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Mr J Schiffmann
Headteacher
The Fairfield Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Schiffmann

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 16 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 Ark)

- The Ark is part of the whole-school, nurturing and inclusive ethos. There is a clear need for this effective provision, and both the school and the local authority are committed to it. It is led by trained staff who are dedicated to nurturing pupils and has been developed to meet the changing needs of the pupils and is integrated into the life of the school.
- The criteria for selecting pupils are clear, including referral by staff and assessments using the Boxall profile. Additional support is given to pupils who do not meet the criteria for the Ark but are identified as needing help. Re-integration is managed carefully against clear criteria and most pupils are given a phased return.
- Nurture group staff are well trained. They attend the local authority nurture group network meetings on a regular basis. They are also supported by the educational psychologist and other local authority staff.
- Pupils are making at least sound progress with their social and emotional development and many make good progress although this varies from pupil to pupil and is often related to their challenging circumstances.

- Relationships are very strong both within the Ark and across the school. Staff know the children well and care for their individual needs with empathy and consideration. Good liaison between class teachers and nurture group staff results in effective communication. Pupils respond well across the school to the clear rewards and sanctions system and all are proud if they can gain a gold star at the end of the day. They are quick to try and rectify the situation if they are moved into the 'orange zone'. Pupils recognise that they have a choice and that choosing the wrong option has consequences.
- Parents are positive and supportive. They enjoy the opportunity to visit the Ark, especially on 'Welly Wednesdays'. They also acknowledge the considerable difference that the Ark has made to the lives of their children. Some are also very appreciative of the way in which the school has supported them, especially by signposting where they can get help when they need it.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- using a wider range of indicators, including attendance information, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the nurture group both while pupils are attending the Ark and after they have left and returned to their classes
- using the experiences and enthusiasm of parents and carers of children who have attended, or who are presently attending, the Ark to support parents of pupils who are about to attend.

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

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector