



First Base

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131822
LEA SUFFOLK LEA
Inspection number 282262
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 22 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Susan Aldridge LI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit	School address	34 Ashley Downs
School category	Pupil referral unit		NR32 4EU
Age range of pupils	3 to 8		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01502 512963
Number on roll	14	Fax number	01502 516525
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Roger Belham
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Annette Moxon

Age group 3 to 8	Inspection dates 22 March 2006 - 22 March 2006	Inspection number 282262
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

First Base is a pupil referral unit for boys and girls aged from 3 to 8 and serves the northern area of Suffolk. It provides support for a total of 36 pupils in schools, as well as at the unit. An outreach service provides support for pupils in schools more than 15 miles away and this support may last for up to 3 terms. Currently, it has 14 pupils on roll who attend one or two days each week and are also registered at other schools. There are never more than 6 pupils at the unit at a time. Almost all pupils are boys. All pupils are White and most are English speaking. A very small number come from families where English is a second language. Pupils are admitted to First Base because of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and most spend two terms there before being re-integrated into mainstream schools or nurseries. A small number are assessed for statements of special educational need whilst at the unit. In 2004 the unit developed a Behaviour Support Service (BSS) for schools and the community. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of pupils admitted with speech and language difficulties. The unit has also experienced staffing difficulties, caused by long-term sickness. First Base and BSS both provide training for staff in mainstream schools. The unit provides a family learning programme, family support services and the community uses its facilities. A Multi-Agency Forum meets at the unit and co-ordinates support for children served by the unit and their families.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

First Base provides an outstanding quality of education for children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 to 3. As a result, all make exceptional improvements in their personal development and begin to re-engage in learning. Teaching is very good and most pupils make very good academic progress. At the heart of its success is the most effective work done by a multi-agency group that co-ordinates support for pupils and their families. Through this group, pupils access a wealth of programmes and sources of support that target their specific and individual needs. The headteacher initiated this work and maintains excellent partnerships with all stakeholders. She provides outstanding leadership. Self-evaluation is accurate and outstanding. This is a PRU that is reflective and committed to continuous improvement. It listens to its stakeholders, knows precisely what needs to be done to improve and has suitable plans for development. The unit's outreach work and that of its behaviour support service is highly valued by staff in schools. Despite a changing pupil population and recent staffing difficulties, there has been excellent improvement since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement is outstanding. The unit provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the unit's development plan, which provides a comprehensive agenda for further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When pupils are admitted to the PRU their attainment is below that expected because of their emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, which occasionally are linked to undiagnosed learning difficulties. Most are at levels below National Curriculum Level 1, called P levels. Once they settle, they make rapid gains in literacy and numeracy skills. The unit's value added data shows that all pupils gained at least one level in a year, three quarters achieved two level gains and half of them achieved gains of three or more levels. A small number gained six levels, moving through P levels into National Curriculum levels. This represents very good progress. The most dramatic gains are made in numeracy skills and reading. Having previously identified speaking and listening and writing as areas for further development, suitable action has been taken and assessment information indicates that there has been a noticeable improvement as a result. Teachers and the pupils themselves set challenging targets and most of these are achieved. Last year, 65% of targets were achieved within the timescale set. Boys and girls achieve equally well, as do pupils with different learning difficulties. Although a very small number of pupils do not make expected progress, there is a satisfactory explanation for this. Whilst a few pupils manage to reach levels expected by the time they go back to their schools full-time, in general standards are below those expected because of pupils' learning difficulties.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are referred to First Base with a variety of behaviour difficulties including aggression, violence, lack of co-operation, attention seeking and failure to form friendships. The centre addresses these most effectively and pupils learn to make the right choices. For instance, they learn to remove themselves to a safe area and use strategies to calm themselves down when they become angry. Pupils know why they come to the centre and they set targets for improving their learning behaviour, such as 'listening to the whole of a story'. They become better at working and playing in small groups with others, and can recognise and express their feelings. Parents say that they are much more manageable at home. 'We have a family life now', said one. Pupils also learn about different cultures and customs, and recently celebrated Chinese New Year. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils get on well with one another and they understand and respect the clear boundaries, and the system of rewards and sanctions. As they start to achieve, their self-esteem grows and when they return to their schools full-time the improvement in their behaviour is sustained, at first with support, and later without this. Pupils clearly enjoy coming as attendance is excellent. They are well motivated in class and participate enthusiastically in physical activities. Pupils are beginning to make healthy choices, such as eating fruit at break. They also help out at functions such as the Strawberry Fayre, when they organised and ran stalls.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour so they successfully engage pupils in learning. Planning is based on detailed assessment that contributes to teachers' thorough knowledge of the pupils. Lessons are very well planned to take account of pupils' individual needs, ages and abilities, with different learning outcomes for different pupils. These are shared with pupils at the start and reviewed at the end of each lesson, so pupils know how well they are getting on. By involving pupils in target setting, teachers ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve. Teachers use a variety of methods and approaches, which are well matched to pupils' needs and learning styles. Opportunities to promote pupils' personal development are woven into lessons and good feedback is given to pupils, who clearly enjoy praise. Parents are involved very well in pupils' learning. Through the Parent Support Group, they learn how to use reward systems, for example, and they successfully use these at home. Assessment and recording are both very good. Pupils, parents and schools are involved well in the process. Records show clearly the progress that each pupil has made, and schools find records informative. For instance, learning support assistants write reports following weekly outreach sessions. These show how the session went, what the outcomes were and what the next steps should be. The improvement plan

correctly identifies a number of ways in which teaching will be strengthened, including developing alternative recording methods for pupils who do not like writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The First Base curriculum is very broad and exceptionally effective at promoting pupils' personal development. Literacy, numeracy, science and personal and social education are emphasised on timetables and cross-curricular topics include humanities, art, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, physical education, music and drama. Care is taken to ensure that pupils do not miss certain subjects at school when they attend First Base, and the great majority of schools find that missed work is not a problem when pupils return full-time to them. The curriculum addresses pupils' particular needs through anger management, teaching negotiation skills, social skills, exploration of feelings and collaboration. The multi-agency group, in partnership with parents, arranges additional resources, programmes and activities such as transport to holiday clubs, therapy programmes, and play activity sessions. Termly visits broaden pupils' horizons and provide opportunities for pupils to extend their social skills. Visitors to the unit, such as police and firemen, give pupils an understanding of jobs that are done in society and how to keep safe. The personal and social education programme includes suitable sex and relationships education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There are excellent arrangements to support and guide pupils in improving academically and personally. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and the highly effective multi-disciplinary work underpin the unit's work in this area. Through the multi-agency support group, pupils and their parents access all the support that they need. Monthly meetings of this group involve parents and keeps pupils' progress under review. The Parents' Support Group is greatly appreciated; parents describe this as having reduced their sense of isolation and given them strategies for coping with children's behaviour at home. There are good arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Staff training in child protection is good and the policy and procedures for this and for health and safety are kept under review by the management committee. The local authority deals with staff checks at the time of appointment. Risks are carefully assessed and pupils well supervised. Support for pupils and staff in mainstream schools is highly valued. In particular, headteachers appreciate the quick response they get from the centre, the approachable staff, and the support from learning support assistants whilst pupils are re-integrating into their schools. They say that pupils thrive once they are re-integrated.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is very well regarded by other professionals and so is the work of the unit. Since she established First Base, it has been used as a model for other similar units in Suffolk. Her innovative work in convening a multi-disciplinary group to co-ordinate support for children and their families is central to the success of the unit. She is well supported by a highly skilled deputy headteacher and a management committee that has a very good range of relevant expertise. This committee keeps the work of the unit under review, ensures that statutory requirements are met, and has representatives from the multi-agency group and the local authority. Self-evaluation is excellent. Assessments of attainment levels and improvements in behaviour enable the unit to clearly demonstrate its success. Questionnaires are regularly sent to all stakeholders including schools and parents; pupils' and staff views are collected. Where the unit can do so, it compares its performance with other similar establishments. Information is analysed to inform future development. Staff development has a high priority, and the quality of the unit's work in this respect has enabled it to respond well to a changing pupil population. Staff skills are carefully audited and training needs identified. The accommodation, which is very good, is continually improving, and finances have been well managed to allow for this. Whilst a delay in starting building work has led to a large surplus, this is set to reduce to a sensible contingency next financial year.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me feel welcome at First Base. I enjoyed my day there, especially seeing you working in lessons. I came to see how well you are all getting on and to find out if there are any things that could be done better. The main things I found are these: - you are all getting on very, very well - you like coming to First Base - staff help you to improve in many ways - those that have left to go back to their own schools are doing well - your parents are very happy with the progress that you make - lots of people work very well together to give you and your parents all the help that you need - some children get help from staff who go into their schools and this works very well - your headteacher is doing an excellent job. There are things that could be improved but the headteacher already knows what these are and has plans that should make things even better. I hope that you will all keep up the excellent work that you are doing. Best wishes to you all.