

# Inspection of First Base Bury St Edmunds

Airfield Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 7PJ

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils know that staff believe in them. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They join First Base having experienced disruption or difficulties in their schooling. Pupils usually respond positively to adults' clear and patient guidance. Pupils develop the knowledge and skills to learn alongside their classmates. They like school. Pupils' attendance is high and they are well placed to re-join mainstream education.

Pupils get along with each other. They are well cared for and develop positive relationships with staff. Staff use their thorough knowledge of each pupil's needs to help them to manage their emotions and conduct. When pupils become agitated, skilled adults use familiar routines to settle them back to their learning. Pupils respond particularly well to the praise, kindness, resilience and 'smiley face' awards they receive when they get things right.

Pupils receive a good quality of education. They learn to read and like the regular opportunities to grab a book and to read with adults. Pupils also develop confidence speaking with adults. They get the chance to put this into practice when they visit the local shops, theatre and bakery.

Pupils feel safe, including from bullying. They turn to trusted adults, who resolve any incidents that arise.

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

Determined, skilled trust and school leaders are improving the school. They share a common goal to equip pupils with the knowledge and skills to reintegrate into mainstream education. Leaders' ambitious 'springboard pathway' curriculum details what pupils should learn.

The school's thorough induction process provides teachers with a detailed overview of pupils' needs and capabilities. Teachers usually tailor the curriculum and their teaching to each pupil's circumstances. Recent staffing changes have resulted in a little unevenness in the delivery of this curriculum.

Leaders' belief that 'getting literacy right is the basis for pupils to move forward' underpins the curriculum. Most pupils join the school lacking the confidence or phonic knowledge to read fluently. Some are not used to handling books. Adults teach phonics well. They model how to say words and sounds accurately. Adults give pupils plenty of practise reading books full of familiar sounds. Pupils and staff enjoy reading stories together. Pupils become more confident and fluent readers.

Adults combine good subject knowledge and their understanding of pupils' needs to design learning that interests pupils. Adults usually introduce pupils to manageable amounts of new content with clarity and precision. Pupils have plenty of time to practise using this knowledge. This helps them to remember important words or

facts. Most pupils learn to stick at their work and so they progress well. On occasion, adults are less clear and specific in what they expect of pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils are less sure of what they have to do. They lose focus and do not develop a secure grasp of facts or words.

Pupils' behaviour improves over time. They join First Base needing expert support to regulate their emotions and conduct. Adults model calm, positive behaviour. They use plenty of praise to motivate pupils to behave well. Adults are quick to spot tell-tale signs that a pupil is becoming anxious and unsettled. On occasion, adults do not refocus pupils on their learning as swiftly as they could. However, usually, pupils settle promptly back to their learning.

Provision for pupils to develop their character, resilience and cultural awareness is threaded through the curriculum. The 'readers for life' programme, for example, includes books that mirror pupils' own experiences and emotions, and provides them with windows on the wider world. In 'choosing time' and 'supported play', pupils learn to make independent decisions. Each day they reflect on their successes and learning as they complete their 'today book'.

The trust plays an important role in ensuring that pupils receive a good-quality education. For example, they support leaders to provide staff with the training and support to carry out their jobs effectively. Leaders of pupils' mainstream schools are full of praise for the work of First Base staff. Parents are too.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is an important thread running through the school's work. Trustees are diligent to check that the school is a safe, secure environment for pupils and staff. Trustees ensure that the school's recruitment processes are robust, and the record of checks carried out on staff is accurate and thorough.

Staff are suitably trained. They spot, and report, any concerns about a pupil's well-being. Leaders act in pupils' best interests and ensure that they get the help they need.

Pupils feel safe and are taught strategies to stay safe, for example, in crossing the road or when swimming.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- At times, when delivering the curriculum, adults are not sufficiently clear in their instructions to pupils. Where this is the case, pupils are less certain as to what is expected of them in their learning. Their attention wavers and adults can take a little too long to refocus them. This slows pupils' progress. Leaders should ensure

all staff are trained to teach the curriculum well and ensure that pupils focus on their learning and achieve well.

## **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.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146072
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268327
<b>Type of school</b>	Alternative provision
<b>School category</b>	Academy alternative provision converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 8
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	5
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Alan Whittaker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stacey Laws
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.raedwaldtrust.com">www.raedwaldtrust.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- First Base Bury St Edmunds is part of the Raedwald Multi-Academy Trust (the trust).
- The headteacher, who is also the headteacher of First Base Ipswich, took up her position at the start of 2023.
- The school provides short-term placements of up to 19 weeks for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- The board of trustees is responsible for governance of the school.
- Suffolk local authority is the commissioning authority.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- First Base Bury St Edmunds converted to become an academy school in February 2019. When its predecessor school, First Base, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the trust. Inspectors also met other trust officers.
- Inspectors met with pupils. Inspectors also observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- An inspector met, online, with two trustees, including the chair of the trust.
- An inspector spoke with a representative from Suffolk local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, early reading, English and mathematics. In each deep dive, inspectors spoke with leaders and teachers, looked at curriculum documentation, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work. An inspector also spoke with leaders, looked at curriculum documentation and looked at pupils' work in a small number of other subjects.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked recruitment processes and the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at safeguarding documentation, and spoke with trust officers, staff, pupils and members of the trust board. An inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in discussions with parents over the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account evidence from the responses to Ofsted's survey of staff's opinions and also responses to the school's own parent and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

John Lucas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Steve Woodley

His Majesty's Inspector

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