory. Procedures to ensure pupils are safe are secure, but suitable academic guidance is not consistently given to pupils. However, support for pupils' personal development is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress by making sure that assessment information is used consistently to match work to pupils' needs, especially for the most able.
- Support teachers to develop strategies to deal with pupils' inattentive behaviour consistently well.
- Improve the sharpness of self-evaluation and the pace with which the school acts to bring about improvements in teaching.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards are above average in all years. Pupils' achievement is improving. It is generally satisfactory and sometimes good in relation to standards on entry, because of an increasingly better match of work to pupils' learning needs. This still varies between classes and is the most significant factor in the underachievement of a small number of the most able pupils and, to a lesser extent, the achievement of some of the least able pupils in science. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement in science is broadly satisfactory and often good.

The school has identified areas of underachievement and has started to deal with them successfully. Underperformance in writing was recently linked to underdeveloped assessment but is now improving. Lower than expected results in mathematics was tracked back to variable mental mathematics and problem-solving skills. Both have been addressed, the first through increased opportunities to practise mental mathematics skills and the second through more carefully planned opportunities for mathematical investigations.

Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because of sound support from teachers and teaching assistants.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall; their spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils are polite and friendly and for the most part they behave well. They are enthusiastic, engage in activities and work conscientiously. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves. The school is particularly good at encouraging pupils to take on responsibilities, and older pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities provided in that respect. For example, they compose and publish the frequent school sports reports and collect and display house points awarded during each week. The school has been successful in gaining the Eco Flag and Healthy Schools Award this year.

There is an active school council which has a positive impact on school life. For example, it suggested establishing a healthy tuck-shop which is now in operation and very well supported. Pupils are well informed about the need for healthy lifestyles and participation in sports activities is high. Preparation for future life is good. Pupils develop enterprise skills, such as the stationery shop which funds school council projects, and they gain good basic skills. Attendance is good.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Sound teaching is a contributory factor in pupils' satisfactory progress. However, whilst improving, the quality of teaching remains variable. Most lessons are carefully planned with a clear purpose so pupils understand what they are to learn. Teachers make increasingly effective use of assessment to provide work which matches pupils' learning needs. In some lessons, work is very challenging and questioning stretches pupils to their limits to explain their understanding. Nevertheless, there are still occasions when work is not matched fully to the needs of the most able pupils and this limits the progress they make. Lessons are generally calm and orderly and pupils work hard. However, in a small minority of lessons where pupil management is not secure, the inattentive behaviour of a few pupils slows the pace of learning.

Teachers' marking is frequently perceptive, positive and provides guidance to pupils on how to reach their targets, but is inconsistent across the school. A growing number of teachers profitably encourage pupils to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. Teaching assistants effectively support pupils with learning difficulties and enable them to make satisfactory progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a sound basis for the pupils to make steady progress, although there are too few planned opportunities to help the most able pupils make good progress. The focus on English, mathematics and science is good and complemented by a broad range of other subjects, visits and visitors to school that enhances pupils' learning. Planning procedures are well established and provide for clear progression as the pupils move through the school. The provision for physical education is good and specialist teaching in French and drama has a positive effect on the pupils' experience. There is an effective programme of personal, social and health education which helps pupils to develop good personal skills and to take on responsibilities within the school.

Pupils benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. A particular success is the Breakercise Club every morning before school where pupils are able to follow energetic activity with a healthy breakfast. Pupils also participate in a variety of sports and music groups. There are good links with the feeder infant school and the high school.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are effective, and successfully ensure pupils' safety, welfare and promote satisfactory achievement. The systems, including

those for checking on attendance are effective. Adults treat pupils with respect, and as a result pupils are confident about seeking help whenever they need it. Pupils' personal development, including the growth of confidence and self-esteem, is promoted very effectively. There are good links with outside agencies, especially for pupils with learning difficulties. The school pays satisfactory attention to promoting anti-racist attitudes.

The monitoring of individual pupils' progress is satisfactory and enables teachers to set realistic targets. Most pupils are aware of their targets and how to achieve them. However, inconsistent assessment practice across the school means that academic guidance varies in quality.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher and senior staff have a sound grasp of the areas where improvement is needed. However, the pace of change is a little slower than it ought to be because the school's self-evaluation is not always sharp enough to provide a clear focus on how to improve teaching and learning, and raise standards. Nevertheless some improvements, notably the increasing use of assessment information to plan lessons and to set pupils targets, are starting to have a positive effect and achievement is improving. Temporary absence in the senior team has also played a part in slowing progress, but this is now over and the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Progress has been sound since the previous inspection.

Governors give sound support to the headteacher and school but recognise the need to sustain efforts to increase the pace of improvements.

The school has good links with the local community, for example sports organisations, other schools and social services that benefit the curriculum, pupils' learning and especially their personal development. Relationships and collaboration with parents and pupils are good and the school takes their opinions and concerns into account when planning improvements.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We very much enjoyed our time at your school. You made us feel very welcome. You were very friendly, polite and helpful to us as we moved round the school. We spoke to quite a number of you in meetings, lessons and around school and you helped us to build a clear view of your school. You spoke to us of your own accord, too, and told us about the school.

These are the main things we found out about your school:

- Your school gives you a satisfactory and improving education.
- Your progress is satisfactory, as is teaching, and sometimes good.
- Your attitudes and behaviour are good. You enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- You have many opportunities to take on responsibilities and many of you do this willingly.
- The school is safe and you have lots of opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles.
- You enjoy all the out of school activities and trips and a very large number of you take part in physical activities.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- Make sure that the teachers use what they know about how well you do to plan work to help you do even better, especially the most able of you.
- Help teachers develop ways to deal with the small number of you who do not always listen as carefully as you should.
- Make sure it knows all the things it has to do to become more successful, and then to make that happen more quickly.

You can help the school improve, too. A small number of you do not always pay attention to what you are asked to do and this slows down how well you learn. You could help by always listening properly and doing what you are asked to do straight away.