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Ms H Eley
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Eley

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 John Kennedy HMI on 10 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

- Senior leaders have a clear vision for the work of the nurture group as part of the whole-school approach to inclusion. They understand that the provision of a nurture group alone will not meet all the pupils' needs. Hence, the nurture group is just one element of a comprehensive range of additional provision that reflects the school's emphasis on early intervention. This provision is coordinated effectively and this helps to avoid duplication and to ensure consistency.
- The purpose of the nurture group is to help pupils with their learning by providing support for their emotional and social development. As a result, the Sunflower classroom provides a warm and supportive environment and the staff are effective role models for pupils' behaviour and relationships. The pupils respond well to the quiet firmness and kindness which typifies the well-established daily routine. This provides a calming influence and helps to develop pupils' self-confidence and supports them in their learning. Pupils who have been part of the Sunflower class in the past remember it as a 'happy place' where they had help. For one it means that 'I am good now' while for another it 'helped with my writing'.

- Parents and the wider school staff understand the role of the nurture group and this helps to foster effective partnerships both in school and externally. Crucially, the pupils attending nurture group also spend each morning or afternoon with their home class. This means that there are regular opportunities to work in their class and to develop relationships with their peers. In addition, good communication across the school helps to ensure that approaches with individual pupils are followed consistently and that the responsibility for their progress is shared between the class teacher and the nurture group staff.
- Monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders are rigorous and staff make notes in daily diaries on how well Sunflower pupils are doing socially and emotionally. The school's data show that the majority of pupils make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and that this is having a positive effect on their learning.
- Parents and carers are very enthusiastic about the provision in the nurture group and the impact that it is having, or has had in the past, on their children. One described it as 'brilliant'. They feel well informed about their children's progress and feel welcomed into the nurture group environment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- looking for ways to further involve parents, for example, using the observations that parents make on their children's progress as part of the school's evaluation evidence.

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

Maureen York
Her Majesty's Inspector