

Short Stay School for Norfolk

Douglas Bader School, Filby Road, Badersfield, Norwich, Norfolk NR10 5JW

Inspection dates

4–5 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The quality of education for pupils, who spend part of their educational life in one of the nine bases of the school, has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.
- This year, leaders have hastened the process of change. They have brought consistency to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Pupils receive a wide range of subjects that help restore their desire to learn.
- Leaders are successfully returning more pupils to either a suitable mainstream or specialist school.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who gain GCSEs or other accreditations is improving year on year. More are able to attend a college place or place of work.
- Pupils in key stage 4 learn effectively through four different and clearly defined pathways. Their academic and vocational education is effectively provided for within the school.
- Pupils with more complex needs who require a more therapeutic approach are well catered for in each of the four bases. These pupils make good progress personally and academically.
- Leadership at the different bases is effective. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. Effective action plans are in place to continue to improve provision.
- Pupils say they feel listened to, safe and secure. Pupils have positive relationships with adults and contribute well to school life.
- Pupils quickly develop and use strategies that help them manage their own behaviour and make better choices. More pupils are developing a good attitude to their learning.
- The quality of education for pupils in the primary phases continues to be a strength. In some bases, the quality of pupils' efforts and presentation in their books is exemplary.
- The recruitment and retention of staff continue to be a challenge. Leaders carefully move staff and leaders to different bases so that pupils receive consistent and good-quality teaching.
- The expectations of pupils to make even better progress from their starting points are not always clear and robust. Leaders have plans to establish more rigorous systems when pupils start.
- More opportunities could still be provided for the most able pupils to excel.
- There is effective sharing of practice across the bases. However, more can still be achieved by improving and sharing good practice with other mainstream schools to help prevent the large number of permanent exclusions within Norfolk.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of education by:
 - providing even more opportunities for pupils of all ages to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in different ways so that even more can excel and make better progress, especially the most able
 - continuing to improve the retention and training of staff so that the provision for the needs of pupils, both personally and academically, continues to improve.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - refining systems to ensure that pupils' starting points are rigorous and precise and then used effectively so that pupils make even better progress
 - maintaining the drive and impetus for school improvement so that more pupils continue to successfully return to mainstream schools
 - contributing to the ongoing work of the local authority by sharing practice effectively with mainstream schools to reduce and prevent the large number of permanent exclusions in the Norfolk area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and staff have made significant improvements to the quality of teaching and the curriculum for pupils. These have resulted in more pupils successfully returning to mainstream schools. Equally, the achievement of pupils who take GCSEs and other qualifications in Year 11 continues to improve. The quality of education is now more consistent across the different sites.
- Leaders have ensured that there are similar practices and processes across all their sites. Teachers have greater responsibility for planning work and expectations for a subject that are then shared with their colleagues. This has resulted in a much more coherent approach to teaching, learning and assessment. More pupils are receiving a better quality of education as a result.
- Leaders have increased the options for pupils in the curriculum, particularly at key stage 4. Through the four pathways, pupils study both vocational and academic subjects that are provided at school. This has resulted in a reduction in external alternative providers and an increase in the proportion of pupils being entered for examinations to achieve recognised qualifications and accreditations. At key stage 4, more pupils are moving on to the next step of their education or into employment.
- Leadership at the different bases is effective. Many staff commented about the support and challenge they receive from their leaders. One member of staff summed up the view of others, saying, 'Base leaders work well with their teams to spread the workload and support their staff.' Base leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision and have credible plans for continued improvement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well provided for. In every base, there are many displays to demonstrate a wealth of experiences and activities to help pupils develop their personal and social skills. Pupils are taught about the contribution they make and about British values.
- Leaders have effectively used additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant, in each base. Leaders use the additional funds to best reduce the specific barriers their pupils face. For example, additional support for some pupils has been used to enhance the outdoor learning areas. There is no discernible difference between the achievement of different groups of pupils. All pupils receive the same equal access to a very high-quality curriculum.
- There has been a great deal of change at senior leadership level of both the school and the trust. Since the beginning of this academic year, the school has been led and managed by two headteachers. Both have clear roles and responsibilities. The pace of change has increased over this year and many of the systems and procedures that were introduced previously have been maintained or are more effectively established.
- The current chief executive officer (CEO) is providing the necessary support and challenge so that the school continues to improve. Vision and values have been developed further. As the trust continue to work through significant financial issues with the regional school's commissioner, the CEO is working closely with the local

authority and other external groups to ensure ongoing improvements. There is strong capacity and commitment from senior leaders for the success of the school.

- Pupils are referred to the school from the local authority as part of their responsibility for pupils with SEND. The local authority has confidence in the school's capacity to continue its journey of improvement.
- Leaders have streamlined a great deal of the information they gather about pupils' progress and behaviour. The information they use is effective and much is necessary to demonstrate how pupils are safeguarded and well looked after. However, the information collected when pupils start at the school is not as rigorous as it could be. This results in the expectations of some pupils being lower than they should be.
- The new CEO is starting to work with mainstream schools to share the good practice found at the Short Stay School for Norfolk. There is a drive to increase the training for other schools so that they can contribute to the work of the local authority in reducing the high number of permanent exclusions.
- Most parents and carers are very supportive of the work of the school and how effectively the school has helped their child to regain a love of learning or to become less anxious. Where parents have raised concerns or complaints, inspectors found that leaders take these seriously. Leaders continue to ensure that communication with parents is increasingly effective.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body continues to be effective in its roles and responsibilities. Governors are led by a knowledgeable and dedicated chair. They have a very clear understanding of the needs of pupils at the school and are committed to moving pupils back into mainstream education as swiftly as possible.
- Minutes of governors' meetings demonstrate that governors use their expertise well and are passionate about the education that the most vulnerable pupils receive across Norfolk. They ask challenging questions of school leaders to hold them to account for the achievement of pupils. Governors visit the school sites regularly to check the quality of provision that pupils receive.
- The local governing body and trust representative have clear roles and responsibilities following a review of the scheme of delegation. The local governing body has an accurate understanding of the many strengths and continued areas for improvement so that the school can maintain its effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school ensures that processes and procedures for keeping pupils safe are in line with current expectations. Staff training is up to date, including how to protect pupils from extremism and radicalisation. Adults are vigilant about the many safeguarding issues that pupils at this school could be subject to.
- There are a number of designated safeguarding leaders. These leaders are tenacious and work closely with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept

safe. Child protection records are meticulously kept. Case studies seen demonstrate the lengths to which these leaders go to ensure that each individual is provided with the care and supported needed. Parents spoke to inspectors positively about the way that leaders work with families to help keep pupils safe.

- Leaders work effectively with the police where there are concerns about county lines or knife crime. There is a diligence to the work and always with the best interest of the pupil at the forefront. Where needed, leaders take difficult decisions to ensure that pupils receive the support that is needed.
- Staff are diligent with recording concerns they may have concerning neglect or abuse. This results in a large number of internal referrals being made over a term. Staff are highly attuned to the needs of the vulnerable pupils within their base.
- Leaders ensure that the requirements of recruiting suitable staff for working with pupils are in place. There were some administrative errors that were identified at the time of the inspection but these were easily rectifiable so that the single central register was compliant.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is now consistently good across most bases. There remains an issue with recruitment and retention in a few sites, and staff changes bring challenges. Nevertheless, leaders have systems and structures in place to provide a good-quality curriculum to pupils so the impact of changes of staff is minimised.
- Teachers work closely together across bases. This was an area to improve at the previous inspection. Staff who responded to their online questionnaire value the opportunities they have to work together and often attend training events as one school. Adults are increasingly well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to plan appropriately for pupils' learning.
- Relationships are very positive between adults and pupils. This is a consistent feature across every base. Pupils respond well to adults' instructions and become quickly settled into lessons. Pupils in the primary phases particularly enjoy the many opportunities for practical learning, such as cooking or using the outdoor spaces for scientific investigations.
- Teachers use the information from pupils' individual 'trackers' very carefully and effectively to plan learning and respond to an individual's personal and academic needs. Pupils often have large gaps in their education when they start. Adults are increasingly skilled at identifying these gaps in learning and finding interesting activities to ensure that pupils re-engage with learning and achieve well. More can still be achieved to ensure that the starting points for all pupils are more rigorously and accurately identified.
- Adults make effective use of the school's chosen system for assessment and feedback to pupils in class. In key stage 4, for example, pupils have an accurate understanding of how well they are learning in mathematics and what they still need to do to catch up

further. Pupils are making better progress in mathematics as a result and pupils are building their knowledge and skills well.

- Pupils' presentation of work continues to improve and become of a more consistently high quality in all bases. In Earthsea, in particular, the work produced by pupils demonstrates high expectations of adults of the standard that pupils can produce. Equally, pupils take pride and complete their work diligently. Consequently, pupils are making good progress from their starting points, especially in English and mathematics.
- The use of additional adults and support staff is effective. These staff are well trained to support pupils who are finding the work challenging or who require settling after their long journey into school. Many of the support staff are adept at spotting when a pupil is showing signs of distress. They know pupils well and many cope with challenging situations sensitively and skilfully.
- Adults generally use the school's feedback policy well, although this tends to be more consistent in subjects such as English and mathematics. There was more variance in the way adults apply the school's policy in subjects such as history and geography on some sites. This resulted in pupils not producing their best work or making the progress of which they are capable.
- Although planning for learning has improved and pupils have a better quality of provision, there is still more to do. Some pupils can achieve even more. For those who could reach the higher standards, pupils' books show that some teachers do not adapt the work or provide sufficient opportunities for these pupils to excel.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they have someone to talk with when they are concerned. Many pupils say that they feel listened to and that their views are important. Their 'voice' and contribution in the school are important to leaders.
- Records demonstrate that the number of restricted physical interventions is reducing. Staff are appropriately trained and follow school procedures effectively. In Compass Belton, for example, the impact of the recent staff training on reducing the number of restrictive physical interventions has been impressive.
- Therapeutic support for pupils is very effective. Pupils at the three Compass sites and at Earthsea are provided with a well-considered curriculum to help them excel personally and academically.
- There is a wealth of artwork, which is of a very high quality, produced by older pupils. Younger pupils are provided with opportunities to care for animals to develop empathy.
- Younger pupils relish the 'crystals' they earn when they have made good behaviour choices. A prize when they have reached five crystals is worth earning. Pupils have well-established strategies in place to help them calm themselves and then return to work. This was particularly the case at Douglas Bader.
- The school use fewer alternative providers than at the previous inspection. Leaders

check that the needs, safety and welfare of pupils who attend other providers are well provided for. The staff at the alternative providers spoke positively about their communication with the school and the quality assurance visits received.

- Older pupils receive well-designed careers guidance information to help them make considered choices about the next step in their education or employment. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils who are not in education, employment or training has reduced significantly across the school.
- There are 'calm rooms' used by pupils across bases which are used appropriately. Pupils were witnessed taking themselves into a calm room, sitting quietly and reflectively, and then returning to their work.
- Social times are used well across all bases. Pupils have a wealth of additional activities to enjoy during less-structured times. Breakfast club is provided to help pupils settle after their often long journey in the taxi to school. These are very friendly and social times so pupils start their day well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff are skilled at supporting pupils who have often had highly turbulent times in their previous schooling. Most pupils develop an understanding of themselves and learn strategies to help manage their own behaviour.
- In all bases, pupils conduct themselves appropriately and well. At Locksley, the expectations of conduct for key stage 4 have increased. Pupils are rising to the challenge and the school is calm during less-structured times. Smoking on-site has been eradicated.
- Pupils' attendance remains mixed across the bases. In some, such as the Compass bases, pupils attend well. In others, especially where pupils return to a mainstream provision after a few terms, the increase in attendance is not sustained. An individual's attendance often increases significantly from very low or no attendance prior to starting at the Short Stay School for Norfolk.
- More pupils are having success when they reintegrate into mainstream or specialist provision that is suited to their needs. Pupils are having more opportunities to study a full range of subjects at the school and this is having a positive impact on pupils' ability to have a fresh start and sustain improvements in a new setting.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their starting points, the progress that pupils make is more consistent than seen at the previous inspection. Pupils continue to make good progress in key stages 1 and 2. With new approaches to the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 and a more consistent approach to teaching across the bases, pupils are making better progress.
- Pupils in key stage 4 are provided with a range of academic and vocational courses that are taught in four different and clear pathways. Pupils in key stage 4 are making better progress. The proportion of pupils achieving GCSEs and other qualifications has been rising year on year. Although attainment has been lower than that found

nationally in mainstream schools, significant improvements are being made and pupils are better prepared for the next step in their education or employment.

- The use of a range of external providers enables some identified pupils to study vocational courses regularly each week. The external provision leads pupils directly into work or gaining further skills and qualifications. Staff spoken with from a number of the external providers speak positively about the school and the achievement of its pupils.
- In key stage 3, there is a different approach to the three-year curriculum provided. With a greater focus on a curriculum where pupils' personal, social and health education is at the centre, pupils in key stage 3 are improving their attitudes to learning. This is having an impact, with pupils making better progress in other subjects, such as English and mathematics.
- Pupils at key stages 1 and 2 access a broad curriculum that, in most bases, is consistent across subject areas. Pupils make good progress in mathematics, reading, computing and science. They are given opportunities to develop their writing skills in English and increasingly in other subject areas, such as history and geography. The quality of provision in history and geography is not as consistent across all bases.
- Transition arrangements when pupils move to a permanent school or specialist provision are well established. Leaders use the fair access procedures to ensure that more pupils return to suitable provision. The average stay at the short stay part of the school is now three terms and closer to the two terms that it should be.
- Post-16 guidance and support are effective. More pupils are achieving appropriate next steps in their education or employment.
- There is still more to be achieved to ensure that pupils' starting points are rigorously assessed and to precisely identify where pupils could make even better progress. Those who have the potential to achieve the higher standards are not yet consistently provided for so that they can systematically excel across the curriculum.

School details

Unique reference number	140753
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10088683

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

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dennis Freeman
Headteachers	Rachel Thornberry and Katrina Warren
Telephone number	01603 737 764
Website	www.theshortstayschoolfornorfolk.co.uk
Email address	Rachel.Thornberry@sssfm.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 th February 2017

Information about this school

- The Short Stay School for Norfolk opened in April 2014. It is part of the Engage Multi-Academy Trust. It is an alternative provision for pupils.
- There are nine sites in total that make up the school. These are located in different parts of Norfolk, stretching from Kings Lynn to Great Yarmouth.
- Three sites are specialist units designed to support very specific needs of pupils in liaison with National Health Service medical teams. These are Compass Pott Row, Compass Lingwood and Compass Belton.
- A fourth specialist site, Earthsea, works in partnership with the national care provider, Childhood First.
- The additional sites are short stay provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded. The school also provides education and support for pupils who are missing education or who are struggling to access mainstream education.

- Pupils arrive at different times through the academic year and most are referred through a system and in liaison with the local authority.
- The current headteacher leadership structure has been in place since September 2018. The headteacher of specialist provision has been in place from September 2016 and the headteacher of the Short Stay School for Norfolk was promoted into the current role in September 2018. A number of new leaders have been appointed or have been promoted since the previous inspection.
- As a multi-academy trust, the school is currently under a financial notice to improve with the Department for Education.
- The CEO at the previous inspection was dismissed from the trust in December 2018. The trust commissioned the support of a part-time CEO from Unity Education Trust from September 2018. Currently, the commissioned support from the interim CEO has been extended until August 2020.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is above that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. Many pupils also have an education, health and care plan.
- Typically, pupils enter with prior attendance and attainment that are significantly lower than expected for their age. Some have had extended periods of absence from their previous schools.
- The school makes use of a range of alternative providers. Providers include Appleseed, Century Training, East Coast Activity Centre, Open Road, Respect 4 Us, E-Learning and NOVA training.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited each site to hold meetings with leaders who hold responsibility for each site, to visit lessons and to look at the quality of pupils' work in their exercise books. The attendance of pupils on each site and safeguarding arrangements were also considered.
- Meetings were held with the headteachers of the school, the interim CEO, a representative of the trust and the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised work from primary and secondary-aged pupils across a wide range of subjects.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, safeguarding records, physical restraint information, documents relating to pupils' achievement and welfare, and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They spoke with parents on-site or by telephone. A parental complaint that was received during the inspection was also considered.
- The views of staff were analysed through the 142 responses to the staff online questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke informally and formally with pupils over the course of the inspection to consider their experiences. Inspectors observed pupils at the start of the school day and during break and lunchtime on different sites. There were no pupil responses to their online survey.
- Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the small number of additional alternative providers used by the school.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Russell Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
John Craig	Ofsted Inspector
Cindy Impey	Her Majesty's Inspector

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