

First Base, Ipswich

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133715
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328730
Inspection date	7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	3–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	17
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Siddall
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Raeburn Road Ipswich Suffolk IP3 0EW
Telephone number	01473 719553
Fax number	01473 274974

Age group	3–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the unit and investigated the following issues:

- what impact the provision has on pupils' academic progress
- the impact of turbulence on improvement since the last inspection
- how well the unit contributes to community cohesion, particularly through its outreach work.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher and staff, members of the management committee, the local authority and stakeholders. Other aspects of its work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the unit's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

First Base Ipswich is a pupil referral unit for pupils who are in the southern area of Suffolk. Its outreach service supports 50 pupils in mainstream schools in that area. Currently, 17 pupils attend the unit and they are dual registered at the unit and in their mainstream schools. At the time of the inspection there were three children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attending the unit for a day each week. Pupils are referred to the unit because they have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, although none has a statement of special educational needs. Most of the pupils are boys and the majority are of White British heritage. A small number come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils usually spend two terms at the centre, attending for a day each week. During this time they also receive support from the outreach service when they are in their community schools. The unit has had a period of turbulence since the last inspection. This included a change of headteacher in April 2008. In the last year there have been three deputy headteachers, two of whom have been seconded to the unit. The unit's work has been recognised by the Healthy Schools Award.

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 Ipswich is highly successful in meeting its aim to promote inclusion. Its overall effectiveness is outstanding and it provides excellent value for money, because it is led and managed exceptionally well. Parents and other stakeholders are delighted with the provision it makes, which is very successful in enabling pupils to maintain their school placements in their local communities. There has been good overall improvement since the last inspection, despite a period of considerable turbulence. Timely support provided by the local authority enabled the unit to manage the difficulties effectively. The arrival of a new headteacher resulted in a large number of positive changes, based firmly on her wide-ranging audit of the in-centre and outreach provision as well as her vision for the unit as a centre of excellence. Her leadership is outstanding, and she is very well supported by the local authority's committed and competent management committee who readily contribute their ideas for development and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They have established a committee structure through which to keep the unit's work under review and they monitor the devolved budget well, ably assisted by a bursar.

In the past year, the unit has become well integrated into the overall local authority provision for pupils who need support to improve their behaviour, social and emotional adjustment. Links with a wealth of agencies and services in the community have been strengthened, and the outreach service has increased its efficiency enormously. With the same staffing complement, it now serves far more pupils and schools, and provides a much greater number of training courses than it did previously. There is now a clear menu of support on offer to schools, tailored to the level of their needs. Customer satisfaction is very high and the unit is seen as highly successful, because of the impact of intervention on the outcomes for pupils as well as on the practice of staff in schools. The unit contributes very well to community cohesion in the local area. Links with the local authority foster community cohesion within the county, and the headteacher has also established national links. She has recognised the need to further develop the global dimension.

In the current cohort attending the centre, standards are broadly average. The unit sets very challenging targets for pupils' progress in the two terms that they are being supported. Almost all pupils reach these; those that make less progress have complex circumstances that account for this. A small proportion of pupils make quite spectacular progress, moving on by two or three sub-levels in reading and writing, for instance. The key ingredients that account for excellent progress and achievement are the high quality teaching, the personalised curriculum and the excellent care, guidance and support that are given to pupils. Planning is excellent. When pupils arrive, staff carry out a thorough baseline assessment of their behaviour. This and academic assessment information are used to construct detailed individual learning programmes and personal targets. Parents are fully involved in the construction of these plans, and many work on pupils' personal targets at home. A good dialogue is maintained between home and school on all matters, particularly successes. Opportunities for pupils to work on their personal targets are built into their daily timetables; they get to know what their targets are and chart their success towards these. Progress against targets is carefully evaluated and recorded each day, and records provide a convincing tale of the rapid progress made. Daily evaluations diagnose areas where more input is needed as well as establishing what works well with individual pupils. Where pupils have particular weaknesses, such as in writing skills, additional opportunities for this are added to their personal curriculum. Staff are very perceptive in diagnosing pupils'

interests and preferred learning styles, and they skilfully plan ways of getting pupils to write in contexts that they find appealing, such as when this forms part of role playing. Each term, activities are planned around a theme and are based firmly upon pupils' interests. This adds to pupils' motivation and enjoyment. Resources are well organised and matched to each theme. Staff have warm and caring working relationships with pupils. Pupils clearly feel very safe and secure. Staff are well trained in matters relating to the curriculum as well as care of the pupils. There are robust arrangements to keep pupils safe. Links with external agencies greatly enhance what the unit is able to provide. For instance, where pupils have particular difficulties, referrals to other agencies and services result in additional support being made available.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Attendance at the unit has improved dramatically in the past year and is well above the national average for primary schools. Pupils make good improvements in their behaviour, attitudes to learning and emotional adjustment. These are the result of precise diagnosis of where weaknesses lie, followed by careful target setting and planning to rectify these. As a result, pupils are more accepting of rules, which they help to set, more attentive, and better able to cope with difficulties, by removing themselves to a withdrawal area, for instance. Because opportunities to work alongside and cooperate with others are built into each day, and pupils are guided well about how to respond, their social development accelerates. Circle time helps them to understand their own feelings and those of others. Physical activity in the form of a gym trail is a daily occurrence and pupils greatly enjoy this. They eat a healthy breakfast and lunch at the unit each day and drink plenty of water. Hygiene habits are well established and pupils behave safely and sensibly. They contribute very well in the unit, by helping to put out and clear way resources, growing plant from seeds and turning their strawberries into jam. They learn to celebrate the achievements and successes of others, make choices, take risks and participate in decision making. Because their self-confidence grows, their basic skills improve and they are more able to get along with others. By the time they leave the unit they are very well placed to thrive in their own schools. Transition is a carefully planned process, with support tailored to meet pupils' needs. Schools particularly appreciate the after-care element and find that it helps pupils to ease back into full-time attendance. All pupils successfully continue with their community school placements.

Self-evaluation is outstanding. The unit makes use of a number of tools to accurately measure improvements in behaviour, social and emotional adjustment, as well as pupils' academic progress. There is also a wide range of criteria used to evaluate the effectiveness of the outreach service. Data is used well to establish which areas of its work are strong and which are in need of improvement. An ambitious development plan, drawn up by the headteacher in her first year, has been monitored and evaluated and a three-year plan is now under construction. Staff work well as a team, all taking on suitable responsibilities. There are excellent plans for further development. However, following a period of rapid development, a consolidation phase is now planned, when it will be necessary to monitor carefully the effectiveness of developments as well as continuing those that have been initiated. At present, the unit's capacity for further improvement is good rather than outstanding because there is no permanent deputy headteacher in place to support the headteacher in monitoring and evaluation.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

There were no children present on the day of the inspection. Evidence gathered from records and discussions demonstrates that the provision is highly effective. Excellent links with parents and schools provide good information about children's needs, as well as the unit's own

assessments. Planning is excellent, incorporating individual targets for each child as well as covering all areas of learning. There is an appropriate balance between activities led by adults and opportunities for guided interaction with other children. The emphasis on learning through play and multi-sensory approaches is most effective in enabling children to make very good progress against their targets. Children are very well supported by the high quality of continuous liaison with their families and schools, and through the involvement of other agencies where necessary. The children are encouraged to follow a healthy life style; they all join in a gym trail session when attending the base. There is a strong emphasis on staying safe, such as washing hands before lunch and taking care when handling equipment. Behaviour is very well managed and effective strategies are used to encourage appropriate responses. Independence skills are actively encouraged such as clearing away after lunch or after play. Leadership and management are excellent. Health, safety and safeguarding arrangements are robust and reviewed regularly. Self-evaluation is highly developed and data collected shows clearly how successful the setting is. A thorough knowledge of the stage and what constitutes best practice enable staff to identify areas for development, such as enhancement of the outdoor learning environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen its capacity for sustained improvement by appointing a permanent deputy headteacher.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of First Base Ipswich, IP3 0EW

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited you at First Base. We enjoyed the day. It was kind of you to let me do some pond dipping.

I came to see how well you are all getting on and whether there are any things that could be improved.

There are many excellent things about First Base. You are all getting on very well and this helps you to go back to your schools and enjoy your time there. Your parents are very pleased with the progress you are making. The staff make your lessons enjoyable and they teach you very well. You all learn exactly the right things, which help you to improve. The staff take very good care of you. They work with your parents and the teachers in your schools to make sure that you do as well as you can. If you need help from someone else, they arrange this for you too.

Everyone is working very hard to make the unit even better. They know exactly what they need to do to improve and have plans to help them do this. Some of the staff have been at the unit to help Mrs Siddall for a short time. Now she needs to have someone to help her who will stay for a longer time because she has so many ideas and things to do, and needs help with checking to see how well things are going.

You can all help by keeping up the great work you do. Congratulations on your excellent attendance.

Yours faithfully

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector