

# First Base, Ipswich

Raeburn Road, Ipswich IP3 0EW

**Inspection dates** 28–29 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Exceptional leadership of the unit ensures that its main aim of successfully re-integrating pupils who are at risk of exclusion and have been excluded from school back into full-time education is met very successfully.
- This is achieved by making all pupils feel welcome, safe and highly valued. Leaders design a personalised curriculum for each pupil that enables them to re-engage in learning and make accelerated progress.
- Improving pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are given top priority. Staff go out of their way to instil in pupils the positive attitudes and modified behaviours needed to engage fully, make friends and achieve exceptionally well.
- Staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils, whether in small groups or individually, on a one-to-one basis.
- Time in lessons, and during breaks and lunchtimes, is maximised to teach pupils how to respect one another, show good manners and enhance their social skills.
- Pupils' enjoyment is shown in their regular attendance and good punctuality.
- Once behaviour is secured, high-quality teaching focuses on raising achievement. Gaps in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are quickly closed.
- Inspirational teaching has a substantial impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- All staff show remarkable patience, tolerance and understanding when dealing with moments of very challenging behaviour.
- From their initial starting points, pupils thrive and make very rapid progress. Their books clearly illustrate exceptional progress, particularly in mathematics. They contain fewer examples to show how writing is improving.
- Teaching is underpinned by thorough assessment of pupils' personal needs and interests. Work is tailored to match their different needs. Targets are checked regularly to gauge how well each pupil is progressing.
- The management committee oversees the unit's strategic development extremely well, and provides very effective support and challenge for the headteacher.
- Communication between the unit and pupils' homes, and with support agencies, is very good. Parents and carers enthuse about the unit. They told inspectors that, for example, 'I feel very lucky to have been given a place for my son here', with another commenting, 'without it, I don't know what I would do'.
- Records of the unit's impact on pupils after they have left the unit are not collated.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Demonstrate the full impact the unit has on pupils' achievement by:
  - including more examples of their writing in their learning records to illustrate improvements that pupils make over time
  - collating further evidence of the long-term impact of the unit's work once pupils have returned to full-time education in their primary schools.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher provides clear, outstanding and coherent leadership. Her vision for the unit is firmly based on modifying pupils' behaviour so that they are able to fully re-engage in learning before returning to their own school.
  - Since the last inspection, the unit has undergone a period of significant change. The number of sessions has increased, including a few for pupils who attend for more than the usual two terms. New classrooms have been built and new staff appointed. Against this backdrop, the headteacher has ensured that the extremely high quality of the unit's work and its reputation have been maintained.
  - The headteacher is very ably supported by her deputy headteacher and staff who lead improvements in core and foundation subjects. This year, a new leader has taken responsibility for mathematics. The headteacher is providing intensive support and training to help her develop her role.
  - The recent appointment of a family liaison officer has added significantly to the unit's capacity to improve further. Taking responsibility for safeguarding pupils, communicating with parents and carers and attending multi-agency meetings, this officer has given the headteacher much needed time to spend on leading and managing improvement.
  - Leaders discuss training needs in the regular meetings held each half term to review pupils' progress. Staff reflect on their practice and share resources. Regular visits to classrooms to observe pupils at work are used by leaders to gain a clear overview of the quality of teaching and develop the effectiveness of staff.
  - Self-evaluation is accurate. Inspectors agreed with the views of senior leaders that the unit continues to be outstanding. Improvement planning is firmly based on the unit's core values of reflection, resilience, engagement and success for pupils. Plans include actions to maintain the unit's capacity to improve as further staff changes take place later this year.
  - The curriculum is matched to the specific needs of each pupil. This promotes equality of opportunity extremely well, as all pupils are dealt with as individuals. Their needs and improvement targets are recorded on 'pupil passports' which enable leaders to monitor the improvements made to their behaviour and their academic progress.
  - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven through the curriculum. Their social development is exceptional. Every opportunity is taken to help them to forge good relations, behave respectfully, and learn how to live and work alongside others. Teachers display endless patience when reinforcing the difference between right and wrong. They encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour and reflect on the occasions when they let themselves down. Opportunities to learn about other cultures and backgrounds are underdeveloped. Plans are in place to improve this.
  - Partnerships with other schools, agencies and parents are well developed. Reintegration rates are very high. Most pupils return to their mainstream schools. The outreach support provided by the unit to prepare the ground for their return to full-time education is valued highly by schools and parents. Staff visit pupils to help them to settle in during the first term and inform teachers of the best ways to manage their behaviour. Little is done to gauge the long-term impact of the unit's work beyond this first term.
  - This year, the unit has accepted on full-time, one-year placements a few pupils who have been excluded permanently from their previous schools. Adapting provision to meet their specific needs has presented further challenges, but this is being managed effectively by leaders. Liaison with parents, local schools and support agencies has ensured that all these pupils have full-time, permanent placements in schools or in specialist provision next year.
- **The governance of the school**
- The management committee includes senior leaders from other local schools who provide members with a valuable insight into interpreting data and what the expectations of teachers are.
  - Data collected to monitor pupils' progress is presented graphically to illustrate trends over time and to enable members of the management committee to analyse the unit's performance. Minutes of meetings show that they hold leaders accountable by asking questions about the unit's strategic development and the performance of staff and pupils.
  - The chair of the committee makes regular visits to the unit to evaluate its work and assess what actions are needed to improve it further.
  - The unit's finances are tightly controlled. It does not receive primary physical education and sport funding. Pupil premium funding is not allocated directly to the unit. Requests are made to the schools that the pupils last attended. Clawing back this funding is not straightforward and, so far this year, no

funding has been received. Minutes of meetings show that the management committee continues to pursue this with the schools concerned.

- Records show that the management committee meets its duties to manage the performance of staff and ensure that teachers' pay awards are firmly based on outcomes.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.**

There is a culture of keeping pupils safe in the unit. Safeguarding procedures, including checks on staff prior to their appointment and procedures to manage any concerns raised about children's welfare, are rigorously maintained. All staff are fully trained, including in the 'Prevent' duty, and understand the importance of following up any concerns raised. Three staff are trained as designated lead officers for safeguarding. Arrangements for inter-agency working to protect children are well established. The unit's site is secure, with locks on all doors. Risk assessments are all fully in place. The last fire drill was successfully carried out earlier this year.

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding**

- Teachers and support staff are adept at modifying pupils' behaviour. They defuse challenging situations calmly and sensitively, transforming behaviour over time to get pupils focused on their learning. They expect pupils to consider the consequences of any poor behaviour and the need to change it in order to build good relations with staff and other pupils.
- Teachers and support staff work alongside each other very well to teach and manage behaviour. They take full advantage of the small classes to get to know their pupils well. High expectations of behaviour are coupled with regular praise and compliments about their manners. Having introduced pupils to new rules, routines and expectations, staff apply them consistently.
- Teachers plan learning based on early assessments of each pupil. Their personal targets are referred to in lessons so that pupils understand what they are trying to achieve. Teachers' marking complies with the unit's own policy of informing pupils of how well they are doing and whether or not their targets have been met.
- Teaching is excellent, capturing pupils' imaginations and inspiring them to learn. For example, in an early years and key stage 1 lesson, pupils used seashells to evoke memories of a trip to the seaside. The teachers' calm, quiet approach encouraged pupils to listen carefully. Pupils were in awe when listening to the sounds of the sea in the shells. This was followed up with a period of reflection, with their eyes closed, to picture their favourite view of a beach. With little guidance or instruction, pupils proceeded to write at length about their experience. Younger and less-confident pupils completed easier tasks, suited to their abilities, on the same theme. Needless to say, their application was outstanding.
- Teachers make full use of indoor and outdoor areas to stimulate pupils' interest. Imaginative planning and a range of practical resources ensure that activities are designed to suit both girls and boys. For example, boys engage in hands-on activities and enjoy learning. In mathematics, pupils made mock sandwiches, calculating the total cost of the ingredients and diligently trying different ways of adding up coins from the till to pay for them.
- Good questioning and discussion in groups develops pupils' speaking and listening skills well, and boosts their confidence. Teachers take every opportunity to reinforce basic literacy by sounding out difficult words phonetically and asking pupils to repeat them. They use actions and words expertly to promote listening skills, or to find out how many syllables longer words contain. The quality of writing by some older, more able pupils is very good, but a few others have gaps in their learning from the past and remain reluctant writers.
- At times, the quality of learning for some pupils slows as teachers switch their attention to others, leaving them to cope by themselves or with a support assistant.

**Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**is outstanding**

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding
- Most pupils join the unit having missed long periods of schooling. This is quickly reversed and attendance rates in the unit are consistently high.

- Briefings at the start and end of each day enable staff to review the welfare and progress made by each pupil. Any incidents or concerns raised are followed up with pupils and their parents.
- Staff go out of their way to ensure that pupils' needs are met. For example, pupils experience a limited range of enrichment activities as leaders choose to engage them in the safe and secure environment of the unit. However, staff find out what is happening at their mainstream school and enable pupils to take part in its outings and events.
- At breakfast and lunchtimes, pupils socialise with staff and eat together with them, developing good relations, excellent behaviour and boosting pupils' confidence.
- 'Gym trail' activities combine physical activity with numeracy and literacy games to develop pupils' ability to follow instructions in a fun and enjoyable way.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Most pupils have been excluded from their mainstream school due to their challenging behaviour. The unit prioritises improving their behaviour and attitudes so that they are ready to cope with the rigours of learning and socialising alongside others. Staff do this very well indeed. In a short space of time, well within the two terms that most pupils spend in the unit, behaviour improves significantly. This is so much so that almost all of them return to mainstream education very well equipped to continue their learning.
- Staff boost pupils' self-esteem and motivation by making them feel valued and very much part of the life of the unit. They help pupils to identify the next steps to take to correct their behaviour and to take responsibility for 'making the right choice'. Pupils know that failure to behave well leads to appropriate sanctions.
- A range of initial assessments are used to form a profile of individual pupils' behaviours and attitudes, and identify targets to modify and improve them. These targets are shared with pupils and with their parents.
- Incidents of poor behaviour still occur. These are recorded meticulously. Records show a high proportion of behavioural incidents, but this reflects the special needs of the pupils the unit serves and the rigorous recording by staff.
- The unit does not use exclusion to manage pupils' behaviour.

### Outcomes for pupils

### are outstanding

- Senior leaders have recognised that, without the significant gains made in improving pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, they are unlikely to have much impact on raising their overall achievement. Once better behaviour and attitudes are secured, high-quality teaching, care and support enable pupils to improve their basic skills, catch up on learning missed and make rapid progress.
- Data collated by leaders and evidence apparent from activities observed jointly during the inspection confirm that pupils make substantial and sustained progress. The progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has risen incrementally over the last five years. Senior leaders' evaluations can point to key moments when they have intervened to raise attainment in mathematics and in writing, and this has led to improved results.
- Currently, pupils make significant gains in mathematics, mainly due to improved teaching and a wider range of practical resources to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding. Similar improvements are noted in writing.
- In reading, most pupils make or exceed expected progress, but over the past few years outcomes have not been as rapid as in mathematics and writing. Senior leaders have introduced a tailored approach to pupils' learning and target setting, and a renewed focus on daily phonics which is designed to resolve this. Two pupils readily volunteered to read aloud to an inspector. Both of them read well, with confidence and fluency. Both were able to decode big words, describe characters and explain different features in the story.
- Numbers in the unit are very small. There are very few disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders monitor carefully the progress of these pupils in the same way as they do others. The data shows that disadvantaged pupils make at least the same progress as their peers. The small amount of funding clawed back from schools last year was used to fund new support staff and purchase resources for mathematics. Senior leaders are not fully aware of what aspect of this spending had the most impact on raising pupils' achievement.
- A few pupils are much more confident and more able than others. Evidence gleaned during the inspection confirmed that they read and write well, and can cope well with two- and three-digit numbers in calculations and problem solving. They could manage more challenging work. However, staff are sensitive

to their personal and behavioural needs. They have very appropriately assessed that at this stage additional challenge may adversely affect the progress made so far in re-engaging them in learning.

- Scrutiny of pupils' books does not fully support the unit's data, because there are too few examples of regular, extended writing in them. New resources have been purchased to help teachers to improve the teaching of comprehension.

### **Early years provision**

**is outstanding**

- Younger children join the unit at different stages of the school year, usually for two days each week over two terms. On different days of the week, the four Reception-aged children are taught together with Year 1 and 2 pupils.
- Children thrive in this nurturing environment because they receive intensive support to improve their behaviour and learn the routines of the day. They are taught the expectations of working together with others. They eagerly engage in the breakfast club, at lunchtimes and during playtimes alongside older pupils. There are plentiful resources to help them to learn and play by themselves and with others inside and outside of the classroom.
- The children make rapid and sustained progress, because the quality of teaching is exceptionally good. Regular assessments and reviews of personal targets highlight how well they are doing and what else is needed to promote their learning and well-being. Structured learning activities led by an experienced and highly effective teacher and support assistant are closely matched to children's individual needs and abilities. Time is taken to develop their basic skills and understanding on a one-to-one basis.
- Liaison with parents each morning enables staff to share how well children are doing. When asked, they told inspectors that they were very pleased with the unit, particularly the quality of provision and the care provided to re-engage their child in learning.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133715
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10003765

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–8
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	12
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Salter
<b>Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge</b>	Janice Siddall
<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 719553
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.firstbaseipswich.co.uk">www.firstbaseipswich.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@firstbase-ipswich.co.uk">info@firstbase-ipswich.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28–29 November 2011

## Information about this school

- First Base, Ipswich caters for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who have been, or are at risk of, permanent exclusion from their main schools. Most pupils attend the unit for two days each week for two terms. This year, three pupils have attended the unit on a full-time basis.
- The unit aims to modify and improve behaviour and attitudes, and after a short stay to re-integrate pupils back into mainstream education.
- The unit provides some outreach services for primary schools in the area.
- All pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Very few pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and children looked after).
- Since the last inspection, all teachers, including the deputy headteacher, have left the unit. A member of the support team is on long-term sickness absence. A new chair of the management committee was appointed in 2015.
- No alternative provision is used.
- The unit meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed both classes and observed all teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other leaders and managers, support staff, members of the management committee and a representative of the local authority.
- They also held informal discussions with parents and carers.
- An inspector held a telephone call with a member of the management committee.
- Inspectors observed the unit's work and looked at a range of documents including the unit's self-evaluation and improvement plan, safeguarding policy and procedures, minutes of management committee meetings, assessment data, behaviour and attendance records, and other information provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' learning records.
- They considered one response from a parent to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

## Inspection team

John Mitcheson, Lead inspector

Sharon Wilson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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