

25 February 2011

Mr G Cunningham
Headteacher
Oakwood Avenue Community Primary School
Oakwood Avenue
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 3SZ

Dear Mr Cunningham

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 on 9 February 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 our national evaluation and reporting. 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

- The school has defined clearly the purpose of the nurture group, called the 'Tree House', and senior leaders ensure that it complements other support available for vulnerable pupils. The provision is continually reviewed to ensure that it responds flexibly to the changing needs of pupils.
- Tree House provides an attractive and welcoming environment which recreates the atmosphere of a family home. It includes visual prompts to help pupils focus on their areas for improvement and a 'post box' for pupils to communicate in confidence their feelings or anxieties.
- Sessions in Tree House are planned carefully to include a good balance between numeracy, literacy and social skills activities and to ensure that pupils participate in the broader range of subjects provided in their main class.
- Targets used in Tree House are chosen to focus on the key areas that will help pupils achieve on return to their main class. Pupils' successes are recognised through the popular 'gem' system which also links with the reward system used more generally in the school.
- Staff who work in the nurture group have received good training and are highly skilled at running small groups and in maximising the development

of pupils' social skills. They are also closely involved in liaising with class teachers and in supporting pupils' emotional development more widely in the school.

- The school uses a recognised system for identifying pupils' particular social and emotional needs, setting targets and measuring their subsequent progress. Its assessment data show that pupils with a wide range of social and emotional needs are making good progress and are able to function more effectively in the classroom environment.
- Despite experiencing previous difficulties in their academic learning, the school's data show that pupils currently attending the nurture group are making at least satisfactory and sometimes better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Parents and carers spoken with during the visit held very positive views about the work of Tree House and appreciated how staff were approachable and willing to discuss their children's progress. They receive detailed information about the work of Tree House which is summarised clearly in a booklet provided by the school.

Area for improvement, which we discussed:

- drawing together the range of evidence that the school already has which demonstrates the progress of individual pupils who have attended Tree House in order to be able to evaluate more effectively its overall impact and the longer-term progress of pupils after they have left the 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 will be sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector