

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FIRST BASE PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT**

Lowestoft

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 131822

Teacher in Charge: Mrs D. Moxon

Reporting inspector: Mrs C. Marsh  
002113

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 May 2000

Inspection number: 215460

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils:	3 - 8
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	34 Ashley Downs Lowestoft Suffolk
Postcode:	NR34 4EX
Telephone number:	01502 512963
Fax number:	01502 - 516525
Appropriate authority:	Suffolk LEA
Name of responsible officer	Mr J. Taylor

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs C. Marsh	Registered inspector	Equal Opportunities, Special Educational Needs.	What sort of unit is it?
		Science, Design & Technology, Art , Music, Humanities.	How high are standards? The unit's results and achievements.
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the unit led and managed?
			What should the unit do to improve further?
Mrs M. Kerry	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
			How well does the unit care for its pupils?
			How well does the unit work in partnership with parents?
Mr D. Bolton	Team inspector	English, Mathematics, Information Technology, Physical Education.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Integration.

The inspection contractor was:

Countrywide Education Consultancy Ltd  
Kingfisher House  
68 Pattison Lane  
Woolstone  
Milton Keynes  
MK15 0AY

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT**

This newly established pilot Primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), based in Lowestoft, serves the Northern Area of Suffolk, a largely rural area. It has been open for just over two terms. The PRU supports pupils aged 3-8 who are having significant behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools, with the aim of reintegrating them full-time. It can accommodate a maximum of 8 pupils at any one time. In addition, staff are involved in outreach and preventive work in schools, both with pupils who also attend the PRU and with other pupils. All pupils at First Base are dual-registered (also attending their mainstream schools), and at the time of the inspection 15 were on the roll of the PRU and a further 13 pupils were being supported in schools. No pupils were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Five pupils attending the unit had statements of special educational needs (for emotional and behavioural or moderate learning difficulties). Attainment on entry is well below average.

### **HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS**

Although First Base is still in its infancy, this is a very good PRU with some outstanding features. Pupils are very well taught, with all the teaching being good or better, and most of it very good or excellent. Pupils make very good progress in the unit and achieve very well in their work. Most pupils come with serious behavioural problems. Their behaviour and their attitudes improve significantly, and their personal development is very good. The unit has a very strong, productive partnership with parents and with schools, working to the same end. The curriculum offered jointly by the PRU and schools is broad and balanced. First Base is very well led and managed by both the teacher-in-charge and the LEA. It makes a major difference to the pupils who attend and to their families. Staff work hard and successfully with parents, pupils and schools to get pupils back into school full-time and to help them to remain there. The PRU is in the early stages (first year) of its development. The ongoing evaluation of its work to date is analytical and perceptive and has helped steer its development. The planned end-of-year LEA external evaluation is timely and appropriate. Resources, including setting-up monies, have been used wisely and the PRU gives very good value for money.

#### **What the unit does well**

- The teaching is very good indeed. Even though many pupils have very significant behavioural problems, the focus remains on helping pupils to learn, at the same time as working to improve their attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in their work.
- Pupils' personal development is very good, including much improved behaviour for the great majority of pupils.
- The unit is proving to be very good at preparing pupils to cope with a full-time return to school and at helping them to remain there.
- Individual pupils' attainment and progress are rigorously and systematically monitored.
- The support for parents and the links the unit has with them are outstanding. Parents value highly what the unit does for them and for their children.
- Partnership with schools and other agencies is very good and is a key element of the units success.
- The unit is very well led and managed.
- The accommodation is very good and the unit is well resourced.

#### **What could be improved**

- There are no issues for improvement.





## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the unit.

Progress in:	By age 8	Key	
English	A	very good	A
Mathematics	A	good	B
Science	A	satisfactory	C
Personal, social and health education	A	unsatisfactory	D
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	poor	E

\* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs

Pupils achieve very well during their time in the unit, usually starting from a low base. Because of very good teaching, they make very good progress in their work, particularly in English, mathematics, and science and in their personal and social development. Pupils make very good progress in literacy and numeracy, although improvement comes in small, hard-won steps. Pupils achieve the targets set for them in their individual education plans.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Very good. Pupils develop a positive attitude to their learning and gradually learn to relate positively to other people, adults and pupils alike.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good progress. Pupils come to the unit with serious behaviour problems. Many pupils behaved well during the inspection, but a few still have major outbursts. Overall, however, behaviour improves significantly and this carries over into school and to home.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils gain in confidence and self-esteem. They learn to socialise and interact with other children. Many learn to express and reflect on their feelings, and to understand how their actions affect others. They are learning to manage their own behaviour.
Attendance	Good.

The PRU is proving very successful in helping pupils to develop a positive attitude to learning, and to develop their personal and social skills. Pupils learn how to improve their behaviour and they develop very good relationships with staff. Pupils' personal and social development while at the unit is very good, and the effects of this are transferred to school and to home. Early indications are that pupils are being helped to reintegrate successfully into school full-time. Attendance is good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	
Lessons seen overall	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching is a major strength of the unit and pupils are very well taught. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching was good or better in all lessons and in 84% of lessons it was very good or excellent. The very best teaching was seen in English, mathematics and science. Literacy and numeracy are very well taught.

Teachers are caring but firm, and relationships in the classroom are very good. Teachers ensure that pupils succeed and achieve well in their work, whilst at the same time insisting on appropriately high standards of behaviour, attitude and effort. In spite of some challenging behaviour, which is managed very well, they retain a focus on learning, as well as on improving behaviour. Teachers are very good at motivating and encouraging pupils to learn and they are equally very good at getting pupils to think and to put this thinking into words. The needs of individual pupils are well understood and work is successfully pitched to meet these needs. Teachers are very clear about what needs to be learned and how they will make this happen. Good planning of interesting, enjoyable activities help to hold pupils' attention and they learn well as a result. Time is well used, questioning is skilful, and pupils are appropriately challenged. Teamwork between teachers and learning assistants is outstanding.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is well structured and yet flexible. A good range of opportunities – both for learning and for personal development. Well matched to the particular needs of the pupils, preparing them to cope better in school. A key to its success is the very strong partnership with parents, schools and other agencies.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good – helped by very good and some exemplary individual education plans which target pupils' special needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. This is a key focus of the unit, which caters very well for pupils' personal development. Spiritual and cultural development is good; social and moral development are very good. First Base equips pupils to cope better in school.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	Tracking of individual pupils' academic progress is rigorous and effective, as is the way staff monitor and encourage good behaviour and personal and social development.

The unit welcomes parents and carers and places strong emphasis on working in partnership with them. This is an outstanding strength. As a result, teachers and parents work together to ensure pupils learn and make progress. Teachers keep parents very well informed about how their child is doing. The partnership with schools is also very strong and ensures that the pupils' overall curriculum fits together and is broad and balanced. The PRU has plans to work with 3-year olds in the future and has rightly recognised that, as part of its planned development, more planning and preparation is needed before this happens. The unit is very good at enabling pupils to learn and to develop personally and socially and it rigorously monitors pupils' progress in all of these areas.

## HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The teacher in charge and staff all share the same vision – a clear commitment to the full-time integration of pupils into school. There is good communication, good teamwork and good planning followed through with effective action
How well the management committee fulfils its responsibilities	The interim professional support group (set up for this pilot project) is well informed. It has clear terms of reference and carries out its role in advising, guiding and monitoring the work of the PRU. The LEA has a clear vision for the purpose and development of this PRU and is establishing a clear framework of policies and procedures.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	Good range of methods for evaluating how well the PRU is performing in this its first year.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Teachers are efficiently deployed supporting pupils in mainstream schools, when they are not teaching in the PRU. Everything is done with the clear aim in mind of helping pupils to cope full-time in school.

Leadership and management by the teacher in charge and staff from LEA are very good. A major refurbishment programme has made the accommodation a very pleasant, attractive learning environment for pupils and a comfortable, welcoming place for parents. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced for the work they carry out. The unit is well resourced and monies are used well. The LEA Service of which the PRU is a part applies the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress made by the pupils.</li> <li>• The parenting course.</li> <li>• The support they get from staff at the unit.</li> <li>• The information they receive from the unit.</li> <li>• The links between the unit and mainstream schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None relating to the PRU.</li> </ul>

The inspection team supports and endorses the views of parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The unit's results and achievements**

1 First Base is a newly established Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Pupils enter the unit with complex learning and behavioural needs. Because of this, the attainment of pupils is well below average for their ages. Many come with low levels of literacy and numeracy. However, pupils achieve very well during their time in the unit. As a result of the unit's focus on raising the attainment of individual pupils, and thanks to very good teaching, pupils learn and make good progress in all the subjects they study, as well as in their personal and social development. They make particularly good progress in lessons in English, mathematics and science, as well as in all aspects of personal and social education. With intensive, patient and skilful support from teachers and learning support assistants, pupils are making clear gains in their learning.

2. In the short time the unit has been open (less than a year), it has managed to build up very good pupil records, including useful individual education plans (IEPs) for all pupils. These IEPs set clear targets for pupils, which they are achieving. The system of regular review is making sure that improvement is maintained. The key targets in IEPs are both academic and behavioural, taking proper account of the need to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour as well as their attainment so that they can cope full-time in mainstream school, thus helping to prevent exclusion.

3. All pupils attend their mainstream school as well as the PRU. In addition to working in the PRU, First Base staff also work on outreach, preventive and support work in schools, in support of the policy of inclusion. The close partnership between schools and First Base is founded on the clear intention that, wherever possible, pupils should remain fully integrated in mainstream education. This early intervention approach is proving successful. The evidence so far, in this first year of the unit's operation, indicates that it is leading to effective reintegration. An issue the unit is having to deal with currently is what should happen to the few individuals for whom, in spite of everyone's best efforts, reintegration is not going to be a viable option.

4. Although standards in English are well below what is expected for their age, pupils attending the unit make important steps forward in developing their language skills. For many, these steps are small but significant, and not without occasional set-backs, and owe much to the careful planning and patience of the adults who work with them. Pupils learn to speak more clearly and at a socially acceptable volume, and are improving their ability to interact with others. They are learning to express ideas and feelings, to listen to others and to take part in group discussions, taking turns and making suggestions. All are increasing their vocabulary. For several, the gradual increase in confidence and self-control in listening and speaking represents a major break-through. A few pupils communicate fluently and are able to develop and explain their ideas effectively. Other pupils still have difficulty concentrating when listening to others and, although they manage to communicate what they want to say, they show little awareness of the listener.

5. Records show that, from a low starting point, pupils are improving their reading. Some are beginning to recognise key words in texts, and can recognise an increasing number of letter sounds. Others have learned to sound out simple words. The number of high-frequency words that pupils can recognise increases steadily as time goes by. For many younger pupils, progress is painstaking and hard-won, but constitutes significant achievement. Some older pupils handle simple texts with reasonable confidence. Almost all

pupils have developed an interest in books, in some cases showing real enthusiasm. Pupils also develop their handwriting, improving their letter formation. Some are moving towards independent writing, and a few (particularly older pupils) are able to write in simple sentences. Overall, although all pupils have a lot to catch up on, they are making very good progress in English and are gaining in confidence.

6. Most pupils come to the unit with low levels of attainment in mathematics. The work they have done has helped them to make very good progress in overcoming basic difficulties and they are starting to catch up lost ground. For example, with persistent practice, some younger pupils are learning to recognise and count numbers up to ten. They have learned to compare two numbers and decide which is “more” or “less”. Others have become more confident at simple addition and subtraction, using their knowledge and understanding to solve simple problems. They are improving their ability to estimate. They have learned to recognise and name 2-D shapes. Some older pupils, who come to the unit with a wider range of attainment, show that they can identify a range of 3-D shapes, classify them and are able to describe their properties using appropriate mathematical language. Records show that, in mathematics, pupils achieve, or make very good progress towards, the specific targets set for them on an individual basis. This is moving them forwards in their learning.

7. In the few science lessons seen, attainment was well below average, but pupils achieved well and made very good progress. With skilful teaching and much one-to-one support, they are developing an understanding of the properties of materials and their uses. They are starting to use appropriate scientific terminology and to use language in a scientific way. This is made possible by very well planned and well prepared lessons, using good resources and language which is carefully geared to meet individual pupils’ needs.

8. In art, and in design and technology, pupils can, with the help of adults, use coloured inks to good effect to produce interestingly patterned marbled paper. Some can control the ink well, a few counting the required number of drips accurately. In other modelling activities, they manage to solve the problems of weight and balance when 3D models fall over or will not stand up. Some pupils show considerable patience and perseverance; others give up at the first sign of a difficulty. Some cannot hold scissors correctly; others can cut paper accurately. All have helped to create a class collage on space and have been able to use glue to combine articles of different textures to decorate their spacecraft. With skilful adult interventions and questioning, they can talk about which colours and textures they like best.

9. In humanities, pupils can identify familiar places, such as the local church, and can identify different places from photographs, as they did when working on photos of the road adjacent to the school. Most understand that events occur at different times and are able to sequence everyday experiences in simple terms, for example recognising that going to school comes after breakfast, and collecting coats and book-bags comes before going home. For a small minority, this understanding remains elusive.

10. In music, pupils can listen to the sound of an instrument, such as a guitar, and sing a familiar tune. They enjoy exploring making sounds with a variety of percussion instruments and are learning to take turns and share, although this does not come easily to some. Some have the hand-eye co-ordination expected for their age, but others have difficulty, for example, in hitting the finger cymbals together. Music clearly gives pupils pleasure and is making a positive contribution not only to their musical education but also to their personal and social development.

11. Pupils gain confidence in using information technology, both working individually and with adult guidance, to reinforce learning in other subjects. For example, they use computer programmes to practise their number work. When working on their own, they are confident

operating the mouse and moving about the screen. With adult help, they also learn how to use computers to find things out – finding information or pictures about topics they are studying.

12. Through the opportunities provided for physical activity, pupils improve their control and co-ordination, for example running, dodging and avoiding, or throwing, rolling, bouncing and kicking balls. They also practise playing in pairs and groups and learn playground games. They are gradually learning the importance of rules, fairness, and the need to co-operate and to look out for the safety of others. Some pupils continue to have problems of physical co-ordination which are apparent in various aspects of their school work. For them, the range of practical and creative activities and the time given to structured play are making a positive contribution towards improving things.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

13. The pupils at First Base are learning how to learn, and how to interact positively and constructively with peers and adults. They make very good progress in their personal development, and this puts them in a position to cope better in their mainstream school.

14. Despite their emotional and behavioural difficulties, pupils often show enthusiasm for their work, and an improving capacity to sustain concentration. They are beginning to co-operate, and usually take heed of the calm, persistent guidance of adults. They will show pride in their efforts, and work hard, as they did for example, when recalling what they had learnt on a visit from the police liaison officer. When a class discussion is taking place, it requires a great effort from them to listen to others and take turns, but they are prepared to make this effort and frequently succeed.

15. On occasions, individual pupils show extreme behaviour. They may have sustained tantrums when they bite, kick or scratch. However, to their credit, other pupils do not usually join in. This growing self-control, combined with the excellent behaviour management of the staff team, means that sessions continue without major disruption. Eventually, the pupil having a tantrum will be calmed and successfully reintegrated. Sometimes, other pupils will make constructive suggestions about how the situation might be handled.

16. Pupils are strongly motivated by the rewards system. They are very keen to gain and accumulate tokens, and proud of the number they have at the end of a session. They really want to succeed. All are excited by interesting experiences, such as the visit of the police transit van, for example. During this visit, all pupils behaved very well, being courteous to the visitor, and coping successfully with the excitement of riding in the van and hearing the siren.

17. Pupils are beginning to cope with less structured times, such as breaks. They begin to develop relationships with one another. Sometimes they play constructively together, and they rarely interfere with others' activities or intentions. They respond well to the patient and good-humoured suggestions of adults. The excellent quality of the relationships with all adults in the unit is the foundation on which the successful behaviour work is built.

18. The progress pupils make in personal development is very good, and a strength of the unit. Pupils still act in ways which are immature for their age, for example playing alone rather than together, or reacting to strangers by attention-seeking. Nevertheless, pupils' behaviour, both in the unit and in their mainstream school, shows marked improvement. This is evident from both the evaluations of partner schools and pupils' improved scores on diagnostic profiles. The types of behaviour which have prevented pupils from integrating and learning are slowly but surely being changed.

19. Pupils' motivation means that they are keen to come to the unit. They are usually enthusiastic about attending. Levels of attendance are good, with no unauthorised absence.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

20. Pupils in the PRU are very well taught indeed. As a result, pupils learn and make very good progress. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching was good or better in all lessons inspected, and in 84% of lessons, it was very good or excellent. The quality of the teaching is a major strength of the unit's work, for pupils of all ages. The very best teaching was seen in English, mathematics and science, and in personal and social activities.

21. The teaching in the unit reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum but also takes account of the Early Learning Goals and experiences of the Foundation Stage (pre-school) curriculum. It draws on the "Nurture Group" approach, through which it seeks to meet both the developmental and the formal curriculum needs of the children. The teaching day incorporates strict, familiar routines, which are helping pupils to organise themselves and to develop an understanding of order, rules, roles and responsibility. The teaching is in the hands of a small team of teachers and learning support assistants who work very closely and effectively together, and with whom the pupils form strong and trusting relationships.

22. Caring but firm relationships with pupils are a key feature of teaching in the unit. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and of effort, and, for the most part, pupils respond well. Teachers are very good at managing pupils' challenging behaviour and they place a great deal of emphasis on teaching pupils to consider the consequences of their actions in order to learn to manage their own behaviour. Even the most difficult and disturbed pupils are given strategies to manage their frustrations, and these strategies on some occasions are very successful for all pupils. Classroom rules, routines and expectations are constantly and consistently reinforced. Teachers and learning assistants alike are calm, controlled and patient. They are skilled at diffusing difficult situations and at distracting pupils in order to bring out the best in them. Teaching in all subjects makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.

23. Teachers know their pupils and their learning needs well and inspire their confidence, which in turn builds their self-esteem. Activities are adjusted to suit the differing needs of individuals. Making progress in learning is prized as much as improving behaviour, and teachers are good at valuing pupils' contributions, whilst encouraging them to take things further. Good questioning extends pupils' understanding, helps them think things through and helps them improve their spoken language. Lessons are very carefully planned step-by-step, giving pupils every opportunity to succeed and building their confidence. They have very clear objectives, which are explained to pupils, and some older pupils in particular are expected to evaluate how far these objectives and their personal targets have been met. Where pupils tend to be hard on themselves, teachers help them to appreciate where there has been progress and where further improvement is still needed.

24. Another strength of the teaching is that teachers make learning interesting and fun. They use a wide range of interesting resources, ideas and activities, providing a good range of routes to ensure that learning objectives are met for all pupils. This helps teachers and support assistants to cater for the unpredictable behaviour and reactions of some pupils, as well as meeting the different learning needs of individual pupils. Adults are very good at modifying and adapting work to overcome any problems. The quality of teamwork among teachers and support assistants is exemplary and is a key factor in the smooth running of lessons and the consistent focus on learning.

25. The teaching of English is very good. Lessons are carefully planned, with precise

learning objectives, which are based on a detailed understanding of what each pupil can do and of what they need to work on next. All adults, both teachers and learning support assistants, are aware of the plans and objectives for each pupil. This makes for seamless team-work, with adults reinforcing key teaching points at the level appropriate to each pupil, and allowing the flexibility to deal with individual problems or crises. Shared reading is handled well, arousing pupils' interest, enthusiasm and co-operation. Good questioning helps pupils to describe, to explain, to anticipate what comes next, to draw on their own experience of the world, and to use pictures and context to help understanding. The teaching of listening, discussion and turn-taking skills is resourceful and insistent – and very necessary for these pupils. At the same time, good attention is paid to word-level work, focusing, for example, on sounds, spelling patterns or simple punctuation. The teaching of phonics is handled well, using a wide range of resources and techniques to suit individual needs. The planned teaching of English and of literacy extends well beyond the specific English sessions. Many opportunities are planned throughout the day (as an integral part of the teaching of other subjects, as well as during play and at meal-times) to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing, reinforcing key teaching points which are being targeted that day. All adults give high priority to pupils' language development, and this is paying off.

26. Mathematics teaching is very good. Lessons are very well prepared and rigorously planned; the learning objectives are clear for each pupil, matched to their individual targets and needs; and a good range of practical equipment is ready to hand (including, for example, sorting trays, number lines, counters, objects, sand-trays, white-boards, number fans, shapes, games, computer programmes). Teachers are good at seizing opportunities to get pupils to think through, to check and to put into words what they are doing, helping them to build up the right mathematical vocabulary. When adults give intensive help to individual pupils or small groups, they make sure they move them forward in their learning – for example, first explaining and demonstrating, then “doing it together”, then merely prompting and supporting, until finally the pupils are able to work things out on their own. Adults challenge pupils to think and to try, whilst providing reassurance, encouragement and recognition. Teachers are resourceful and generate a sense of fun and achievement, even in the face of occasional resistance, and most pupils enjoy rising to their “maths challenges”. As with the teaching of English, there are many planned opportunities woven into the day's programme, over and above designated mathematics sessions, when teachers focus on developing numeracy – as well as many unplanned opportunities which teachers are also quick to seize.

27. The teaching of science is very good. Lessons are very well planned and set within the scheme of work. The teacher is confident and clear about what pupils are to know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson, and support staff are very well briefed to ensure that this happens. Resources are interesting and appropriate for pupils' ages. The teacher uses the element of surprise and fascination to motivate pupils, as, for example, when pupils looked at materials and their properties. Lessons are interesting and pupils are expected to participate actively, as indeed they do. The teacher engages all pupils in discussion at some level, adapting her questioning and vocabulary in the light of her extensive knowledge of each pupil. Plenary sessions are thorough and carefully planned to review just how much pupils have learned.

28. During the inspection, only a limited amount of direct teaching of other subjects was seen, including humanities, information technology, physical education, art, design and technology and music. What was seen was of consistently good quality.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**



29. The unit provides its pupils with a good range of opportunities for learning and for personal development. These opportunities are of good quality and are well matched to the particular needs of the children who attend. All pupils who come to First Base are dual registered, continuing to attend their own mainstream school each week, as well as the unit. In this way, they all receive full-time education. The effective partnership between schools and First Base ensures that all pupils have access to the statutory curriculum.

30. First Base has a clear, succinct statement of aims for the curriculum. These aims fit in with the LEA's curriculum policy for PRUs and take proper account of the national guidance for such units. They provide a good basis for planning work and experiences that are designed to help pupils to reintegrate and cope better in mainstream school.

31. In their planning, which is careful and detailed, teachers make sure that the National Curriculum is taught, so that pupils do not miss out on what is happening in school. At the same time, they sensibly recognise the developmental needs of their pupils by keeping in mind the early learning goals of the foundation stage (pre-school) curriculum, and the range of foundation learning opportunities, including structured play, which many of the pupils still need.

32. All adults give a high priority to pupils' personal, social and emotional development, both in what they plan to teach and in how they teach it. This is reflected not just in personal, social and health education (PSHE) sessions, but in the way teaching plans are drawn up for all subjects and areas of learning. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Every opportunity is taken – in lessons, during play, at meal-times – to foster pupils' social and moral development. This is done in a planned way, and is not left to chance. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are also well catered for. Staff have worked hard to create an atmosphere in which pupils feel secure, and know that their contributions and views are encouraged and valued. Adults provide a very good role model of positive relationships, co-operation and effective teamwork. Pupils are encouraged to express themselves and know that they are listened to. They are helped to recognise and express feelings and emotions and are encouraged to manage their own behaviour. Much is done to build their confidence and self-esteem and to give them a greater understanding of themselves and of others. They are taught about the importance of caring and respecting living things and the environment. Teachers work to broaden pupils' appreciation of the world in which they live – for example, through visits into the local community, visitors who come to First Base to share with the children, and the choice of attractive, stimulating books and materials which give them insight into ways of life that differ from their own. As yet, the unit has not spelled out for parents whether, or how, teachers will deal with sex education or related issues. This is shortly to be clarified, as part of the on-going programme of policy development.

33. Particular attention is rightly paid to developing all pupils' communication, language and literacy, as well as to improving their numeracy. In doing this, teachers liaise closely with pupils' mainstream schools. They focus on the learning objectives laid down in the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies (of which they have a good understanding) and make appropriate use of methods suggested in those national strategies, so that what is done in the unit backs up what is being taught in school. This team-work is making a difference and is helping pupils to make progress in these key areas.

34. In addition, pupils' lessons in the unit also help them improve their knowledge and understanding of the world, through National Curriculum science, history and geography. Pupils also have creative and practical opportunities, including art, music and design and technology, as well as opportunities for planned physical activities. As a result, the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and pupils have well-planned, well-integrated and well-organised opportunities for learning and development.

35. Pupils attend the unit for varying amounts of time, according to identified need, ranging from half a day a week to three days per week. Clear arrangements and criteria for admission, together with a clear view of what is involved in the different levels of support, help make this work. The curriculum for each pupil is jointly negotiated between school and First Base, to target the specific needs identified. Very helpful individual education plans make clear what each pupil is aiming for, what approaches will be used to make sure that teaching and the curriculum match their special needs, and how progress will be assessed. When pupils arrive in the unit, the over-riding need is to help overcome the challenging behaviour which is making it difficult for them to cope in their mainstream school. The strength of what the unit provides lies in the fact that pupils' individual personal and behavioural needs and their learning needs are held in the right balance. Improved attitudes and behaviour are not at the expense of pupils' progress in their learning. There is an emphasis on raising pupils' self-esteem, expectations and levels of achievement through their success in their learning. The curriculum is carefully planned, learning objectives are precise and tailored to the needs of individuals, and the programme for each day is tightly structured to give pupils the necessary security. At the same time, adults are not afraid to be flexible in responding to situations and to the needs of individuals, adapting things within a clearly organised framework.

36. Another strength of the unit is the way its work is founded on effective partnership. There are very good links with the schools from which pupils come. Good information about pupils' achievements and their needs is regularly passed from school to unit and from unit to school. Staff from the unit work with pupils in their mainstream schools, as well as in the unit itself. There is valuable discussion between teachers in school and First Base staff about how best to meet pupils' needs and help them cope better in school. It is thanks to these close links that the pupils cope so well with spending part of the week at First Base and the rest of the time in school. Equally important is the strong partnership with parents, the value of which is stressed by parents themselves. Staff of the unit work closely with parents, suggesting practical approaches to helping their children's learning and development at home, linked to what is happening in the unit. Parents report that this is paying dividends. The unit also works in partnership with other agencies, including, for example, educational psychologists, advisory teachers, the education welfare service, social services, the health service, child and family consultation service, Parent Partnership and the Children's Society. An important feature is the shared vision and commitment of all concerned, based on an understanding that the children's needs are best served by everyone working closely together. First Base is not seen as a "quick fix", out-of-sight-out-of-mind solution.

37. First Base is still in its first year and it is too early to have reliable proof of its effectiveness in reintegrating pupils into school full-time over the longer term. However, the early signs are very encouraging, including the positive evaluations made by parents and schools. They are clear that the unit's help has already made a significant difference to many pupils. Already, it has been possible to reduce the level of support needed by several pupils. Certainly, the unit and schools are in no doubt that the key purpose is to equip pupils to cope with a return to full time in mainstream school. The inspection confirms that what the unit provides is well suited to this purpose – including the curriculum, the way pupils are organised and taught, the constant emphasis on developing the necessary attitudes and personal, social and learning skills, and the in-school support and outreach work.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

38. The unit gives high quality support and guidance to pupils, particular strengths being the improvement of pupils' behaviour, and regular monitoring of both academic progress and personal development.

39. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are good. Sensibly, on starting the unit from scratch, most attention has been given to fire and first aid procedures, and the overall health and safety policy will shortly be made more specific to the unit. The child protection policy is already well tailored to the unit's different groups of contacts, and staff have a good knowledge of pupils.

40. Attendance is well monitored and the register properly kept. The unit is giving attention to the need to make registers slightly easier to keep where the pupil population is transient, as is necessarily the case here.

41. The promotion of good behaviour, through highly effective classroom management and a motivating reward system, is a strength of the unit's work. The very effective links with partner schools, including regular communication with both headteachers and class teachers, are key to the success of this work. There is a good contribution from the educational psychology service, which helps staff think through the theory underlying the successful practice. There are also effective links with other agencies which support the pupils and their families, and vital links with parents which help to ensure that pupils receive the consistency they so badly need in all areas of their lives. All these elements combine to enable pupils to improve their behaviour both within the unit and in mainstream school to a significant extent.

42. The monitoring of academic progress and personal development is well done. Individual education plans are at the heart of reviews, and contain targets that cover both learning and behaviour goals. Some of the plans are exemplary in the specificity and clarity of their targets. Progress is regularly reviewed against individual plans in a well-organised cycle which is effective in involving parents and partner schools. A very good range of assessment data is collected and collated on entry, and this helps teachers plan their work.

43. Pupils' work is thoroughly assessed. Often, there is helpful comment or annotation. Pupils' progress is well known to staff. Work is planned on a very individual basis, whilst keeping the mainstream curriculum well in view, especially as regards progress in literacy and numeracy. Personal and social education is made relevant to individual needs through teachers' planning and comments. The detailed, regular and analytical behaviour observations undertaken by staff within the mainstream school as well as in the unit, are a strong feature of the practice, giving staff specific and timely information with which to plan.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

44. The unit has an outstandingly successful partnership with parents. A key feature is the involvement of parents through the parenting course, which helps ensure the consistent management of behaviour, which pupils badly need.

45. Parents are very appreciative of the unit's work with them and their children. Staff are seen as approachable and generous with their time in discussion. Both the parents' meeting and questionnaire showed their strong support for the unit. This is backed up by the unit's own parental surveys, which show a very high level of satisfaction.

46. The parenting course is very much valued, and parents have taken the initiative in opting to continue themselves as a discussion group once the course has finished. As well as the opportunity to improve parenting skills, the course also breaks down parental isolation and helps in the sharing of common problems. Parents' evaluations show their high opinion of the course.

47. The quality of information for parents is very good. The regular, frequent and detailed

reviews involve parents well and give them precise information on their child's progress. Parents also receive regular written reports, as well as daily information through the First Base-home-school link books. The quality of informal communication in discussions and telephone conversations is also high. The current parents' brochure, whilst comprehensive, is not especially accessible, and staff are in the process of designing a leaflet version.

48. From initial referral onwards, parents are fully involved in planning and reviewing pupils' education in the unit. Helpful prompts elicit information and knowledge from parents about their child for discussion at meetings. There is very high attendance by parents at review meetings.

49. The tripartite approach, with close links between school, unit and parents, gives children the best possible chance by ensuring consistency of approach, especially in behaviour management. Both parents and schools are convinced of the improvement in behaviour, and of pupils' increasing ability to cope with the ups and downs of life at school. The partnership is highly effective.

### **HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?**

50. The LEA and the teacher-in-charge set up First Base as a pilot primary PRU, focusing on early intervention to prevent exclusion in the primary years, following consultation, planning and an analysis of the needs of schools and pupils. At the time of the inspection, First Base had been open for a little over two terms. The project was well researched and well prepared. Sufficient funding was provided to refurbish part of a residential school as the PRU base, to employ staff and to provide appropriate resources for learning. The PRU, two terms on, is very well led and managed by the teacher in charge, who is calm, confident and knowledgeable. The LEA is establishing a clear framework of policies and procedures, and has a coherent vision for the PRU's development, which focuses on promoting reintegration and inclusion, although it is rightly awaiting the outcome of external evaluation of the project before building on this pilot. Staff are very clear about the purpose of the unit and all share the same vision. The teacher in charge has successfully created an effective professional team, with a clear commitment to the full-time integration of pupils into school.

51. All staff show a commitment to high-quality relationships with mainstream schools, with pupils, with parents, with other agencies and with each another. Strong teamwork, which is evident in the classroom, is a key feature of the life and work of the unit.

52. The PRU and the LEA have in place a good range of strategies to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the unit's work and to account for its performance. Schools, parents and other partners are regularly consulted in order to identify strengths to build on as well as areas for improvement. The unit's development plan is very good and appropriate actions are identified and carried through. There is systematic and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching. The teacher in charge monitors curriculum planning overall, as well as the planning of individual teachers. Tracking of pupils' progress towards their academic and behavioural targets is thorough and effective.

53. Because of the pilot nature of the PRU, the LEA set up a professional support group for this first year, in place of a management committee. This group has both supported and advised the teacher in charge, has maintained a critical interest in development, and has been kept well informed of the PRU's work through regular reports and meetings. As planned, a management committee will take over at the start of the new academic year.

54. Given the stage of the unit's development, its planning for the next steps in its

development is both detailed and appropriate. The PRU has plans to work with 3-year olds in the future and has rightly recognised that, as part of its planned development, more planning and preparation is needed before this happens. There is good involvement of staff and others who have a stake in the work of the unit. There are good arrangements for consultation and full account is taken of the results of consultation and evaluation in drawing up plans for further improvement. Communication of priorities for development is very effective. The principles of best value are firmly adhered to.

55. There are sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers and the unit is well resourced for the number of pupils currently attending the PRU and those being supported in mainstream schools. Teachers and support staff, including the school secretary, are very good at dealing with pupils whose behaviour is difficult. The teacher in charge, the staff and the LEA have worked hard and to very good effect to make the unit welcoming. They have provided a secure, attractive learning environment for pupils and a warm, welcoming environment for parents.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

56. There are no key issues for action.

57. This newly established PRU has made a very good start to its work. The teacher in charge and staff, working with the LEA, should continue with the development actions they already have in hand. These include the planned developments mentioned in the following paragraphs:

(Paragraph 32) Clarifying the unit's sex education policy for parents;

(Paragraph 39) Making the health and safety policy more specific to the unit;

(Paragraph 47) Developing a more accessible leaflet version of the prospectus for parents;

(Paragraph 50) Continuing to develop the framework of policies and procedures;

(Paragraph 53) Replacing the professional support group with a management committee;

(Paragraph 54) Planning and preparation for the admission of 3-year old children.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11	73	16	0	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the unit's pupils

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll*	15*

\* Plus 13 additional pupils supported on outreach work in schools

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	15

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
Unit data	5

Unauthorised absence	%
Unit data	0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for last whole term before the inspection

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	15
Any other minority ethnic group	

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y3**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y1 – Y3**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

operation.

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	24,936.00*
Total expenditure	21,445.93
Expenditure per pupil	N.A.
Balance brought forward from previous year	N.A.
Balance carried forward to next year	N.A.

\*Includes £16,000 as Set-Up Budget for first year of

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

There were 4 returns to the parental questionnaire. The meeting held by the Registered Inspector was attended by 13 parents or carers. There was strong support for the work of the PRU. Parents said that being in the unit helped their children make good progress not only with their learning but in improving their attitudes and behaviour. They said that they received strong support from the staff at the unit and the Parenting Course run by the unit was appreciated by all the parents.