

23 February 2011

Ms K Beaumont
Acting Headteacher
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Hertfordshire
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Dear Ms Beaumont

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: nurture groups

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit with Maureen York HMI on 2 February 2011 as part of our survey on 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 nurture group is integral to the philosophy of this nurturing school. Senior leaders see the proposed withdrawal of funding from the local authority as an opportunity to review the way in which the group operates and its role as part of a range of support for pupils. They are committed to sustaining the principles of effective practice, to extending the nurture group approach across the whole school and to meeting the wider needs of families.
- The school has a clear process for selecting pupils who may benefit from the nurture group experience. Although social and emotional needs are priorities, there is an emphasis on maintaining an academic focus. Planning ensures that pupils receive a breadth of experiences in an appropriate way to ensure that basic literacy and numeracy skills are developed alongside their social and emotional development.
- Staff in the nurture group are well trained and passionate about the difference they make to the pupils. The learning environment is attractive and the space is well organised. Multi-sensory approaches to learning and the establishment of routines support pupils in developing independence

and in socialising successfully. Staff provide effective role models for pupils' behaviour and relationships.

- Staff make extensive notes on how well pupils are doing socially and emotionally. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is detailed and enables small steps of progress to be demonstrated.
- Parents are very positive about their experience of the nurture group. Communication with the teachers ensures that they are very clear about why their children were referred. They can speak about the progress that their children have made and, in particular, they appreciate the 'traffic lights' approach that they can also use at home.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 remember their time in the nurture group as having been 'lovely'. They have fond memories of breakfast and of 'taking home teddy if we were the kindest person'. They also spoke of learning how to manage their own feelings. Their progress in social and emotional development enables them to integrate well in the life of the school.
- Your monitoring of the effectiveness of the nurture group gives you a sound basis for making strategic decisions about its future development. For example, you know that the academic progress of the oldest pupils has not always been sustained, or accelerated, to enable them to reach age-related expectations at the end of Key Stage 2.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- streamlining the various methods of gathering and recording information on the pupils' progress and analysing this information to provide a simple, but clear, summary of each pupil's learning and development
- sharpening the pupils' individual education plans, reducing duplication and the number of targets to simplify methods of tracking pupils' progress.

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

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector