

First Base, Ipswich

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133715
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	381536
Inspection dates	28–29 November 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	7
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Jim Nind
Headteacher	Janice Siddall
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Three lessons were observed taught by one teacher. Meetings were held with staff, three members of the management committee, three headteachers of mainstream primary schools and a local authority adviser. Informal discussions took place with three pupils and a small number of parents and carers. The inspector observed the pupil referral unit's work, and looked at documentation including the unit's development plan; tracking data to show pupils' progress; four 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 seven parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How does teaching and tracking of progress in learning ensure that different groups of pupils are making the same progress?
- How does the use of target setting for learning and the curriculum prepare pupils for full integration into their mainstream schools?
- What impact are the newly refurbished outdoor and indoor learning environments having on pupils' enjoyment and achievement?
- How does the local authority and management committee form their own view of the work of the unit and ensure that statutory requirements are met?

Information about the school

First Base pupil referral unit serves seven clusters of schools within the southern area of Suffolk. It provides part-time education for pupils, none of whom have a statement, whose special educational needs arise from behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties. The unit aims to improve their behaviour and re-engage them with learning. Pupils are registered at the unit and their mainstream school. They attend the unit for one day per week for two terms and remain on their school roll for the rest of the week. Pupils enter the unit because they are at risk of exclusion as a result of the difficulties they are experiencing in their mainstream school. They are disengaged with learning and many have histories of poor attendance. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds and most pupils are boys. A very high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Very few pupils are looked after by the local authority. There are currently no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attending the unit.

The unit also manages the behaviour support service, which provides outreach support for 88 primary schools and a few early years settings. It is currently supporting 58 pupils. There have been a number of changes since the last inspection. The outdoor and indoor learning environments have been totally refurbished. The number of pupils on roll has reduced. There has been a change of deputy headteacher with a recent permanent appointment and a new Chair of the Management Committee was appointed a year ago. The school continues to hold the Healthy Schools award.

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 provides an outstanding education for its pupils. The outstanding curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that pupils' progress in their personal development is outstanding. This results in their outstanding behaviour as they progress through the unit and in their high levels of attendance. This, together with their good and sometimes outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy, enables pupils to fully re-engage with learning and prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through the family ethos of the unit. This provides a highly-structured learning environment where strong team work from staff ensures a predictable and dependable learning environment where pupils stay safe and secure. The newly refurbished outdoor and indoor learning environments are having a positive impact on pupils' excellent enjoyment. Outstanding partnerships with schools are reflected in the very positive views of headteachers and the excellent reputation of the work of the unit. Links with parents and carers are outstanding and are reflected in their strongly positive views. They say how very happy their children are to attend the unit and notice the excellent improvements in their child's behaviour and willingness to learn.

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage referred for support have levels of development well below those expected for their ages, especially in personal, social and emotional development. They make rapid progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 they exceed the expectations for their ages in most areas of learning. As a result of good teaching overall, and sometimes outstanding teaching, and good use of assessment, there are no significant differences in the good academic progress that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making, nor in their outstanding progress in personal development. The precise use of target setting for behaviour, seen in individual education plans (IEPs), and the provision of enjoyable and imaginative learning opportunities, prepares pupils exceptionally well for return to mainstream. Although there is a strong emphasis on promoting literacy and numeracy across subjects taught, there are missed opportunities to include targets for reading, writing, and mathematics in IEPs. The very few pupils identified with additional special educational needs who are looked after by the local authority make outstanding progress in learning because of the high-quality external support they receive.

The headteacher's excellent leadership, with strong support from the deputy headteacher, is driving forward improvements. Improvements identified at the last

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inspection have been very well addressed and leaders monitor the quality of teaching exceptionally well to identify clear areas for improvement. As a result, the unit has sustained outstanding outcomes for pupils and outstanding aspects of its provision. The unit benefits from good support from the local authority and management committee, who monitor its work closely and ensure statutory requirements are met, particularly for safeguarding. Taken together, the unit has an outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that individual education plans contain specific and measurable targets for reading, writing and mathematics, which are derived from the initial assessments of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils' achievement is good and is reflected in the sustained good progress in reading, writing and mathematics over a short time at the unit. Their outstanding progress in re-engaging with learning was seen in a science lesson on pond dipping, where pupils showed intense curiosity and enjoyment. They carefully transferred pond life from their nets into their trays in order to classify and record them. Pupils make good gains from their below-average starting points to achieve broadly average standards. Boys and girls and those known to be eligible for free school meals make equally good progress. The very few pupils with additional special educational needs and who are looked after by the local authority make exceptional progress. They reach levels of attainment similar to their peers, but from much lower starting points. This is due to the unit's rapid involvement of outside agencies, the parents and carers and the mainstream school in implementing highly personalised programmes, extremely well.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in their increased self-confidence, rapid improvements in self-esteem, excellent improvements in their relationships and ability to work with others. They develop a good understanding and appreciation of diversity through the enriching experiences of the curriculum. They develop an understanding of different habitats and living conditions throughout the world. Pupils greatly enjoy using artefacts from theme boxes in the celebration of Diwali and for making Chinese dragons. They also taste healthy international foods such as guavas, pineapples and mangos. Pupils have an excellent understanding of staying healthy, choosing fruit, drinking fresh water and exercising in the outdoor environment. For example, in an outdoor gym session, pupils focused on and enjoyed all their physical activities, exercising most vigorously throughout. Pupils' good contribution to the community is seen not only in fundraising for good causes but in their growing consideration towards others, and in the excellent progress they make in their behaviour which enables other pupils to learn and make progress.

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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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall and in two thirds of lessons seen it was outstanding. Previous weaknesses in teaching, which have been effectively eliminated, have resulted in good rather than outstanding learning and progress overall. Teachers maintain excellent relationships with their pupils. Good subject knowledge, together with high expectations for learning, ensures good progress. Outstanding team work with teaching assistants, who re-enforce the code of conduct and the unit’s excellent system of rewards and sanctions, ensures that behaviour is managed most effectively and pupils quickly refocus on learning. Assessment information is used well to match learning tasks closely to different aptitudes and to personalise their learning experiences. Very thorough assessments on entry to the unit, involving the mainstream school and the behaviour support service, include detailed profiles of behaviour and current National Curriculum levels in reading writing and mathematics. Information about pupils’ behaviour is used to set clear behaviour targets in IEPs but the information about pupils’ prior learning in reading, writing and mathematics is not translated into IEP targets.

The highly personalised curriculum, which is planned in consultation with the mainstream primary school and parents and carers, provides wide-ranging and enriching experiences which have a very positive impact on pupils’ personal development. During their short stay in the unit, pupils engage in well planned

imaginative activities, such as forest school activities, outdoor reading and pond

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

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dipping, which enthuse and motivate pupils’ learning. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted extremely well through enriching experiences. The outstanding care and support provided for the very few pupils, whose circumstances make them most vulnerable enable them to settle quickly into routines and make rapid progress in learning and behaviour. The outstanding arrangements for induction, as seen during the inspection, involve parents and carers, prospective pupils, staff from mainstream schools and support workers in an exceptionally well-planned visit to the unit. This facilitates an extremely smooth transition to the unit. Excellent links with parents and carers to promote their children’s well-being and outstanding partnerships with schools and other agencies were seen in a highly effective ‘Team Around the Child’ meeting where everyone was engaged in the planning process. The systematic implementation of a rigorous and extremely well-thought-out behaviour policy, together with excellent role models of staff, ensure outstanding progress in behaviour with no exclusions in the unit at any time. Attendance is exceptionally well monitored and promoted, resulting in consistently high attendance.

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?

The very strong drive for improvement, shared by all staff, has resulted in outstanding provision and outcomes for pupils, and consolidated the excellent partnerships with mainstream schools and outside agencies. As a result of outstanding monitoring of the unit’s work, the quality of teaching has improved. Ambitious targets are set for pupils to improve their behaviour and re-engage with learning. The success of this is articulated strongly by parents, staff, members of the behaviour support service and mainstream schools. This is reflected in the excellent reputation the unit has for its work within the local authority and the excellent links with parents and carers. They are exceptionally well informed about their children’s progress and fully involved in decision making affecting their children’s learning and well-being. The local authority and management committee support the direction of the unit well. They are rigorous in ensuring that statutory requirements, particularly those for safeguarding, are met. They are fully involved in evaluating the unit’s work and have very positive relationship with staff. The school’s promotion of equality of opportunity lies at the heart of its work. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and there are no significant differences in the performance of different groups. Monitoring of the promotion of equality has resulted in excellent team work with a range of agencies to ensure that the very few pupils from the most vulnerable of

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circumstances reach attainment levels similar to other groups from their lower starting points.

The unit is rigorous in its promotion of safeguarding and this permeates every aspect of its work. Policies are frequently updated to take account of new guidance and procedures, and vetting checks reflect best practice. Staff are highly skilled in managing and defusing situations for those pupils with the most challenging behaviours. Assessments of risk are extremely thorough and involve the exemplary collaboration of unit staff, behaviour support staff, parents and carers, pupils themselves, and mainstream schools. The school actively engages mainstream schools in supporting its good promotion of community cohesion. It evaluates its work effectively and this has led to a growing appreciation and celebration of diversity locally, nationally and globally, particularly within the curriculum. The unit manages its resources very well to achieve outstanding outcomes for pupils and, as a result, provides excellent value for money.

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	1
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	1
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

The unit’s detailed and highly accurate tracking system and excellent use of assessment clearly demonstrates outstanding progress of children in most areas of learning, particularly in personal social and emotional development from their low starting points. For example, in 2010, the very few children supported in the unit achieved above the expectations for their ages in five out of six areas for learning in two terms. The headteacher’s observations of lessons show that children develop very high levels of concentration and imagination through, for example, exceeding a target of concentrating for two minutes by concentrating for 30 minutes in mixing a magic potion and engaging in messy play. Highly effective teaching and extremely

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well-planned outdoor and indoor learning activities stimulate enjoyment. For example, a child showed great enjoyment in a forest school activity, becoming engrossed in collecting natural woodland products to build a habitat for a woodlouse. Assessment is used extremely well in planning to extend the learning of more-able children. Lesson plans incorporate a range of different learning objectives and supporting activities to extend learning beyond the goals expected for the child’s age to National Curriculum levels. The early engagement of behaviour support staff and outside professionals lead to the development of highly personalised learning opportunities. These ensure that those very few children with additional special educational needs achieve the same expectations for their ages as other children. Lesson planning and outcomes of the unit’s observations show that extremely well-led adult sessions are carefully balanced with opportunities for children to initiate their own learning. This was confirmed by mainstream school headteachers during the inspection. Outstanding leadership ensures the excellent promotion of children’s safety and well-being, outstanding arrangements for transition, and full involvement of parents, schools and agencies to promote children’s learning and welfare.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The exceptionally high rate of return of completed questionnaires from parents and carers, reflects their overwhelming positive views about the work of the unit. They unanimously agreed that teaching was good, that their children are making good progress in the unit and that the school listens to their views. There was equally unanimous agreement that the unit is well led, and parents and carers are happy with their children’s experiences in the unit. All parents and carers say that their children are kept safe. There were very few concerns which related to children’s enjoyment of First Base, which related to mainstream school rather than the unit. These were looked at carefully and discussed with the headteacher. The inspection found that teaching is good and leads to good progress in learning, with the care, guidance and support provided to children and the curriculum both outstanding. These aspects lead to their great enjoyment in school, their excellent progress in behaviour, their high levels of attendance and their successful return to mainstream classes.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at First Base, Ipswich 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 seven completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are seven pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	71	1	14	1	14	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	71	2	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	57	3	43	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)	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	86	1	14	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	7	100	0	0	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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of First Base, Ipswich, Ipswich, IP3 0EW

Thank you for welcoming me when I visited First Base recently. I could see how much you all enjoyed your activities there. Thank you also for telling me about your school during snack time. I saw the excellent progress you are making in your behaviour and how this is helping you to learn more in your lessons. I was also very impressed with the pond life you collected during your pond dipping activity. I agree with you that First Base is excellent. You make good progress in learning because teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. Staff provide excellent care guidance and support for you. This, together with excellent learning experiences and the lovely atmosphere in your unit, promotes your outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Your behaviour support teachers are doing an excellent job in helping you to learning successfully in your schools. First Base is managed extremely well by the headteacher and staff who make sure they work very effectively with your mainstream schools and your parents and carers.

I have suggested one thing that your headteacher and staff should do to help you learn even better.

- Make sure that you have targets for reading, writing and mathematics so you know what you should achieve.

Please keep on working hard and trying your best. In this way, you will help make the unit even better.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Lead inspector

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