

First Base

Airfield Road, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 7PJ

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership. She sets very high standards but also provides highly effective support to all staff to help them to meet her very high expectations for pupils' learning, progress and behaviour.
- The quality of the unit's work has improved even more since the last inspection. Marking and feedback to pupils are even sharper and more precise.
- The management committee works in very close partnership with the unit and its staff to ensure that pupils receive the best provision possible.
- Teaching is outstanding not least because teachers and inclusion staff work as a closely knit team to provide a finely balanced mix of support for behaviour and support for learning.
- Work is carefully tailored so that it is pitched at just the right level for each individual pupil in the unit. Hence, pupils achieve outstandingly well.
- The provision for early years is outstanding. Activities are skilfully put together to help children get the most out of them.
- Children in the early years make considerable strides forward in developing early literacy and numeracy skills due to the high quality provision.
- Staff are highly effective in assessing pupils' ongoing progress and breaking tasks down into small steps that pupils can work on successfully.
- Pupils make significant improvements in their behaviour and learn to manage it themselves. Consequently, they are able to go back to their mainstream schools on a full-time basis.
- The strong focus on improving behaviour goes hand-in-hand with improving pupils' learning and achievement.
- Pupils' success in learning gives them confidence and a sense of achievement. This instils a desire to do even better.
- The high level of success in reintegrating pupils back into their primary schools is also down to the exceptional work staff do with parents and the pupils' home schools.
- As a result, pupils experience the same, consistent demands on them in relation to their behaviour, as well as expectations of their learning, at home, in the unit and in their mainstream schools.
- The unit gives a very high priority to pupils' safety. They are exceptionally well cared for and looked after. Pupils learn how to be kind to one another.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out three lesson observations. The inspector also made a couple of shorter visits to lessons. In addition, she observed a small group session at the mainstream primary school of one of the pupils attending the unit. This was led by a member of staff, an inclusion worker, from First Base.
- During the visit to the primary school, the inspector was able to observe the member of staff working with the class teacher and with the parents of the pupil.
- Carrying out joint lesson observations was discussed with the headteacher but it was decided that this might be too much for the pupils. Instead, findings from observations were discussed with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and comparisons made with their own checks on teaching.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher; deputy headteacher; three members of the management committee, including the Chair; and a representative from the local authority.
- Telephone conversations were held with two headteachers of local primary schools that use or have used the unit to support some of their pupils.
- Discussions were held with pupils informally during the inspection. Given the age range of the pupils and the reasons for them being at the unit, formal meetings were deemed to be inappropriate.
- While no parents responded to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, Parent View, the unit was able to provide evidence of parents' responses to its own questionnaires. In addition, the inspector was able to observe part of a review meeting with members of one pupil's family and to speak to the parents of another during the weekly progress meeting with their child's inclusion worker.
- The inspector took account of seven Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector observed the work of the unit. She looked at the unit's self-evaluation summary, the improvement plan, a range of policies and procedures, documents relating to the work of the management committee, and the arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safeguarded. Documentation reviewed included data relating to pupils' attainment and progress, records of behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Gulshanbir Kayembe, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the unit has moved to new purpose-built accommodation in Bury St Edmunds.
- The unit caters for up to 12 pupils between the ages of three and eight years who have significant behavioural, emotional and social needs.
- Occasionally, a Year 2 pupil who has been attending during the summer term and still needs extra support in the autumn term even though they are by then in Year 3, continues to attend the unit. However, no pupils are taken on if they are already in Year 3.
- At the time of the inspection, all pupils on the unit's roll were in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2. It is rare for the unit to have a child of Nursery age.
- Pupils are usually dual registered with a primary school in West Suffolk.
- Pupils attend the unit for two days a week, spending the other three days in their mainstream school. The 12 pupils are taught in two groups of six, with a maximum of six in the unit at any one time.
- The unit's main and significant aim is to reintegrate pupils back to their mainstream schools on a full-time basis. On average, pupils are in the unit for about two terms.
- Inclusion workers support pupils in their mainstream primary school and also work with staff in their schools, especially their class teachers, and parents.
- Typically, most pupils come from White British backgrounds. There are far more boys than girls in the unit.
- All pupils have special educational needs. None currently has an education, health and care plan. Many pupils have speech and language difficulties and some have autism spectrum disorders, though not all needs have been diagnosed when pupils begin.
- The unit does not currently receive any pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal and/or to be in the care of the local authority varies. At the time of the inspection, the proportion, at about a third, was above average.
- The unit also does not receive any primary school physical education and sport funding. This is government funding to encourage primary-aged pupils to become active and healthy.
- The unit's main full-time teacher left at the end of last half-term. Temporary arrangements have been in place since the start of November 2014. The unit is in the process of recruiting a full-time, permanent teacher to begin in January 2015.
- Longer-term plans are in the process of being developed to create a partnership with other local schools and pupil referral units.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure support from the local authority to track pupils' progress in the long term, following reintegration, in order to identify any aspect of the unit's work that could be done even better.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher sets the bar high in terms of what she expects the unit to achieve and provides staff with the right guidance and support to enable them to achieve exceptionally good outcomes for pupils and children in the early years. Staff have a strong sense of common purpose and team work is exceptional. This is a result of the highly successful way in which the headteacher and deputy headteacher work together and with staff.
- The leadership of teaching in both Key Stage 1 and the early years is very strong. Techniques for teaching pupils and children in the unit, and in sessions in their mainstream schools, are analysed in depth to ensure that they will work. Best practice from within the unit and from other settings is used to continually improve teaching and learning, and to keep pace with national developments.
- Leaders have established a culture where reflecting on, and maintaining professional dialogue about, teaching and learning form a key cornerstone of the unit's work. The 'sparkly moments' celebrated at staff meetings are an example of how significant breakthroughs, particularly successful interactions with learners or skilled interventions, are captured and shared. These help to extend everyone's understanding of what works well. The unit also provides valued training for parents and staff from other schools.
- Staff are provided with specific and precise training, mentoring and coaching based on an in-depth knowledge of their personal strengths and areas for development. This enables them to work highly effectively and to continuously improve their skills. Induction for new staff is very comprehensive and ensures that high standards are maintained, even when staff join for a time limited period.
- While there is relatively small leadership structure, comprising the headteacher and deputy headteacher, skilled support is provided to enable others to undertake leadership opportunities, such as enhancing partnerships with parents further or creating a philosophy programme. Hence, the contribution that staff leading on specific projects or initiatives make to the unit's leadership is exceptional.
- The teaching programmes for both Key Stage 1 pupils and children under five are built, very appropriately, around the early years approaches to learning. The use of themes or books, such as *The Gruffalo*, engage pupils' interests and provide a strong platform for promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The unit has recently adopted a 'values-based' curriculum where themes such as 'kindness' are delivered very effectively through lessons. A strikingly designed and well-equipped outdoor area successfully promotes an active lifestyle. The unit has made excellent progress in implementing the new National Curriculum requirements.
- British values and being prepared for life in modern Britain are delivered highly effectively through the curriculum. Pupils and children in the early years are given opportunities to think about differences between them and others, starting from learning to understand how their own behaviour affects others. The unit ensures equality of opportunity is very well promoted; discrimination or discriminatory language are not tolerated. It uses its resources exceptionally well to narrow or close gaps in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to others in the unit and nationally.
- The unit has established strong links with the schools pupils come from, other pupil referral units and relevant agencies. It uses its links with social services and other professionals to work highly effectively in dealing with any safeguarding issues or concerns. The local authority provides good support to the unit.
- Staff work closely with parents and carers, enabling them to help their children deal successfully with their behaviour and learning. Staff give frequent and comprehensive feedback to parents and carers on their children's progress and development. Parents and carers are highly positive about the unit's work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee is highly effective in overseeing the work of the unit and probing its performance. Unit leaders are challenged, supported and guided by members of the management committee in an equitable partnership with the unit staff.

- The Chair of the Management Committee brings considerable expertise to her role, as indeed do all other members, and works in close partnership with the headteacher. A shared vision for the future development of the unit results in a cohesive approach to planning for this future, and members are actively involved in plans for the development of a partnership with other schools locally. Members are very well informed through their regular visits and the comprehensive data and information from the unit's self-evaluation that the headteacher provides. Consequently, they have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of how good the unit is, how well pupils perform and how good the teaching is.
- Members make informed decisions, based on performance, about pay. They check how well different groups of pupils and children are progressing, both in their learning and behaviour, and keep a close eye on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- The management committee also looks at the success of re-integration. It is, rightly, interested in understanding the longer-term impact of the unit's work. However, the unit has limited access to data which can help it to analyse the extent to which pupils who have gone back to their mainstream school remain in mainstream for the rest of their school careers. The management committee ensures that the unit meets all legal requirements, including those for safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils in the unit is outstanding. When children in early years and pupils in Key Stage 1 arrive, their behaviour is poor and a significant barrier to learning. Many pupils have been unable to work in class in their mainstream school and have been isolated from their peers.
- During their time at the unit, pupils' behaviour undergoes significant change. They learn to become more self-aware and to understand how their behaviour, when it is poor, impacts on others. Pupils experience significant emotional growth and development while at the unit. As a result, they develop the resilience and self-confidence to keep going, for example, sticking at it when work is difficult. Pupils also improve markedly their ability to work on their own. A significant factor in effecting these changes is to get pupils, and other people around them where relevant, to think differently about themselves and their behaviour and to develop strategies to manage it themselves. Children in the early years also make significant progress in improving their behaviour and their social skills improve considerably.
- Pupils learn to make friends. A frequent comment from parents and staff was about pupils' lack of ability, prior to attending the unit, to make friends, get on with others or even be aware of their peers. Once at the unit, they start to establish more enduring relationships with adults and one another. Pupils readily help one another and are welcoming to others. Their ability to take turns and share becomes vastly improved. At lunch, for example, pupils socialised very well with one another and passed food and drinks along the table. Behaviour during play times is impeccable.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are much more positive as a result of being in the unit. They want to learn and to do well. Pupils greatly enjoy earning 'smiley faces' for good behaviour or work, and hate getting 'dots' for not completing work or behaving badly. No pupils have been excluded this year or last, and pupils are rarely away unless ill. Attendance and behaviour are exceptionally well monitored.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The unit itself provides a very safe and secure environment within which pupils feel very safe. They are taught how to keep themselves safe and to understand that their behaviour, when it is not good, can hurt themselves and others. Pupils are learning the importance of being kind to others. Their responses to using their hands in a kind way have been very good with, for example, one pupil gently massaging another's back. Children in the early years are equally safe and develop their understanding of how to stay safe equally well.
- Through story books and other curricular opportunities, pupils are taught to accept and respect those who are different. The rare instances of bullying or racist and homophobic name calling are dealt with very effectively by unit staff, and parents are appropriately involved in dealing with such behaviour.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much teaching over time is outstanding and is never less than consistently good. Teachers and inclusion workers work together in a strong partnership to provide highly effective teaching to pupils. Teaching for children in the early years is equally good. The practical nature of tasks and activities benefit all groups greatly. The use of visual timetables helps those with special educational needs and younger children who are not yet reading on their own.
- Displays are rich and vibrant, and provide lots of stimulation to help pupils' thinking while they work. Pupils are particularly taken with the story of *The Gruffalo* and completely absorbed in the details about, for example, where different animals live. They talk about these in a lively and engaging manner, asking questions as well as giving their own opinions and views.
- Staff expect a great deal from pupils and provide them with work that is challenging and makes them think things through for themselves. Each pupil is provided with individual work based on careful assessment of their progress so far. Hence, the work they do moves pupils smoothly on to their next steps in learning. Pupils' progress is discussed with them and they receive excellent feedback and guidance on what they need to do next. Consequently, pupils have a very clear idea of how well they are getting on.
- Inclusion workers interact with pupils exceptionally well especially when working with them on a one-to-one basis or in pairs. They ask probing questions that encourage pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding. Inclusion workers are also highly effective in managing and modifying behaviour.
- Basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy are very well taught both in Key Stage 1 and the early years. Pupils are encouraged to use their knowledge of letter sounds to help with both their reading and their writing. Planning is exceptionally well developed so that relevant opportunities to develop basic skills are built into work across different subjects.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- When children in the early years begin at the unit, their level of development is usually lower than that typical for their age. Attainment levels in reading, writing and mathematics for those joining in Key Stage 1 are often low in comparison to age related expectations. Some pupils do arrive with good levels of ability in reading, writing and/or mathematics but, on balance, attainment on entry tends to be low.
- Pupils make significant progress in the short time they are in the unit and their progress accelerates as their behaviour becomes more controlled. Many pupils leave with levels of attainment that are close to, or in line with, where they should be. This is especially so in reading and mathematics. The excellent focus on speaking and listening helps pupils to articulate ideas before writing them down and to think more deeply about their work.
- By the time they leave, most pupils in Key Stage 1 are reading independently, have a good grasp of letters and the sounds they make, and are learning to add up and take away numbers. Writing levels improve too with pupils being able to understand and use basic punctuation, and spell commonly used words, correctly.
- More-able pupils make as good progress as others because they are challenged well and given work that is pitched at the right level for their capabilities. Sessions in philosophy are particularly good in enabling more-able pupils to think more deeply and explore ideas more widely, which they are very keen to do.
- Planning takes very good account of pupils' special educational needs. For example, one pupil with an autistic spectrum disorder is given a personal timetable which tells him what is coming next so that he is mentally prepared for this change. Work is broken down into even smaller steps for those who need this. Speech and language therapy support is secured where relevant and enables pupils to improve their communication skills significantly.
- Disadvantaged pupils make as significant progress as others. At the unit they receive a high level of

individual support, and gaps in learning are quickly identified and tackled. Overall, levels of attainment are no different for disadvantaged pupils as others.

- The most significant achievement is when pupils are reintegrated back into their mainstream school. The unit prepares pupils exceptionally well for reintegration and virtually all make a successful return to their mainstream schools. They do not, for example, return to First Base. However, the unit does not track progress over the long term. Hence, it is not able to evaluate how successful its work has been over the period of pupils' school careers or identify any further improvements it could make to prepare pupils for their longer-term future.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Achievement in the early years is outstanding and this is due to excellent teaching and provision over time. Children make strong progress in their social and personal development in particular, learning to take turns and share resources. They are exceptionally well supported to learn key routines and develop behaviours that support their own learning and that of others. Children's behaviour improves significantly during the time in the unit. One parent noted that her child was 'not the same child' as the one who had started at the unit several weeks ago.
- Many children arrive with low level skills in early reading and writing. Their books and learning journeys show that children have a wide range of opportunities to develop writing through mark making which contribute to their strong achievement in early writing. Staff nurture children's enjoyment of picture books which develops great enthusiasm for reading. They encourage and support parents and carers to work with children at home, providing resources as well as ideas for parents to work on.
- Systematic work on phonics enables children to develop their early skills. Intensive work with speech and language therapists, for those that need this, improves clarity of speech significantly. More-able children flourish and establish secure early reading, writing and numeracy skills.
- Practical activities are thoughtfully put together so that they encourage and motivate learning. The role play area, for example, became Santa's Workshop. It provided many creative opportunities for reading and writing, such as lists and letters for Santa, as well as construction work to make toys and presents. The outdoor area is very well used and exceptionally so for physical activities.
- The early years provision is exceptionally well led and managed. Consequently, children are very well prepared for a return to their mainstream school and for Year 1. Excellent working partnerships with schools and parents form a significant part of the unit's work and contribute to its success.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134617
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	448932

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	12
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Kate Ruttle
Headteacher	Judith Bush
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2011
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