

2 February 2011

Ms C Kirkham  
Headteacher  
Stourfield Infant School  
Cranleigh Road  
Southbourne  
Bournemouth  
BH6 5JS

Dear Ms Kirkham

### **Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: nurture groups**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and children, during my visit with Steve McShane HMI on 19 January 2011 as part of our survey of the use of nurture groups for pupils who are vulnerable to underachieving.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to a national report. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

This letter briefly summarises our discussion at the end of the visit.

#### **Strengths of the nurture group provision (Acorn Base)**

- Your drive, determination and commitment and that of your deputy are central to the development of the nurture group provision. You have developed the provision on sound principles, integrated it into the life of the school and adapted it in response to the children's changing needs. You have ensured its sustainability over the past eight years by systematically building the capacity to continue its development.
- Acorn Base is part of a whole-school ethos and commitment to nurturing children. This approach goes beyond informal dialogue or a caring ethos because the provision is grounded in whole-school approaches to learning, cognition and professional rigour.
- Senior staff have skilfully integrated the work of the nurture group, special educational needs and safeguarding children into a team that the senior leaders are responsible for. This is backed up by relevant training and leads to a strong and holistic approach to supporting vulnerable children and their families.
- The provision has a high profile in school policies and practices. This means that Acorn Base has a clear place in school development and the

performance management of staff. It also means that roles and responsibilities of class teachers and nurture group staff are clear which support effective communication between them.

- The school has clear criteria for selecting children for the nurture group based on a range of formal assessments alongside discussion with key staff, and a period of monitoring before they join the group. This helps staff to get the timing right so that children and their families can gain the maximum benefit from the support on offer.
- Parents and carers of children attending Acom Base understand the role of the group and are clear about the positive difference it has made to their children as well as to their family life.
- The children are clear about what they are working on. Their behaviour and social skills within the group often improve quickly in response to very clear boundaries and high expectations of staff.
- Nurture group staff are trained well, confident and flexible in their approach to children and families.
- The new approach to planning sessions for the group gives a clear structure and appropriate focus on learning for individuals and small groups, which helps staff to evaluate how well children reach the intended outcomes of the lessons.
- Monitoring of children's progress is strong and linked to regular, whole-school approaches to assessment and review. Because this is neatly joined up and so clearly led, it ensures quality information about children's progress while they are in the nurture group and for a period of time after they leave it.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- making good use of the wealth of data on individual children to further evaluate the overall quality of the nurture group provision.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop this aspect of the school's work.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Heather Yaxley**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**