

First Base

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134617
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	381698
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	3–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	Judi Bush
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2009
School address	School Lane Brandon IP27 0AD
Telephone number	01842 815478
Fax number	01842 819691
Email address	admin@brandonfirstbase.suffolk.sch.uk

Age group	3–8
Inspection date(s)	11–12 October 2011
Inspection number	381698

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Three lessons were observed taught by one teacher. Meetings were held with staff, two members of the management committee and a parent. Informal discussions took place with three pupils and telephone discussions were held with three parents and carers, the headteachers of three schools and the local authority adviser. The inspector observed the pupil referral unit's work, and looked at documentation including the development plan, tracking data to show pupils' progress, individual case studies, curriculum plans and policies in relation to the welfare and safety of pupils. Samples of pupils' work were also examined. The inspector scrutinised questionnaires returned from staff and four parents and carers.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How consistently is assessment information used to match tasks to different abilities and ensure that all groups of pupils are making equally good progress?
- How well are opportunities to develop writing and number skills promoted across the curriculum?
- Do the policies and procedures for promoting safeguarding provide clear enough guidance to staff?
- How well does the local authority form its own view of the work of the unit and hold it to account for its work and has the management committee implemented a schedule of visits?

Information about the school

First Base provides support for pupils with a range of behavioural, emotional and social needs, who are experiencing difficulties in their mainstream schools and are at risk of exclusion. Pupils are registered at both their school and the unit except in the case of pupils who have occasionally been permanently excluded from school. Pupils come from a wide area of West Suffolk, most are boys and nearly all are from White British backgrounds. An above average proportion are known to be eligible for free school meals. All pupils have been identified with special educational and/or disabilities, although no current pupils hold a statement. Pupils attend the unit on a part-time basis for up to two days each week for a maximum of one year. For the remainder of the week, they attend their mainstream schools. Some pupils attend the unit, while others, including Nursery-aged children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are supported in their mainstream schools and settings on an outreach basis. In addition a behaviour support service provides behaviour support for over 40 pupils in 90 primary schools at any given time. A new post of deputy headteacher has been created since the last inspection and a new management committee has been formed. Plans are in place to relocate the unit into purpose-built premises in May 2012.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school’s capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

First Base is an outstanding pupil referral unit. It provides an outstanding and highly relevant curriculum which promotes excellent enjoyment of learning and outstanding opportunities for pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the care, guidance and support which they receive are outstanding. These are reflected in rapid improvements in pupils’ self-confidence and in their relationships with others, and outstanding improvements in behaviour and attendance in a relatively short period of time. The unit has outstanding safeguarding procedures and ensures pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. Headteachers of a sample of mainstream schools, rightly, highlighted the excellent collaboration and partnership with the unit as key factors in ensuring pupils continue to learn successfully in their mainstream schools. The outstanding links with parents and carers are reflected in their overwhelmingly positive views. Reflecting the views of others, one said, ‘I have found staff at First Base to be extremely caring and helpful. They carefully explain what they will do to help my child and how they will involve me in the process. I can’t speak highly enough about it.’

Pupils make good progress in reaching broadly average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, from below average starting points when they enter the unit. They successfully re-engage with learning and in lessons they were seen to focus on their activities with enthusiasm and complete their tasks. Good teaching, with excellent use of well-chosen resources and well thought-out activities, promotes good learning for all groups of pupils, including the very few of minority ethnic heritage. Information about pupils’ prior attainment is nearly always used to match learning tasks to different levels of ability. However, very occasionally, this is not the case so that a very few pupils struggle because the tasks may be too difficult or too easy. Very detailed information is recorded about each pupil’s progress in learning in small steps, although this is not used to provide a view of achievement as a whole within the unit from one year to the next. The wider gains made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are collated and analysed effectively. The well-conceived referral, planning and review meetings with each pupil’s school focus sharply on the outcomes the school wishes to see achieved during the period of time pupils attend the unit. These focus on behaviour, rather than learning, and are nearly always exceeded.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide outstanding leadership in developing the work of the unit. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed very well. The local authority and the new

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

management committee are providing good support for the unit and holding it to account for its work through a range of meetings and frequent focused visits. The unit has applied clear and rigorous criteria to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have an accurate view of the unit's strengths and areas for development derived from systematic monitoring of teaching in lessons and in frequent meetings with staff about pupils' progress. They use the outcomes from these to set well-conceived and clear priorities for further development. As a result, the quality of teaching and assessment systems have greatly improved and many aspects of the unit's work have moved from good to outstanding. Consequently, the unit has an outstanding capacity to further improve. The unit uses its resources exceptionally well to secure excellent outcomes for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing good teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - using information about each pupil's prior attainment and progress to produce an annual overview of achievement for the unit as a whole
 - agreeing targets for learning, linked to National Curriculum levels, for each pupil referred to the unit, at the initial planning meeting with their school
 - always ensuring that learning tasks are matched to the prior attainment of individual pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children enter the unit with skills that are below expectations for their age, particularly in personal, social and emotional development where their prior attainment is typically low. They make outstanding progress in their personal development as a result of the high quality guidance and support they receive, in the unit and in school, through their key workers. Pupils throughout the unit make good progress in learning because they are well taught and occasionally, they make outstanding progress. For example, in just one year, individual children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have exceeded age-related expectations in all areas of learning from low starting points.

Pupils' outstanding behaviour in lessons has a significant impact on their learning as they focus on their tasks and enjoy participating in the rich variety of activities. All pupils listen very carefully to staff, follow instructions and make equally good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. On rare occasions, a very few pupils find learning too hard or too easy because the tasks are not matched to their prior attainment. Nevertheless, as a result of their good progress during the short time they attend the unit, their achievement is good.

Pupils said that they feel exceptionally safe and they adopt very safe practices in the unit such as using cutlery at meal times properly and moving safely around the building. They exercise vigorously at breaktimes and always make healthy choices at lunchtime. They contribute well to their community, not only through their

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

outstanding behaviour which enables others to learn, but also by fundraising for a number of good causes and doing little jobs around the unit. Pupils help to lay the table and clear away after meal times and they take turns in sharing out resources in lessons. They greet visitors with a smile and take a pride in showing them their work. Pupils’ high attendance has a positive impact on their learning and, together with their outstanding progress in personal development and the good progress in learning, ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Moreover, the outstanding progress pupils make in their personal development through the work of the unit enables them to meet with an excellent level of success when the return full time to mainstream school.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In lessons seen, teaching was at least good and sometimes outstanding. This was fairly consistent with the school’s own monitoring of teaching, where more lessons were judged to be outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and excellent relationships, the management of behaviour and use of well-chosen resources are outstanding features of teaching. Staff make good use of assessment to inform learning. Pupils always receive good feedback on how well they are doing and learning tasks are nearly always matched to their different levels of prior attainment. Very occasionally, the tasks provided are too challenging for low attaining pupils or do not extend more-able pupils.

The very strong emphasis on personal, social and health education as well as

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

promotion of literacy and numeracy which extends across all learning activities, ensures that the curriculum is highly relevant. Excellent opportunities for enrichment during the two days pupils attend the unit include the Forest Schools curriculum which encourages resilience, builds self-confidence and creates tremendous enjoyment as many pupils experience the outdoors for the first time. The curriculum promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well, especially through enabling pupils to work with visiting puppeteers, artists, owners of exotic animals from around the world and musicians. The excellent partnerships and close collaboration with pupils' mainstream schools aid the very smooth transition between the school and the unit. Each pupil is allocated a key worker, who liaises very closely with the school and the family to ensure consistency of support in the management of behaviour and learning between the unit and the school. This has an excellent impact on sustaining successful learning at the end of the placement when pupils move back full-time into mainstream. Excellent procedures ensure highly effective support and collaboration between the unit and each pupil's school. Behaviour support provided by inclusion workers is also greatly valued by mainstream schools in giving teachers the strategies to manage any incidents of challenging behaviour confidently in their own classes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are exceptionally ambitious for the unit and drive improvements through rigorously and systematically. This has resulted in the curriculum and many aspects of personal development moving from good to outstanding since the last inspection. Good monitoring of teaching and learning has led to sustained improvements in the quality of teaching with more outstanding features in teaching now in place. Good support from the local authority and regular monitoring of the unit's work by the management committee ensure that the unit is held to account for its work and all statutory requirements are met. The unit rigorously applies all the required checks on the suitability of staff and visitors and ensures that safeguarding permeates all aspects of its work. For example, it undertakes highly individualised risk assessments for every pupil across all activities and in each area of the unit's work, including on Forest School trips. The security of the premises and very high levels of staff supervision and engagement in pupils' activities throughout the day are key strengths in promoting safeguarding. Discrimination is tackled effectively and all pupils have good opportunities to benefit from all that the unit offers. The excellent links with parents and carers are seen not only in their overwhelmingly positive views

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

about the unit but in their active engagement in their planning for and review of their children’s progress. Key workers are highly effective in facilitating outstanding partnerships with schools. Community cohesion is promoted well, especially between the unit and each pupil’s mainstream school. Pupils learn to appreciate and respect diversity and contribute to the learning of others through the exceptional improvements in their behaviour.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although there are currently no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage working in the unit, the school’s tracking shows that outcomes for all children have been good. They have made good progress in all areas of learning and especially in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. For example, some children increased their knowledge of sounds and letters so that they were able to read simple words within two terms of attending the unit, having arrived with no reading skills. Staff adapt and implement the learning and welfare requirements well to suit each individual child. There are regular planned visits to the local forest and a balance between teacher-led and child-initiated, with indoor and outdoor experiences. Stimulating and well-resourced learning opportunities nurture children’s development effectively as they take part in purposeful play and exploration. Assessment is used well in planning these activities, which stem from a thorough knowledge of each child’s interests and learning needs. The promotion of children’s safety is an outstanding feature reflecting the strengths in the rest of the unit. Strong collaborative links with schools and parents and carers ensure a smooth and successful transition into school. Good leadership ensures that all learning and welfare requirements are met.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The high rate of return of completed questionnaires demonstrates the overwhelmingly positive views of parents and carers about all aspects of the unit's work. Parents and carers indicated that the quality of teaching, the progress made by their children, the management of behaviour, the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the unit's ability to meet the needs of their children are particular strengths. They all believe that their children are kept safe, that the unit is well managed and they are all happy with their children's experiences at the unit. There were no concerns raised. This inspection found that pupils' safety and well-being are extremely well promoted. Pupils make good progress in learning and outstanding progress in their personal development as a result of an outstanding curriculum and care, guidance and support.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at First Base to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received four completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are five pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	25	3	75	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	1	25	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of First Base, Brandon, IP27 0AD

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited you all recently. You told me how much you enjoy coming to First Base and I was very impressed with your excellent behaviour. I saw how well you are learning in your lessons and was pleased to see the good progress you are making. I agree with you that the unit is excellent.

Teaching at the unit is good and all the staff care for you exceptionally well. They help you to learn how to stay very safe and healthy. Staff from your other schools and your parents and carers say that First Base is doing an excellent job of helping you to succeed in your schools and I agree with them. Your key workers do a really good job of making sure you are settle down to learn in your schools. Other staff, called inclusion workers, are doing a good job in helping some of your schools to develop better ways of managing difficult behaviour. Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Your headteacher and her staff manage First Base really well.

I have asked the headteacher and her staff to do just one thing to make First Base even better for you.

- Use the knowledge they have about how well you are learning, to make sure that you are always given tasks which you can do and which extend your learning. You can help by continuing to try your best.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**