



First Base

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134617
LEA SUFFOLK LEA
Inspection number 282617
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 11 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Steven Parker LI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	School Lane
School category	Pupil referral unit		IP27 0AD
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01842 815478
Number on roll	17	Fax number	
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Yvonne Cash
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Ms. Judith Bush

Age group 3 to 7	Inspection dates 11 January 2006 - 11 January 2006	Inspection number 282617
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

First Base Brandon is a pupil referral unit (PRU), established in April 2004 to serve a wide area of West Suffolk. The unit itself provides support for pupils from early years up to the age of eight, who have experienced a range of social, emotional and behaviour difficulties, including autism, that cause them problems in coping with the expectations of their mainstream schools. As a consequence, their attainment is generally lower than expected for pupils of their age. One group of pupils, with 17 currently on roll, attend the unit. Most of these pupils, all boys at the time of the inspection, do so for up to two days a week, depending on their level of need. They spend the rest of the time in their mainstream schools. The majority return full time to those schools after an average period of three terms. The second group of 25 pupils, a number expected to increase over time, are supported within their mainstream schools by the PRU's behaviour support service. The service's staff work directly with the pupils, individually or in small groups. They also provide a range of in-school advice to their teachers, together with focused training in the unit. This is the outreach element of the PRU's work. This is the PRU's first inspection. This inspection looked at the work of both the unit and the outreach service.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

First Base Brandon is a good PRU that provides good value for money. The inspector agreed with most of the unit's own judgements about its work, especially in relation to its effectiveness in enabling pupils to continue with their education in mainstream schools. The unit's capacity for further improvement is particularly good. The headteacher has successfully established the unit and support service through her very successful leadership. By recruiting and developing a capable team of teachers and behaviour support assistants, who work in effective partnership with each other and their mainstream colleagues, she has ensured that the unit promotes learning that is relevant to each pupil. At the unit, good teaching and a curriculum carefully tailored to pupils' needs help them to make good progress and become better able to meet the demands of their mainstream schools. Parents and carers appreciate the direct support that they are given themselves and agree that the unit helps their children to improve their life opportunities. The behaviour support service is successful in providing well focused guidance and encouragement to mainstream teachers, to help them manage referred pupils' behaviour more effectively. By working with the pupils individually and in small groups, within the settings that they find difficult, they help those pupils to develop the ability to cope there and become more effective learners. The management committee has been supportive during this early stage of the PRU's history, but has not been as successful as it would have wished, because it has not had a complete and active membership. As a consequence, its committees have not been fully involved in staff appointments, policy making and monitoring the PRU's activity. This has meant that the unit and service is not wholly effective in analysing the information that it collects to evaluate the outcomes of its work, and further improve the work it does.

What the school should do to improve further

- Carry out more formal checks and analysis, and fully involve the management group on how well the unit is performing. - To work in collaboration with the local authority, review the terms of reference of the management committee to facilitate full membership, so that it can more effectively meet its brief.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Over both the unit and service, pupils make good progress. Their particular difficulties mean that most are performing below the standards expected for pupils of their age. However, as a result of the good teaching and support that they and their families receive, they improve their personal and social skills and achieve well in their class work. They become increasingly self confident and, through being helped to understand how best to deal with their often negative attitudes to school and lessons, they engage more successfully in their learning. Challenging targets were met last year. Whilst the main focus of the unit's work is in relation to pupils' social, emotional and behavioural

needs, the unit does support and encourage the development of their basic skills. Many make impressive progress in their reading, writing, mathematics and computer skills, helping them to benefit more from the wider educational opportunities available to them in their mainstream schools. Their improved ability to listen actively and express their feelings and ideas more effectively also has a significant impact on developing their learning capabilities. All pupils make similar progress, no matter what their age or difficulties are.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

At the unit, very good relationships between pupils and adults ensure that pupils' personal development is good. The key worker system operating in the unit helps pupils to feel safe and relaxed, and they quickly learn to trust and respect staff. This then enables them to talk about how they feel and express their anxieties about situations. Pupils learn about how to lead safe and healthy lives effectively. Staff act as very good role models, in showing how to get on with each other more appropriately, and be positive. They also employ a wide range of approaches, including play and creative therapy to explore feelings, and circle time to resolve conflicts. Pupils consequently learn to recognise that there are alternative ways for them to deal with their difficulties, other than reacting anti-socially. Strong reinforcement of any good behaviour encourages more of the same, and most pupils demonstrate significant improvement in their ability to control their own behaviour. Overall behaviour is good. They come to enjoy their time at the unit, value its importance and, consequently, attend very regularly. Their attendance at their home school often improves as well. Pupils are encouraged to play a role in the unit community and readily accept responsibility. Clearly, splitting their week between two different settings, with perhaps differing expectations, is challenging for pupils. This situation is, however, used creatively by staff, and pupils learn adaptability and varying strategies to cope with change. Outreach pupils benefit from highly focused help and encouragement provided by the behaviour support staff. This enables them to develop similar capabilities to read and adapt to their situation, whilst staying in their school. The help that their teachers are given to examine and change the way they approach these pupils' needs is equally important in maintaining them productively in that setting. In this way, both sets of pupils are helped to improve their self worth and personal esteem, moving on to the next stage of their education with better capability to make the best of their situations. Pupils are learning skills effectively which will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teamwork between teachers and very able behaviour support assistants results in good teaching and learning. In the unit, the small class of five or six pupils

provides a welcome and enabling contrast with pupils' mainstream experience. They thrive on the skilled, intensive support and individual attention afforded by the nurture group model of working. They enjoy being taught in a more relaxed way and quickly become comfortable and confident learners. For example, in a literacy activity, where pupils were 'fishing' for letters written on ping pong balls in a pool, they speedily and accurately composed and wrote a number of words. Planning of activities is detailed and very relevant to each pupil's particular needs, based as it is on regular and careful assessment. This means that every pupil works on tasks which are challenging and relevant, ensuring that their time back in their home school is productive. Pupils are encouraged to think carefully about how well they are doing and what they could do to be even more successful. Outreach staff are equally effective in promoting successful learning. They work very well with teachers in mainstream classes and provide sensitive support for identified pupils. This is often in small groups that include other pupils with learning difficulties, thereby providing a valuable and beneficial additional resource to the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, because it provides highly relevant learning experiences for the pupils. The focus is primarily on personal and social development through a well structured programme of activities. Pupils learn and consolidate basic skills naturally by this approach, but the unit staff are increasingly targeting specific aspects of literacy and numeracy in individual planning. Pupils benefit from a wide range of community visits that extend their experiences and apply skills that they have learned in the unit. Some particularly enjoy their weekly visits to the Forest School, an unusual initiative that provides them with the opportunity to explore the rich environment of the local Thetford Chase. This free setting successfully promotes independent learning, co-operative working, initiative and self esteem. They also learn safe practices and self- control. Outreach staff often advise and support their mainstream colleagues in how best to adapt pupils' curricular experiences to meet their needs more successfully. This often results in pupils re-engaging in their learning in their current school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well looked after and cared for. At the unit, child protection requirements and safety procedures are firmly established, well understood by all staff and rigorously applied. Outreach staff are equally vigilant in working with staff in schools and other agencies in monitoring the safety and security of the pupils they work with. At the unit, targets for learning are precise and used well in ensuring that learning matches closely to pupils' needs. Individual files contain detailed information and provide convincing evidence of the progress pupils make, as well as information that is helpful to teachers in the pupils' other schools. Procedures for promoting and recognising progress in personal and social development are particularly impressive. Targets in individual plans are well supported by detailed information in daily record sheets about

how each pupil has performed throughout the day. They also provide a comprehensive picture of what might have triggered troubled behaviour and what has worked well. Parents and carers are kept very well informed on a daily basis through personal contact or home school books. Parents are extremely appreciative of the pastoral care that their children receive and the very well focused support, guidance and encouragement that they are given themselves during regular home visits. This element of collaborative working is a particular strength of the PRU.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have enabled the PRU to develop its increasingly effective provision in a short time. The headteacher has had the determination and capability to ensure that all aspects of the PRU's work have been continually refined to function effectively. She is a very good, professional role model for her colleagues and is held in high regard in the wider educational community for the way she has developed the provision. The whole staff team works extremely well together and pursues a very clearly expressed, reflective approach to its work. Best use is made of individuals' expertise, and many of the development initiatives have come about through debate around individuals' interests and ideas. Very impressive continuing professional development has ensured that the necessary knowledge and skills have then been learned and applied. Day to day management of the unit and outreach provision is efficient and effective. The PRU's capacity to continue with developing its provision on the basis of lessons learned is very secure. The headteacher does, however recognise that some work needs to be done on further developing the PRU's monitoring processes. Whilst she and her colleagues have a solid, though sometimes informal knowledge of the quality of all aspects of the PRU's provision and its effectiveness, it does not, as yet have a properly structured approach to using its considerable bank of data, which includes the views of parents and other stakeholders, to inform rigorous self-evaluation. The management committee has been supportive of the PRU's development from its outset, but has not been fully able to meet its brief, because of difficulties in recruiting and maintaining an active membership. This has limited its capacity to provide the level of challenge and support required of such a body.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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	NA
Learners are educated about sexual health	NA
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

As you know, I visited your unit recently to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for making me feel welcome and talking to me so confidently. I really enjoyed watching you do your work, having lunch with you and spending some time with you during your playtime. What I think is good about the unit: - it is a happy place, where you feel safe and learn how to understand your feelings - the staff give you lots of interesting things to do and make sure you do the best you can - some of your work is very good - you behaved particularly well considering some of the difficulties you have had in your other schools - all the staff are very kind and help you to feel more confident and good about yourselves - the headteacher makes it possible for everyone in the unit to work together successfully. What I have asked the unit to do now: - develop better ways of showing how well First Base is doing its work - find ways to make the Management Committee (a bit like governors of a school) get better at helping First Base to do its work even better.