

Inspection of an outstanding school: First Base Ipswich Academy

Raeburn Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 0EW

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

Outcome

First Base Ipswich Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at First Base. Teachers are caring and highly skilled at meeting the needs of every pupil who attends. Pupils form exceptionally trusting relationships with staff. Each morning pupils are warmly welcomed so that their day starts well. Parents and carers cannot praise the school highly enough. They talk about the dedication of staff who have changed these children's lives for the better.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They are proud that each and every one of their successes is celebrated. Pupils receive stickers reminding them when they show the school's core values of resilience, kindness, curiosity and reflection.

Leaders have the highest expectations for pupils. Classrooms provide a tranquil space that is very effective in supporting pupils' learning and development. The environment is safe and secure. Pupils enjoy going outside. They learn to play safely with one another, such as in organised games of tag. There is no bullying at this school.

Each pupil is well known. Staff are knowledgeable about individual needs. They are quick to recognise when pupils may have difficulty. Pupils receive calm, sensitive and reassuring approaches to help and support them with regulating their emotions. This means pupils do not lose a minute of their learning.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders and the trust have created a highly effective team. The vision of 'higher expectations, higher aspirations, higher achievements' is evident through every part of school life. All staff make a significant contribution to helping pupils re-engage with learning. As soon as pupils start, staff build strong relationships. They are alert to every pupil's needs in order to support successful placements.

The quality of education is exemplary. Pupils benefit very well from leaders' well-designed approach to delivering the curriculum. Leaders chosen approach makes the use of

'pathways'. For each route, leaders have considered in detail what pupils need to learn and remember. Well-chosen themes provide pupils with highly effective experiences. They build their academic knowledge alongside their self-esteem and confidence.

Teachers use leaders' curriculum intentions expertly. Staff have strong subject knowledge. They skilfully craft lessons to motivate pupils. Staff make regular checks of pupils' learning and development. Teachers use the information to plan individualised work that challenges pupils to learn and develop further.

Reading is a main focus. Many pupils have faced disruption to their early education experience. They have gaps in their phonics knowledge, which slows their reading. Leaders recognise the importance of helping pupils to read confidently and accurately. Staff quickly address these gaps through individualised approaches. Books are well matched to help pupils practise the sounds they know. Pupils develop their love of reading by listening, reading and experiencing a variety of stories. These stories are carefully chosen to help pupils understand and manage their emotions.

Well-trained staff teach pupils about managing their feelings and emotions. Adults constantly use words of praise and encouragement. They are alert and respond sensitively when pupils become anxious. This ensures that the environment remains calm for learning. Pupils are proud of their work and achievements.

The well-thought-out curriculum provides pupils with rich opportunities for their personal development. Leaders plan these events as part of the curriculum, linked to the texts pupils read. They enhance pupils' development through first-hand experiences. These include trips to the bakers and vets to learn about the world of work. Pupils develop an awareness of the environment through trips to woodlands and nature parks.

Staff speak highly of the support they receive from leaders and the trust. The daily briefing sessions are critical in helping them fulfil their roles. There is a strong sense of cohesion among the school team. It helps to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met consistently well. Trust leaders have a secure knowledge of the impact of leaders' work. They ensure that there is regular communication with local leaders. This helps to have a deep understanding of the effectiveness of the provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding systems and procedures within the school are robust. This ensures that there is a caring and nurturing environment.

Most pupils attend another school on a part-time basis. They are registered at two schools. Leaders ensure that communication is maintained to keep pupils safe. Daily logs are kept that record any information adults need to know about a pupils' welfare. Staff receive regular training. This ensures that they are vigilant and swift to respond to any signs that may suggest a cause for concern.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, First Base, to be outstanding in June 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	145101
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10213310
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Whittaker
Headteacher	Stacey Laws
Website	www.raedwaldtrust.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- First Base Academy is part of the Raedwald Multi-Academy Trust. It joined the trust in November 2017.
- Places at the school are commissioned through the local authority for pupils in early years and key stage 1.
- Pupils attend different curriculum pathways that determine how many days a week they spend at the school and the length of their placement.
- All pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2020.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, teachers and school staff. Inspectors also met with trust leaders, including the chair and vice-chair for the trust, the chief executive officer and school advisers from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised school documentation, including safeguarding information, the school's single central register, school plans, school self-evaluation and visits from external partners.
- Inspectors considered the three responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and three free-texts responses. Inspectors also held a telephone conversation with three parents. Inspectors also looked at two responses to the survey for staff. There were no responses to the pupils' survey. The lead inspector also had a telephone conversation with a local headteacher.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Sue Cox

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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