

Alderwood

Raeburn Road, Ipswich, IP3 0EW

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The unit's success is due to the headteacher's outstanding leadership. Her determination to overcome the barriers that prevent each pupil from engaging fully in learning equips them with the skills they need to return and stay in mainstream education.
- The unit's stimulating and nurturing environment, coupled with high quality personalised care for each pupil, enables all of them to quickly modify their behaviour, re-engage in learning and achieve well.
- Pupils make rapid progress in mathematics, science and, to a lesser extent, in English. Consistently good teaching and high quality support, tailored to each pupil's specific academic and pastoral needs, accelerate their learning and progress.
- Systematic, daily monitoring of pupils' personal targets for improvement provides staff with a thorough understanding of how well they are doing and informs them of what further support is needed.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary because procedures to manage behaviour are applied consistently. Parents enthuse about the improvements they see in their children.
- Pupils respect their staff and the learning environment. They care for each other and say they feel very safe. Attendance is consistently above average.
- The excellent relationships staff forge with pupils makes an excellent contribution to their achievement, well-being and enjoyment.
- A broad, enriched curriculum taught in the unit and in the outdoor environment reignites pupils' enthusiasm for learning and promotes their good behaviour and high achievement.
- The management committee add further strength to the leadership of the unit and help to shape its positive ethos. They hold senior leaders fully to account for maintaining and securing further improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Improvements to the quality of teaching, driven by senior leaders, have made it consistently good but more needs to be done to make teaching outstanding.
- There are gaps in pupils' literacy skills, particularly in their extended writing, that prevent them from making rapid progress in English.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons; eight of these were carried out jointly with senior staff. In addition, the inspector observed pupils during break and lunchtimes, and attended a daily staff debriefing led by the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Management Committee and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector checked responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and looked at questionnaires returned by two members of staff.
- The inspector observed the unit's work, scrutinised data about pupils' achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, looked at documents used by senior leaders to monitor and evaluate the unit's work, and scrutinised pupils' work.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alderwood is a pupil referral unit (PRU) serving 21 pupils in South Suffolk who have experienced multiple, fixed-term exclusions or have been permanently excluded from at least one school. Its main aim is to return pupils back into mainstream schools to continue their education.
- All pupils attend on a full-time basis and most of them stay for two to three terms. The unit also provides longer-term education in 'The Bridge' for eight pupils in Key Stage 2 who have more complex learning needs. These pupils stay for up to two years.
- Most pupils are White British, and very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. All pupils are supported through school action plus or have a statement of special educational need. Three pupils are looked after by the local authority. All pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Seven pupils are eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support particular groups of pupils). However, the unit does not receive this funding as it is allocated to pupils' previous mainstream schools.
- None of the pupils attend alternative off-site provision.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.
- The management committee includes headteachers from a local primary school, a secondary school, a nearby pupil referral unit and two community officers one of whom is employed by the local authority.
- Alderwood hosts the local behaviour support outreach service but this is not part of the unit.
- A major building programme to replace aging temporary accommodation is nearing completion.
- The unit is working in partnership with a number of other units in South Suffolk to become an academy in 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that most of it is regularly outstanding by:
 - including more opportunities for pupils to learn independently and collaboratively, by themselves and in small groups for extended periods of time
 - ensuring that in all lessons, different tasks are provided to enable the most and least able to learn equally as well as each other
 - maximising the time available in lessons to enable pupils to make exceptional progress in all subjects
 - sharing the outstanding practice evident in some lessons throughout the unit.
- Raise achievement so that pupils make rapid and sustained progress in all subjects by:
 - embedding the additional opportunities provided for pupils to strengthen their literacy skills, in particular to write at length across all subjects, and evaluating the impact this has on their learning and progress
 - collating pupils' written work produced in their books and on computers to illustrate fully the improved progress they make over time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join the unit having been referred by their school or by the local authority support service due to their very challenging behaviour. Many of them have missed significant amounts of schooling. Their prior attainment in most subjects, particularly in English is well below national averages.
- Pupils make progress quickly because staff are adept at determining each pupils' starting points, including their social and emotional needs and the barriers that have prevented them from learning in the past. This information is used to modify their challenging behaviour and provide personal programmes of learning and support. These enable pupils to re-engage in full-time learning and ultimately return to mainstream education.
- Pupils' progress and well-being are monitored systematically on a weekly basis to ensure that they make accelerated progress, catch-up on work they have missed and that the gaps in their learning are filled. In each lesson, targets to improve their behaviour and progress are routinely checked to ensure that their needs are being met. Pupils also gauge their progress by assessing how well they are doing and whether they have met their improvement targets.
- School data shows that most pupils make exceptional progress in the two to three terms they spend in the unit. For example, last year pupils in Key Stage 3 made five sub-levels progress in mathematics and science, and four sub-levels progress in English. Similar rates of progress have been achieved this year. A small minority make only expected progress and, overall, pupils make less progress in English than they do in other core subjects. The rate of progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 in The Bridge is slower, mainly because greater emphasis is placed on meeting their complex, social and emotional needs before focusing on their academic learning.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals do not benefit from pupil premium funding because it is not allocated to the unit. However, these pupils also have special educational needs and receive additional support from teachers and behaviour support assistants to help them achieve well.
- In lessons observed jointly between the inspector and senior leaders, pupils usually made good rather than outstanding progress mainly because the quality of teaching was good rather than outstanding. A scrutiny of pupils' work did not support the views of senior leaders that achievement is outstanding. The quantity of pupils' written work is often minimal, particularly in English. Staff presented additional work completed by pupils using computers and other work displayed in classrooms to illustrate pupils' progress, much of which was high quality. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to regularly write at length in all subjects to reinforce their literacy skills and ensure that they are fully prepared for mainstream education.
- Additional lessons introduced to promote pupils' basic literacy skills are helping to tackle some of the shortfalls in their knowledge and understanding of spellings, punctuation and grammar but these are new this year and not yet firmly embedded. Pupils' reading records show that they read regularly and choose books according to their ability and interests. Several of them read fluently to the inspector and described their favourite genres with great enthusiasm. Phonics (letters and sounds) were taught to a few younger, less-able pupils to improve their early reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lesson observations confirmed the views of senior leaders that teaching in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science is consistently good. The headteacher's determined focus on improving it through staff training and learning from other settings has added this greater consistency and developed some outstanding features. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They capture pupils' interest by engaging them in short, practical tasks and by demonstrating what they want pupils to do. Interactive whiteboards are used well to illustrate learning. Teachers' good questioning actively involves pupils in group discussion and develops their speaking and listening skills well.
- Good facilities, excellent pupil to adult ratios and consistently applied procedures to manage behaviour combine to produce an excellent environment in which to learn. Teachers and behaviour support assistants are experts in motivating and enthusing pupils who have disengaged from learning. The excellent relations they forge with pupils help them to feel safe, valued and to re-engage in learning. Challenging behaviour is handled firmly but sensitively by reasserting the expectations of pupils and by reassuring them of how well they have achieved since joining the unit. Group points are awarded for good behaviour and pupils take great delight in adding their contribution to the 'pasta jar' which earns them group rewards. In addition, pupils have individual targets which if met, secure 'golden time' at the end of the week.
- A wide range of enrichment activities taught in the afternoons provide pupils with excellent opportunities to deepen their knowledge and apply the skills they have learnt in the classroom in outdoor settings. For example, following a mathematics lesson where they learnt about the points of the compass, pupils worked together in small groups in a nearby forest to build a compass using natural materials and use it to plot directions to follow. This helped to strengthen pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding and enabled them to thoroughly enjoy learning. This excellent practice has not been fully shared across all subjects.
- In most lessons, time is used well to retain pupils' attention and keep them on task but occasionally the pace of learning slows. Teachers know pupils very well. They usually plan tasks suited to their different abilities, but occasionally work is too demanding for less-able pupils and this prevents them from making rapid progress. More-able pupils are not always encouraged to work for sustained periods or find things out for themselves. Teachers' high expectations of pupils are reflected in the excellent quality of their marking but not in the quantity of pupils' extended writing, which is often minimal. In some lessons, too much time is spent planning what to write and how to organise it which limits the opportunity to regularly practise writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The unit excels in its core purpose of improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and building their confidence and self-esteem so that they can participate fully in education. Pupils behave exceptionally well. Monitoring records show that all pupils in short-stay placements improve quickly and are re-integrated back into mainstream schools. Those with much more complex needs continue their learning in The Bridge before moving to specialist provision.
- Pupils feel valued, cared for and are kept safe. They say they feel much happier than they did in their previous schools because staff respect them, provide help, and support and look after them well. Staff welcome pupils each morning and dine with them at lunchtime, which promotes strong relations and develops pupils' social skills well. Their excellent behaviour is maintained outside lessons and on off-site visits. Pupils feel free from all forms of bullying and say that when it does happen they know which adult to approach to resolve it. When pupils do misbehave, procedures to manage them are applied consistently and incidents are followed up with pupils and their parents and carers to prevent them from reoccurring.

- Exclusions from the unit are rare. Senior leaders' extensive monitoring and record-keeping clearly illustrates the significant impact staff have had on modifying challenging behaviour when pupils join the unit to enable them to settle in and enjoy what the unit has to offer. Similarly, records show that the poor attendance of some pupils in their previous schools has improved significantly since joining the unit.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The vision and high expectations of the headteacher instils a caring and supportive ethos in the unit that makes pupils feel highly valued, cared for and able to achieve well. Appointed since the last inspection, she has made rapid improvements by resolving a number of inherited staffing issues and has ensured that the high achievement of pupils noted at that time has been maintained. Ably supported by her team of senior leaders, she ensures that the unit continues to provide pupils with a safe, healthy and enjoyable place to be and enables them to thrive. A major building programme and significant changes to the funding of the unit have not deflected her attention away from the unit's aim to provide excellent support for vulnerable pupils and make sure that they are well prepared to reintegrate back into mainstream education.
 - Self-evaluation is accurate and up to date. The routine, rigorous analysis of data about pupils' achievement and their social and emotional well-being ensures that pupils receive support tailored to their specific needs. This data also informs the headteacher's constant drive for further improvement. She has secured significant improvements to the quality of teaching which is now consistently good and improving. Detailed improvement planning rightly prioritises improving pupils' literacy skills and making more teaching outstanding by promoting greater pupil independence and adding challenge in all lessons.
 - Senior leaders ensure that all pupils receive at least 25 hours of education each week, and their attendance is closely monitored to ensure they gain the maximum benefit from this provision. A wealth of data is used to match the curriculum to pupils' academic and social, emotional and behavioural needs. The unit's commitment to developing pupils' spirit of adventure through learning outdoors adds significantly to their achievement and enjoyment, and makes an exceptional contribution to pupils social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.
 - Good partnerships with other schools and other pupil referral units in the area, and with the local authority, enable senior leaders to coordinate high quality, appropriate provision for pupils excluded from school. The local authority provides good support to the school. Regular communication with parents and carers ensures that their child's particular needs are met and keeps them informed of their progress. A recent survey and many letters from parents confirm their full support and sincere thanks for staff in the unit.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The management committee strengthen the leadership and management of the unit by engaging fully in regular monitoring and evaluation of the unit's performance. They hold the headteacher and her senior leaders to account for improving the quality of provision and for measuring the impact this has on pupils' achievement. Together they provide senior leaders with expert knowledge and extensive experience to call upon, in particular in supporting the headteacher to determine the long-term strategic direction of the service. Their rigorous management of teachers' performance ensures that teachers who moved up the salary scale had met their targets. Regular checks of safeguarding arrangements, including the single central record, are routinely made to ensure pupils' safety.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134918
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	408921

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	7–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Appropriate authority	The management committee
Chair	Nigel Burgoyne
Headteacher	Lindsay Last
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2010
Telephone number	01473 725860
Fax number	N/A
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