

First Base Ipswich Academy

Address: Raeburn Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 0EW

Unique reference number (URN): 145101

Inspection report: 12 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders provide highly effective strategic oversight of attendance and behaviour. Extensive professional development ensures that staff understand pupils' needs deeply and respond precisely. Staff identify barriers to pupils' attendance, including those related to pupils' needs, disadvantage and vulnerabilities. They work closely with families and external professionals to secure timely support. As a result, pupils engage positively in learning and build resilience that supports successful reintegration into mainstream schools.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning improve because the school provides a calm, nurturing and inclusive environment. Staff build highly positive relationships with pupils and adapt support carefully to meet individual needs. Bullying, discrimination and unsafe behaviour are dealt with consistently, helping pupils to feel safe and valued. Pupils learn to regulate their emotions more effectively and become increasingly confident learners. Consequently, many sustain engagement in lessons and develop more positive attitudes towards education. Leaders maintain high expectations while ensuring that support for pupils and families remains flexible, responsive and well matched to individual circumstances.

The trust's oversight of attendance and behaviour is skilfully interwoven and closely aligned with leaders' work. The trust provides effective challenge and advocacy, stepping in to secure additional support from external agencies and partner schools when needed.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders and staff are highly ambitious for pupils. They work relentlessly to identify and reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing for all pupils. They develop a detailed understanding of pupils' individual needs, including social, emotional and mental health needs, gaps in learning, receptive language difficulties or special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders review pupils' needs carefully as they change over time. As a result, pupils receive support that is closely adapted to meet their individual circumstances. Leaders have consistently high expectations for pupils' engagement, attendance and their next steps. They use additional funding and additional resources thoughtfully to remove barriers for disadvantaged pupils and their families. This includes practical support to improve pupils' wellbeing and readiness to learn.

Leaders and staff work extensively with families and external professionals to secure the right support for pupils in a timely way. They advocate tenaciously on behalf of pupils and their families to ensure that barriers are reduced quickly, helping pupils to reintegrate successfully into mainstream education, where appropriate. Parents and carers value the highly relational support they receive and the way leaders help them to access wider services and specialist expertise. This helps families to support their children's wellbeing beyond school.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with previously disrupted educational experiences, increasingly engage positively in learning. Staff understand and support pupils' communication, sensory and emotional needs well. As a result, pupils develop confidence, improve their emotional regulation and become increasingly ready to learn. Pupils build knowledge and skills securely over time and achieve well from their varied starting points. They develop important foundational skills in reading, writing and mathematics, alongside stronger communication and engagement in learning. Most pupils reintegrate successfully into mainstream education with improved resilience, routines and engagement in learning.

Leaders are increasingly supporting pupils within the newer curriculum offer to address gaps in their prior learning and develop important knowledge and skills. Staff use assessment information effectively to identify barriers to learning and provide targeted support. Although this curriculum is still developing, pupils are making gains socially and academically. However, staff do not consistently support pupils to sustain and apply their learning throughout the school day and across wider learning opportunities.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have sustained the school's long established, high-quality curriculum. They have strengthened assessment systems so that staff identify pupils' needs with increasing accuracy and use this information to shape an ambitious curriculum that reflects pupils' starting points. The curriculum is well resourced and implemented effectively. Staff support pupils' learning, communication, language and emotional regulation very successfully. As a result, pupils access learning that is increasingly personalised, and they learn well.

Leaders are evolving the curriculum to respond to changing local needs and support more pupils in Suffolk to reintegrate successfully into mainstream schools. Within this developing provision, learning is broken into manageable steps that help pupils address gaps in their knowledge. Staff use assessment information effectively to support pupils' social and emotional needs and address gaps in reading, writing and mathematics. However, temporary staffing instability has affected the consistency of this provision for a small number of pupils. As a result, some pupils rebuild confidence in learning and strengthen their knowledge, but are not consistently supported to sustain and apply this learning across the wider curriculum.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and trustees have an unwavering ambition for pupils and for the role of the school within the wider local offer in Suffolk. Leaders work collaboratively to ensure that resources benefit all pupils. Parents and carers and partner schools speak positively about the advocacy and support leaders provide in securing appropriate provision and external services for pupils. Staff value the support, training and daily guidance they receive from leaders. They feel well supported to manage the demands of their work. Professional

development is well planned. It is beginning to strengthen the academic ambition within the newer curriculum, alongside the established strengths in the school's provision.

Trust leaders' work is closely interwoven with the school's day-to-day practice. Leaders responsible for teaching and learning bring expertise and insight. They have been pivotal in developing assessment systems to more precisely identify the wide ranging needs of pupils. However, the curriculum for some pupils in the newer curriculum pathway is not fully developed. Recent staffing issues have slowed the pace and consistency of this work.

Trustees check on the effectiveness of leaders' work through a range of quality assurance activities. However, they do not have a precise collective understanding of the timeframes and success criteria needed to evaluate the implementation and impact of the new curriculum. In some cases, dual commissioning arrangements with the local authority and partner schools do not secure clear accountability and expectations for the joint implementation of the newer pathway and its expected impact on pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an inclusive approach to supporting pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Pastoral support is highly effective and takes precise account of pupils' individual needs, particularly in relation to their emotional regulation, mental health and social communication. Staff know pupils and their families extremely well and provide responsive support that helps pupils to feel safe, understood and valued. Leaders work tenaciously with families, external professionals and partner schools to identify and reduce barriers that affect pupils' wellbeing and engagement with school. As a result, pupils develop confidence, resilience and increasingly positive relationships.

Through the school's long standing, established curriculum, most pupils learn about relationships, health, emotional wellbeing and risks to their safety, including online safety. Pupils are supported to understand difference and diversity. They develop respectful relationships with their classmates. They learn about taking responsibility for their actions and making responsible decisions to contribute positively to the school community. Pupils are supported to develop communication skills that help them to articulate their feelings independently.

Pupils are supported effectively to access wider opportunities and engage in school life successfully. Most pupils develop appropriate social understanding and are increasingly prepared for life beyond school. Leaders extend opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community through school initiatives, such as the 'SEND through the eyes of the child'. Pupils benefit from trips, visitors to the school and other wider experiences.

However, leaders do not monitor and evaluate the impact of the curriculum and wider opportunities sharply enough for some pupils. For example, they do not work closely enough with some partner schools to review how effectively the newer curriculum supports pupils' understanding of contribution to the wider community. As a result, leaders do not know the full difference this provision makes for the small number of pupils accessing it.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils settle quickly here because relationships with staff are warm, respectful and consistent. Staff know pupils very well and provide highly effective support to help them manage their emotions and become ready to learn. Pupils know that adults will help them when needed. They feel safe, well cared for and supported to understand the feelings of others. Pupils learn how to interact kindly and respectfully with each other. Bullying is very rare and dealt with effectively should it occur.

Staff and leaders take considerable time to understand the experiences, challenges and barriers faced by pupils and their families. Parents and carers value the positive relationships that they have with leaders and staff. Close work with families helps many pupils improve their attendance, rebuild confidence and engage positively with education again. Over time, pupils develop highly positive attitudes to learning and use effective strategies to regulate their emotions and behaviour. As a result, pupils take part positively in daily routines and enjoy learning in a calm and inclusive environment.

Learning is adapted carefully to support pupils' individual needs. Pupils' communication, emotional wellbeing and regulation are supported particularly well. Pupils following the school's longstanding curriculum develop essential knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics and gain confidence to use this across their lessons. They achieve well and most return successfully to mainstream education. Pupils following the newer curriculum are developing important social and academic skills and catching up in reading, writing and mathematics. However, opportunities for pupils to use this learning consistently across the wider curriculum are less well developed. As a result, pupils do not apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills as confidently in other areas of learning as they might.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teaching uses assessment information more precisely for pupils in the newer curriculum pathway, so that pupils build securely on prior learning and consistently sustain and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding across the wider curriculum and throughout the school day.
- Trustees and leaders, working collectively with partner schools and the local authority, should ensure that there are precise, shared and clearly accountable success measures for jointly reviewing the effectiveness of the newer curriculum pathway for the pupils who access it.

About this inspection

This school is part of Raewald Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Angela Ransby, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Whittaker.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the chief executive officer (CEO), trust leaders, trustees, including the chair of the trust, parents, pupils and staff during the inspection. The school has a small number of children who attend early years. Due to the small numbers, this provision is not reported on separately. Inspectors gathered evidence about the experiences and outcomes of these pupils, and this evidence is included in the inspection findings above.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school provides full- and part-time provision for pupils who are dual registered with another mainstream school or academy. Many pupils attend the school through dual-placement arrangements with mainstream schools, commissioned by the local authority.

The school provides additional commissioned services to mainstream schools, offering advice, guidance and strategies to support pupils with additional needs.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Stacey Laws: Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Kim Pigram, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspector:

Ruth Brock, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

School capacity

12

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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