SUTTON

NURTURE

GUIDANCE

Best practice for schools

WELCOME

Welcome to our first version of Sutton's nurture guidance, we hope you enjoy reading it! This guidance has been co-produced between Cognus Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and practitioners working in Sutton schools and nurture interventions. A special thanks goes to members of the Sutton Nurture Network.

"Every child needs at least one person who is really crazy about him or her (Bronfenbrenner, 1977)

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INTRODUCTION

This document has been created in light of the increasing interest in nurture approaches and nurture-focused interventions across Sutton schools, with the aim of creating guidance to inform schools of best practice in this area. Over the past couple of years, the EPS have also offered training courses for school staff and created Sutton Nurture Network and will continue to offer these services to further support schools in embedding nurturing approaches.

This document provides an overview of the history of nurture and nurture groups, as well as a summary of the latest research. Practical guidance about how to set up groups, the different types of nurture intervention schools can create and thinking about whole school nurture is provided. Case studies from Sutton schools who have experience in delivering nurture interventions have also been included to increase the local area knowledge.

WHAT IS NURTURE?

John Bowlby's theory of attachment is well known to many and refers to the process by which infants form attachments with their caregivers. Different styles of attachment may be formed depending on several factors including the behaviour of the caregiver and the constancy and consistency of their approach to meeting the needs of the infant. Research suggests that a secure attachment is the foundation for good mental health, yet for many children this is not reflective of their early experiences and instead they develop an insecure attachment style. This has implications for their ongoing social and emotional development, as well as the way in which they process the world around them, and form relationships. There isn't however a notion of a 'critical period' for the development of secure attachment relationships, and 'nurture' as a way of providing these experiences can be applied to children and young people beyond their infant years and by adults outside of the home.

'Nurture' as an approach and philosophy is focused on promoting emotional and social well-being through caring and warm relationships. For some children this involves providing an experience of a secure attachment relationship which they have not previously experienced, for others it involves removing barriers to learning through developing emotional literacy and social skills. For children who have experienced greater adversity nurture can provide a way of making school and education feel safe. The philosophy of a nurturing approach is applicable to everyone, but is needed for some children and young people.

Marjorie Boxall, an Educational Psychologist (EP) who was working with children with social and emotional needs in London schools in the 1970's, first coined the term 'nurture group'. The intervention was planned as a way of supporting children who were struggling during lessons and who were identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties to develop their skills

in these areas and enable them to more successfully access academic learning. It was considered that unless the emotional barriers to learning they were experiencing were reduced they would not be able to engage in learning. 'Nurture groups' were then created as small classes (6-12 pupils) within schools where pupils would attend for part of the school day, with learning experienced focused on early experiences that they have missed out on (as assessed by the Boxall Profile), as well as core curriculum content by two trained[1] members of staff.

Many schools across the UK now contain nurture groups, and a greater number make use of nurture principles to run groups and interventions. The impact of a 'classic' nurture group will be far greater for many children than a shorter-term, less intensive nurture intervention, but it is recognised that staffing, training and pupil need will not always necessitate this. Nurture interventions, and a whole school approach to nurture can support social and emotional skills, resilience and pupil well-being as well as providing support for parents and carers and embedding preventative and early intervention.

WHY DO WE NEED NURTURE?

There is a lot of evidence about the worsening mental health and emotional well-being of children and young people in the UK, and research from a variety of sources seems to verify these statistics. Some estimates suggest that 10% of 5-16 years olds suffer from a clinically significant mental health illness, but that only 25% of children who need it receive treatment[2]. Figures for children who are looked after and those whose parents have mental health needs are far greater still.

Nurture UK also collect data, and in a small-scale study assessment data using the Boxall Profile showed that 36% of children within the sample had SEMH needs, and within this group 1 in 10 children (10%) had high levels of SEMH, and an additional 1 in 4 pupils (26%) were experiencing moderate difficulties (a sample of 6,810 primary-aged pupils). On further analysis of the data 29% of children didn't feel emotionally secure in their relationships and interactions with adults. The prevalence and severity of need was higher for male pupils with the sample gained from whole school data collection.

An average class of 30 pupils will have:

19 children with no apparent needs

8 children with moderate SEMH needs

3 children with high levels of SEMH needs (commonly one girl and two boys)

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[1] 'The Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups' is a three-day accredited training is run by Nurture UK.
[2] Source: Mental health of children in England (publishing.service.gov.uk)

THE EVIDENCE BASE

There is a growing body of evidence for the effectiveness of nurture in primary and secondary settings as a means of supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people who are finding it difficult to thrive in a mainstream classroom.

Research into Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) has also shown that traumatic events can have negative and lasting impacts on the health and wellbeing of those who experience them, and the focus of nurture on developing emotional and social well-being and positive relationships provides significant benefits. The same can be said for facilitating secure attachment relationships later in childhood for those who did not experience these during infancy.

We also now know a lot more about how the brain develops than we did previously, including the order in which different parts of the brain develop. For children who experience in-utero stress, part of the lower brain can become over-active, leading to a child who is constantly on 'high alert'. This is the first part of the brain to develop in order for subsequent development to occur as expected, otherwise children can become 'stuck' in the lower brain and struggle to develop the ability to form relationships or to emotionally regulate due to the high state of vigilance that they are in. For these children learning is not possible, even from the best teacher. These children need support which regulates their brains 'from the bottom up' as well as developmental opportunities to fill in missed experiences.

It is also important to think about the role that stress plays as a barrier to learning. Children who are experiencing high and persistent levels of arousal are not able to receive and process cognitive information, above that which is needed in order for them to survive.

Some key findings from the research show that children and young people who attend nurture groups:

* Become better at managing their emotions (Cooper and Whitebread 2007)
* Become more able to empathise with others (Sanders, 2007)
* Develop confidence and self-esteem (Kearney 2005)
* Experience higher levels of satisfaction with school (Sloan et al., 2016)
* Have higher levels of attendance (Estyn 2014; Sanders 2007)
* Show increased academic performance following nurture provision (Sanders 2007; Reynolds, MacKay, and Kearney 2009; Seth-Smith et al. 2010)
* Subsequently receive fewer exclusions (Ofsted 2009; March and Kearney 2017)
* Become more affectionate and communicative at home (Pyle, 2015)
* Maintain a comparable rate academic progress to peers, with many surpassing peers (Scott and Lee, 2019)
* Schools experience calmer classrooms and teachers who feel more able to meet SEMH needs

This means that most learning experiences are completely inaccessible to them, further explained in the work of Bruce Perry who introduced the relate, regulate, reason model as a way of supporting children and young people who are experiencing stress. Additionally, children who experience prolonged stress earlier in their lives can display a reduced capacity to sustain and direct their attention and challenges with emotional self-regulation due to the impact of cortisol on the developing brain.
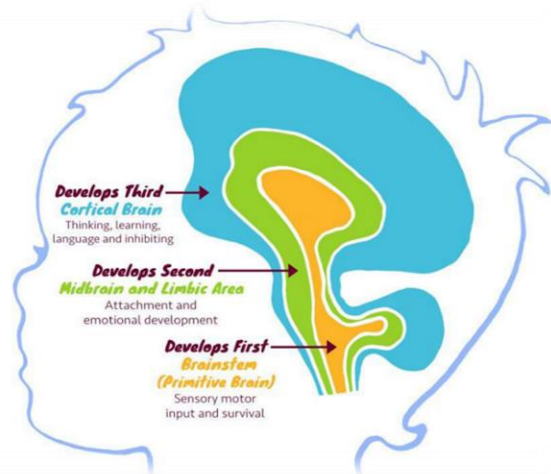
Bottom-up model of development trauma
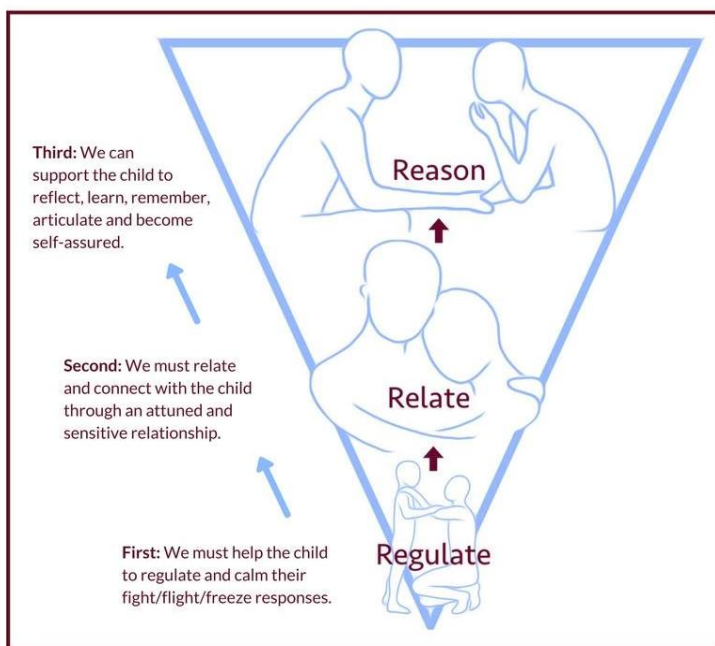
The Three R's (taken from Beacon House resources and based on the work of Dr Bruce Perry)

With sufficient nurture and support from adults, children can develop the skills and resilience they need to cope with stressful experiences and return to manageable levels of stress, in turn allowing them to become ready to learn (Shonkoff et al. 2015). Nurture groups help students return to healthy levels of stress by providing predictability and consistency to the routine of their days and the responses they receive from adults. The chance to build a secure attachment with a nurture group practitioner can begin to repair some of the earlier experiences children have missed, enabling children begin to begin to accept the boundaries necessary for developing subsequent healthy relationships with peers and adults.

NURTURE PRINCIPLES

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally

- Opportunities are offered to children that they may have missed earlier in their lives
- Learning is matched to meet their developmental needs, meaning there is often a focus on play
- Adults respond to children 'as they are'
- Social and emotional skills are taught explicitly

2. The school offers a safe base

- The adult-child relationship is central to learning and needs to be built
- Trust, attunement and secure attachments are built over time and provide emotional security
- Children need to feel a sense of belonging to school
- Routine, predictability and boundaries lead to safety

3. The importance of nurture for the development of well-being

- Children who have not experienced trusting relationships with adults will not be able to do so in school
- The availability of negative consequences gives a child the chance to prove themselves to be as unlovable as they think they are
- Children who have experienced trauma and loss often need 'supportive scaffolding' to help them organise and regulate their feelings and behaviours

4. Language is a vital means of communication

- When children can put their feelings into words these can begin to replace impulsive actions
- How we use language sends important messages to children
- Social problem-solving needs to be taught to some children

5. All behaviour is communication

- Adults should look behind challenging behaviour and try to understand the underlying difficulty that it is communicating
- Staff need time to reflect on behaviour and their responses to children

6. The importance of transition in children's lives

- Being able to manage beginnings and endings is underpinned by emotional well-being
- Preparation for change is key
- The school needs to create a safe and secure environment to gradually increase their flexibility and tolerance to change

NURTURE INTERVENTIONS

There are a variety of ways to offer a nurturing space within a school and different schools will have need of different types of nurture interventions. The hierarchy of nurture shows how nurture approaches can be applied at different levels, starting with a universal offer of screening for all children using the Boxall Profile, moving up to the use of nurture interventions, with the most intense nurture support being provided through nurture groups and finally nurture group +.

The hierarchy of nurture
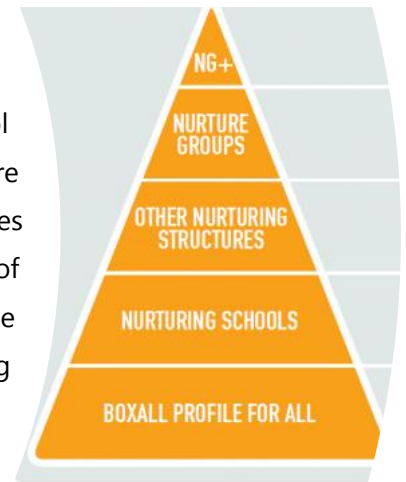
Nurture groups

Nurture groups are small classes of between 6-12 pupils, usually within the school, where pupils attend for part of the school day, for two to four terms. For the rest of the day pupils return to their mainstream classroom and reintegrate fully into their classroom once they have left the nurture group. In some instances, children will attend for the majority of the school day, only spending time in their mainstream class to register and for certain social activities. The routine of the nurture classroom is very structured, and offers a part-school, part-home environment in which social and emotional skills are taught alongside literacy, numeracy, language and communication skills. The focus of teaching and learning is individual and looks to provide early experiences needed to meet emotional and social milestones that a child may have missed, as assessed by the Boxall Profile, alongside core curriculum content. Nurture groups are staffed by a teacher and at least one member of support staff, all who are nurture practitioners.
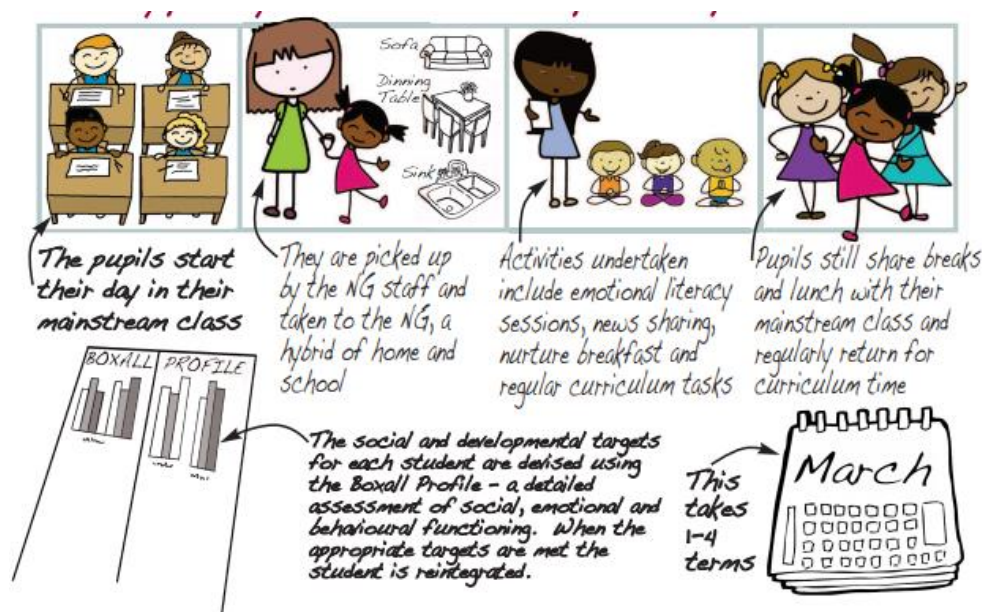
An example day in a nurture group

Nurture interventions

There are a variety of other ways in which groups and interventions focused on nurture can be run within schools, but which are not classic 'nurture groups'. As a protected title it is important that settings use an alternative name for their groups but an explicit focus on the nurture aspect of the group is recommended. Some examples of the different types of interventions which schools may run are as follows:

* Daily core curriculum sessions
* An afternoon a week for targeted social and emotional skill development
* Daily lunchtime or breaktime groups
* 2-3 times a week morning or afternoon

* Whole school focus on nurture where the six principles are embedded in all school activities
* Whole class weekly nurture sessions
* Safe spaces and 'nurture nooks' around the school
* Use of the Boxall Profile to screen all children

Nurture groups

- Small group teaching intervention (between 6-10 children)
- Two staff usually including a qualified teacher and accredited Nurture Group practitioners
- Children remain in their mainstream school for the period of the intervention
- Take place in a separate room, usually called the Nurture Room

Nurture interventions

- A small group intervention with a range of delivery options
- Run by members of school staff with training/experience supporting children with SEMH needs
- Pre- and post- assessment, but not necessarily using the Boxall Profile
- Intervention tends not to last longer than a term

Key differences between nurture groups and nurture interventions

SETTING UP A NURTURE GROUP ROOM

A nurture room is predominantly an educational setting which includes the elements of a secure and supportive home. This means that there is normal classroom furniture including table and chairs, a whiteboard and display boards for work alongside these other key areas:

1. A kitchen area where food is prepared, and which can be used for cooking activities
2. A dining area where snack time occurs each session
3. A role-play area often including a home corner
4. A quiet area with a tent, basket or covered area which children can use if they need time away from the rest of the group
5. A soft seating area where informal activities can take place

A range of play equipment also needs to be available and may include:

- ✓ Sand, water and messy play
- ✓ Dolls and a pushchair and small world toys
- ✓ Recording devices so children can record their 'stories'
- ✓ Train sets, blocks and construction materials and jigsaws
- ✓ `Early years' resources and activities

A nurture room in a secondary setting would be expected to have many of the same resources, as the focus on play and learning through play remains. The way that materials are presented would be 'older', perhaps with fewer toys in sight and fewer early years resources. Messy play and small world toys are usually very popular in secondary groups.

The Sunshine Room, Stanley Park Junior School

READINESS CHECKLIST

Once the agreement for resourcing a nurture group or intervention has been secured it is necessary to ensure that key systems are in place so that the group will run effectively. The following could be used as a readiness checklist.

Area of readiness	Yes/no	Actions
All staff are trained in nurture and attachment		
Governors and SLT are on board with the nurture group		
There is a clear funding stream for the nurture group (many schools use Pupil Premium funding)		
Behaviour is understood as communication by all staff		
All school staff understand the ethos, rationale and purpose of nurture and the group		
There is a school ethos which emphasises the importance of emotional wellbeing for all pupils		
There are opportunities for all children to develop their social and emotional skills		
Members of staff who will lead the intervention have observed another setting		
There is a clear way of selecting the pupils who will attend the group/intervention		
There is a system of assessment and progress monitoring		
There are thresholds and a plan for exiting the group		
There is a plan for how the nurture group will run alongside other lessons		
Parents can visit the nurture room and have access to information about the intervention		
Consideration has been given to how staff will be supported to balance the needs of curriculum with nurturing activities		
Contingency plans are in place e.g., for staff sickness		

THE NURTURE TIMETABLE

A classic nurture group would operate with sessions of around two hours, with children attending as many sessions a day as is considered necessary to meet their needs. An overview of a nurture group session would broadly look as follows:

Meet and Greet – children are collected from their classes by one of the nurture practitioners and welcome to the group

Free Play – child-led play where they can choose from a range of table-top and floor activities. As explored in more depth below it is important that a range of play and toys are available which offer children to explore at their developmental level.

Group Time – led by one of the adults and focused on development of a particular skill related to emotional awareness, social interaction, communication etc. Whilst one member of staff is leading this activity the other will support children who need additional help to engage as well as observing the behaviour of all children in the group.

Examples include speaking and listening activities, learning through play (role play, puppet work), 'getting classroom ready' activities such as following instructions, circle time activities

Toast Time – children take turns to serve and prepare snacks and drinks. This time is also for problem solving any difficulties which have arisen during the session.

Focused Teaching – each child completes core curriculum learning either 1:1 with an adult or working in a small group. Leaning objectives will have been provided by the class teacher and be differentiated in line with the individual child's learning goals.

Story Time – one member of staff reads a story to the group and the other models good listening skills and, if needed, development of language skills.

During all the activities adults are actively and explicitly role modelling social interaction skills, and emotional awareness and self-regulation. This may include observing and then joining a child's play to support them in moving away from solitary play, or through sitting with the children at toast time and modelling turn-taking and table manners. Problem-solving between members of the group is an essential component of each session so that children are supported to repair relationships with one another.

For nurture sessions which are more infrequent the same broad session plan would apply, but consideration would be given as to the nature of the focused teaching time. It is advised that some element of the core curriculum forms part of the nurture session as it can offer a chance for children to engage with academic learning in a safe environment which they are not usually able to.

THE ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

A nurturing approach is centred on the social environment of a child and how this impacts on their ongoing social and emotional well-being and their behaviour. The role of adults within a nurturing approach is therefore critical to its success, because it is through the relationship which is created that a child can experience some of the early attachment and nurturing experiences that they missed out on. The safety and security of a trusting relationship can then further promote the resilience of a child and enable them to engage in more challenging social and learning activities, making the school environment a more positive place for them

Relationships in the nurture setting model the interaction between child and caregiver and have the potential to provide a secure attachment experience to a key adult outside of the home. In the longer term this can lead to a more helpful internal working model being created by the child in which they begin to view others as safe and trustworthy.

For this relationship to achieve these aims adults will use some of the following strategies and skills:

* Verbalise everything. Nurture involves listening and responding and adults need to engage with children in reciprocal shared activities e.g., play/meals/reading/talking about events and feelings.
* Noticing and praising small achievements; 'nothing is hurried in nurture groups'.
* Adapting language and communication style to the developmental level of the child.

With thanks to Wallington Primary Academy

*The **adult-adult relationship** of the practitioners working in a nurture group is incredibly important. Not only do they need to be able to support and contain one another during stressful points but they need to offer support to children which replicates that of two caregivers.*

* Putting in place rules and boundaries which are communicated with empathy and patience.
* Acceptance of all emotions and non-judgemental empathy for all emotional responses.
* Focusing on repair of relationships.
* Attunement to the child's emotional state and offering attuned interactions.
* Enable a child to receive approval and experience positive interactions.

PRE AND POST ASSESSMENT

Assessment as part of the nurture group intervention is critical because it enables practitioners to determine the individual developmental needs of each child who attends the group, as well as providing a baseline level against which their progress can be monitored. Nurture Groups use the Boxall Profile for this purpose, but settings running less formal or intense interventions may choose to use something different.

The Boxall Profile is a psycho-social assessment tool aimed to measure social and emotional functioning and wellbeing of children. The Boxall Profile is divided into two sections, each comprising 34 questions with two versions available, one for primary-aged children and one for secondary-aged.

There are two areas assessed by the questionnaire, the first being 'Developmental strands' which measures different aspects of cognitive, social and emotional development that influence how well a child is able to learn and function in the classroom. Specific areas measured include giving purposeful attention, being emotionally secure, participating constructively, engaging with peers/responding constructively, accepting constraints. The second area is the 'Diagnostic profile' which measures challenging behaviours that prevent successful social and academic performance. These behaviours are directly or indirectly the result of missed developmental opportunities in the early years and can be resolved once the social and emotional needs are identified and the necessary skills are developed. This includes behaviours such as underdeveloped behaviour (craving attachment and showing inconsequential behaviour) and unsupported development (having an insecure sense of self and showing negativity towards self and others, avoiding attachment).

The Boxall Profile can also be used to screen potential social and emotional needs across the entirety of the pupil population: shedding light on children and young people whose needs would otherwise not have been noticed. Other measures of social and emotional needs can also be used to screen the well-being of pupils, but the Boxall Profile is the official measure of NurtureUK and provides the most insight into attachment styles and early unmet developmental needs. Other tools which could be used include:

* The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
* Emotional literacy tools (GL assessment)
* Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS)
* Behavioural and Emotional Rating Scale 2nd Edition (BERS-2)

Selection criteria

As noted above it is important that an assessment measure is used to baseline and monitor the progress of children in the nurture group, but more general guidance around referrals into the group are also important to create. These may be used as the primary method for identifying pupils who would be suitable for the group or may run alongside a screening process.

The following are examples of criteria which may be used to identify children and young people to be put forward for nurture intervention. Children who:

- ✓ Are unable to regulate their responses to stress and anxiety
- ✓ Are easily frustrated
- ✓ Find it hard to trust adults and build relationships
- ✓ Struggle to share resources and the attention of adults and other pupils
- ✓ Find it hard to ask for help
- ✓ Have low feelings of self-worth
- ✓ Are unable to explore the world around them
- ✓ Struggle to attempt new things confidently without fearing failure

It is important to note that schools are likely to be putting in place other support for these children, for instance ELSA intervention. The type, severity and longevity of the needs of a pupil who would benefit from being in a nurture group would however be far greater than could be addressed through a time-limited ELSA intervention.

INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS

To ensure that each session is focused to meeting the needs of individual children it is recommended that some form of individual action plan is produced which identified a child's targets, and how these will be met. Wallington Primary Academy have kindly provided the below examples:

Nurture group – Individual Action Plan				
Pupil:	DOB:	School: WPA	Start date:	Review period: Every 6 weeks
Identified difficulties	**Targets to be achieved**	**Measured by … (success criteria)**	**Activities, strategies & resources**	**Results/outcomes**
1 – Lack of focus	Give purposeful attention Ask insightful question	Start with 5 minutes Marbles in the jar for each question asked Timer Positive praise	Fiddle toy Sand timer Sit near the teacher at the front	Boxall profile Circle time
2 – Listening to others' ideas	Participate constructively within the class	Positive praise Marbles in the jar each time responds positively to peers/adults observations	ELSA work around the word compromise 1-1 group increasing over time	Boxall profile Snack time
3 – Learn to share	Engage cognitively with his peers in and out of the class	ELSA work Game playing Written observations	Teacher led activities	Game playing Snack time
Nurture group – Individual Action Plan				
Pupil:	DOB:	School: WPA	Start date:	Review period:
Identified difficulties	**Targets to be achieved**	**Measured by … (success criteria)**	**Activities, strategies & resources**	**Results/outcomes**
1 – To give purposeful attention	To listen with interest when the teacher explains something to the class	Praise Marbles in a jar reward system for every 3 minutes of attention given, slowly increasing over time	Arts/crafts, games & cooking - following instructions Visual/verbal reminders and adult repetition, modelling Fidget toy	Boxall Profile Snack/lunch times Circle-time Daily Log
2 – To participate constructively	Tidies and uses equipment appropriately	Praise Marbles in a jar reward system, adult prompting leading to independence Observations.	Outdoor/indoor play Visual/verbal reminders Praise/praise pod	Boxall Profile Snack/lunch times Circle-time Daily log
3 – To engage cognitively with peers	Actively contributes and is cooperative in play with 2 or more children	Praise Marbles in a jar for every positive contribution Game playing Observations	Adult led play activities Structured play with adult facilitation	Boxall Profile. Indoor/outdoor game engagement Daily Log Circle-time

BEING A NURTURING SCHOOL

A whole school approach to nurture is recommended for settings who run any form of nurture intervention to ensure that there is support from everyone in the setting, and so that nurture becomes central to all activities within the school. Anecdotal and research evidence would suggest that the most important factor in creating a nurturing school is commitment from the leadership team, who are able to make nurture a school priority. Other factors integral to becoming a nurturing school involve putting relationships and nurture at the heart of decisions.

A whole school nurture self-evaluation is a useful exercise to undertake and there are various examples available including this one by Inverclyde EPS.
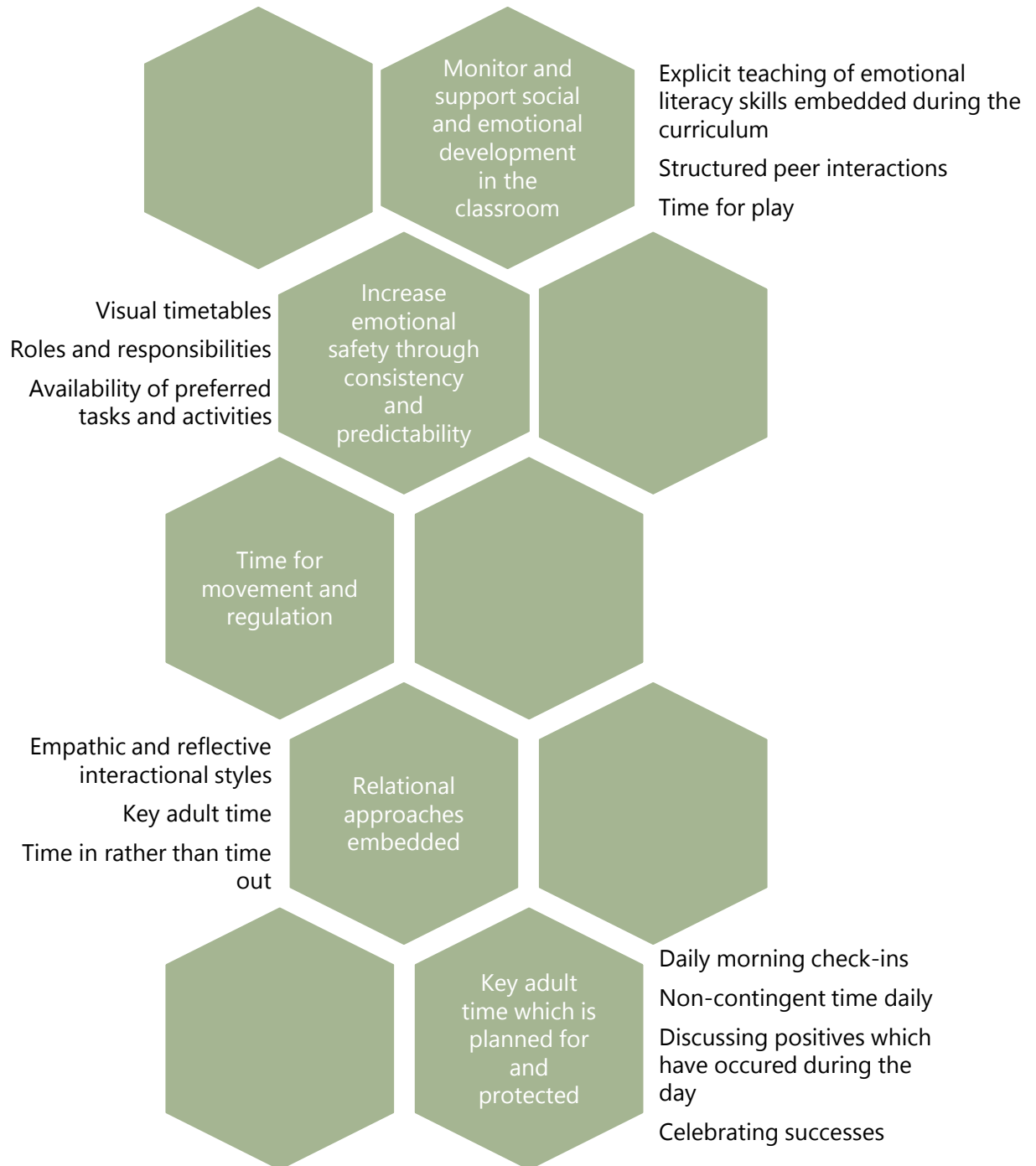
NurtureUK also advocates the use of a graduated approach to nurture and define a 'whole school nurture approach' as using the Boxall Profile to screen all pupils and ensuring that the six principles of nurture are embedded in all classrooms. Following the screening of all children it may become apparent that there are needs across the school which could be met through well-being programmes or adaptations to the curriculum. Particular classes who would benefit from increased pastoral support may also be identified.

A whole school approach would ensure that there is space in the curriculum for all children to be taught social and emotional skills throughout the day, rather than experiencing teaching only confined to PSHE lessons. Other factors to consider when planning for the implementation of a whole school approach to nurture would include (detailed in school policy):

* Planning for a curriculum which meets pupils needs on an individual basis, targeting social, emotional and behavioural learning needs as well as academic targets
* Modification to the environment to ensure a calm, yet stimulating and welcoming environment. This would include safe spaces throughout the school where children can retreat to
* Structured social times before school, during break and lunchtimes and transition support
* Explicit celebration time
* Whole school training so that all staff espouse the principles of nurture and attachment aware and trauma informed practices

NURTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

Central to a nurturing school is the classroom environment. There are a number of ways that children can be supported in nurturing ways in their mainstream classes.

Monitor and support social and emotional development in the classroom

Explicit teaching of emotional literacy skills embedded during the curriculum

Structured peer interactions

Time for play

Increase emotional safety through consistency and predictability

Visual timetables

Roles and responsibilities

Availability of preferred tasks and activities

Time for movement and regulation

Empathic and reflective interactional styles

Key adult time

Time in rather than time out

Relational approaches embedded

Key adult time which is planned for and protected

Daily morning check-ins

Non-contingent time daily

Discussing positives which have occured during the day

Celebrating successes

KEY APPROACHES WITHIN NURTURE

To support children in developing strong and trusting relationships, adults need to approach interactions with them using principles of attunement. As with other relational approaches nurture is underpinned by a belief that 'every interaction is an intervention'. Frameworks to structure these interactions have also been created to support professionals, all highlighting the importance of using emotional vocabulary and explicitly showing empathy. A well-known example is Dan Hughes's PACE approach which is designed to build relationships as well as offering emotional containment and supporting the development of secure attachment relationships.

Playfulness	This is about creating a fun, light and playful atmosphere when communicating with the child. It means using a light tone of voice, being together in an unconditional way, having fun and expressing a sense of joy. Relating with a playful attitude keeps the interaction light and upbeat and can help diffuse a difficult or tense situation. It's not about being funny but enabling a positive connection.
Acceptance	This is about unconditionally accepting that whatever the child (or you) are feeling right now is ok. You are accepting their thoughts, feelings and perceptions without judgement. You may not agree with their interpretation or their behaviour, but you accept their feelings about it. It is their experience, and it is important not to minimise or invalidate it. Show them it's ok to feel the way they do and actively communicate to the child that you accept their feelings and thoughts. *"I didn't realise that you feel like that, I'm sorry it feels that way to you" not "That's not true" or "Don't say that"*
Curiosity	This is about approaching children with an air of curiosity. Seek to understand their likes, dislike, interests and what is important to them. Curiosity means you don't judge so quickly and instead ask questions and show the child that you are curious to know more about them. Children often know that their behaviour wasn't appropriate but can't explain their actions. Sitting alongside and being curious about the 'why' is much more supportive. *"What do you think that was about?" or "I wonder what...?" not "Why did you do that?"*
Empathy	This is about putting yourself in someone else's shoes and allowing yourself to feel what they must be feeling. This is essential in helping a child feel understood. When someone really understands you, it can make a big difference to how you cope. Being empathic is not about reassuring the child (which tries to make the problem go away) but about being with them in the moment, carrying and containing their big emotions. With empathy, when a child is sad or in distress, we are feeling the sadness and distress with them and letting them know that. We demonstrate that we know how difficult an experience is for them. We are telling them that they will not have to deal with the distress alone.

Other strategies

Remembering and recalling "I was thinking about you yesterday when I was buying some …… and I remembered that you told me ……………"

Thoughtful comments "I think that might be a little hard. Do you want to try first or…."

Promises and fulfilment "I'm going to leave you to finish that, and I'll come back in 5 minutes"

Holding in mind gestures - 5 fingers - indication 5 more minutes

Wondering aloud "I noticed that you asked to go to the toilet as soon as X had given you that work to do on your own, I wonder if you may be feeling a bit anxious about it"

Providing commentaries "I can see you are getting into a bit of a muddle with all these instructions as you are shuffling and sighing. I think you are starting to panic so we need to stop and take a quick break…."

Nurturing 'You Statements' "You're trying to tell me something aren't you?" or "Sharing can be so hard. We can worry there won't be enough for us"
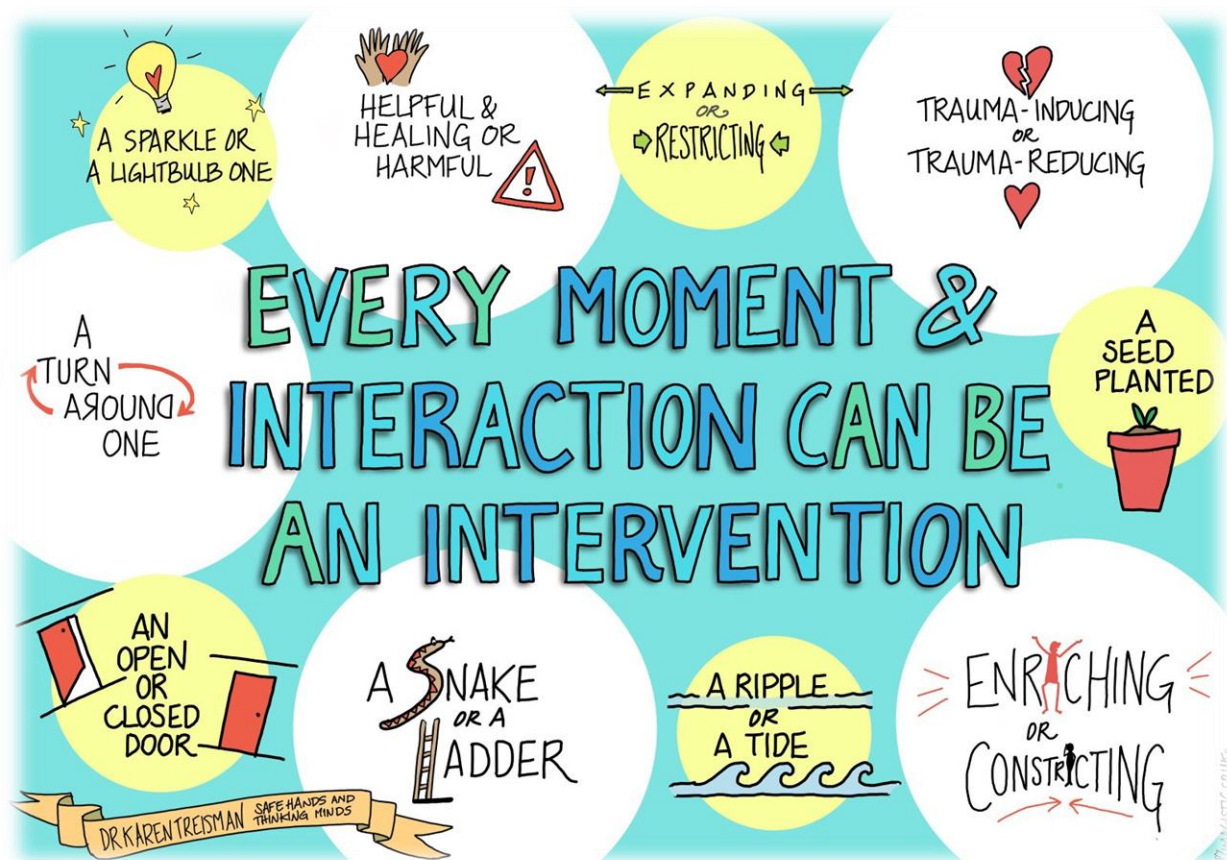
WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The involvement of parents is an essential feature of a nurturing school but also important for the individual children who are attending a nurture group or intervention. At its truest sense a focus of nurture on developing and strengthening attachment relationships extends beyond adults in school and children, to relationships with parents and carers too. For pupils whose behaviour has been challenging, there can often be a strained relationship between home and school and seeking to repair this and reverse the negative feedback cycle is fundamental to supporting a child's well-being. The potential capacity to utilise parental involvement within a nurturing in school is huge.

As part of a nurturing approach, it is important to seek further opportunities for engagement with parents and carers through creative practice such as:

* Creating environments parents can use in school
* Parent/carer groups supported by the school
* Regular 'soft finishes' to the school day in which parents are invited into the classroom
* Parent well-being programmes designed and run by parents
* Parent games days/afternoons

* Engaging with parents as classroom or school volunteers
* Helping parents to access training in areas of interest for example on attachment theory or the use of praise
* Inviting a parent into school for one-on-one time playing games or doing work with their child and a member of school staff. This could be as a reward for a child or to facilitate the development of the parent-child relationships
* Mobilising parental helpers to contribute to the school for example through teaching cooking skills or coaching a sports team
* Facilitating the organisation of parent/child days out such as "day out for dads" to build relationships with the school parent group

NURTURE NETWORK

This final section provides real-life examples and reflections from Sutton schools who have embedded nurturing practices. If you would like to attend half-termly Nurture Network meetings, please contact ep.service@cognus.org.uk.
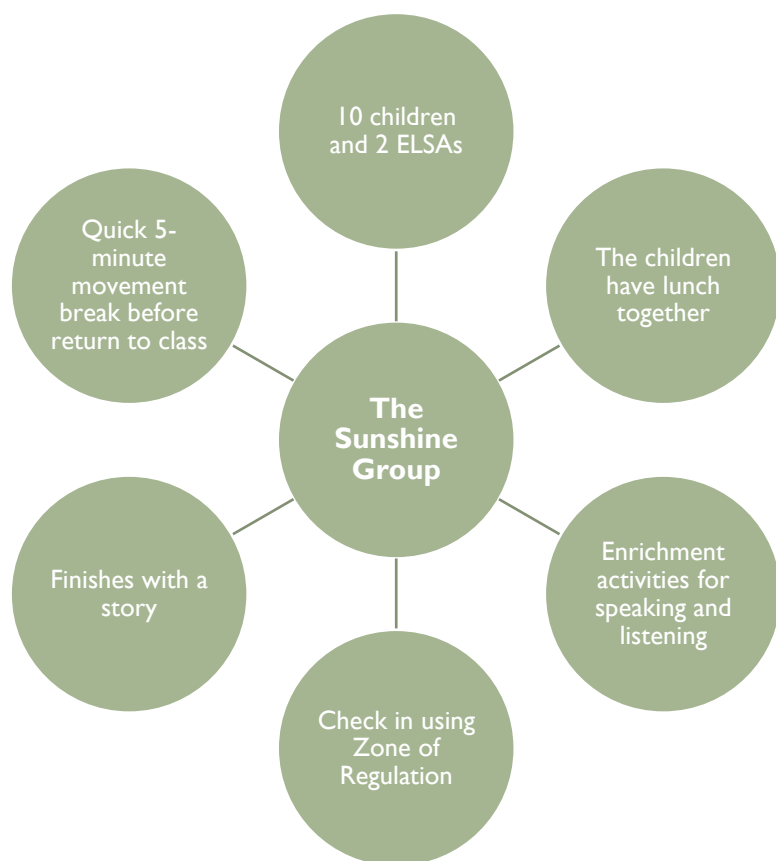
"The children's emotional well-being has improved significantly as has their maturity in coping with school and the challenges they face" (school staff)

Wallington Primary Academy

Horizon Nurture is a part time KS1 provision which operates over four afternoons a week for 2 hours. The aim of this provision is to support the children's development of their social and emotional skills to help remove the barriers to structured learning.

With this provision the children are experiencing success as they are able to cope with the overall demands of school in which they can access the morning curriculum in their classrooms as well as unstructured elements of the school day with increasing positivity.

Each afternoon follows a well-established and predictable routine for the children which allows for group and individual growth. Additionally, children are able to follow their own interests as well as engage in group tasks, with their targets and progress measured using the Boxall Profile.

TOP TIP It is important to know the children well, observe them in different settings across the school, talk to parents and teachers to gain a full understanding of their needs.

Stanley Park Junior School

Stanley Park Junior School run the Sunshine Group on a Monday lunchtime for Year 4's in the Autumn term, inviting Year 3's in the Spring term once they're settled.

- 10 children and 2 ELSAs
- The children have lunch together
- Quick 5-minute movement break before return to class
- **The Sunshine Group**
- Finishes with a story
- Enrichment activities for speaking and listening
- Check in using Zone of Regulation

The Sunshine Group:

- Provides the children with a chance to develop positive relationships with adults and each other in a safe environment.

- Provides play-based opportunities to help children learn to negotiate turn-taking, sharing, listening, co-operating, concentrating and planning.

- Includes an ELSA focussed activity in each session. Children are split into 2 groups. One group does an ELSA activity whilst the other has supervised free play and then after 10 minutes they swap.

- Promote children's self-esteem and build their confidence whilst giving them a sense of belonging.

Case studies

A year 3 girl who found it hard to develop friendships could often be rude and say unkind things to other children. As she watched other children engage and model appropriate behaviour, she began to adjust her behaviour. She now has a good group of friends and is much happier at school and is able to share and communicate her feelings.

A year 4 girl who was very sad in class, stealing other children's' belongings and often feeling unwell. As the sessions progressed her confidence and sense of belonging grew, she began to smile more and engage in the turn-taking activities. Around school, she became noticeably happier.

High View Primary School

At High View Primary School nurture provision is available for children across five-year groups. Children are usually identified and recommended by the Inclusion Manager, SLT or class teacher. A Boxall Profile for each child is completed by the class teacher at the end of the academic year (by this time they know the child well) for a start in nurture the following September.

This year the school are running different Nurture groups three afternoons a week. Groups are the same year or Key Stage but have also been mixed in the past. The number in each group varies between 4 and 7 (depending on needs and behaviour) and meets once a week in the afternoon for at least one academic year. Boxalls are completed mid-year and at the end of the year.

Activities within the group are built around the areas highlighted by the Boxall Profile. For example, focusing on self-esteem, working as part of a group or being able to give purposeful attention. Afternoons are planned half termly to ensure progression in the area we are focusing on.

The school will be introducing pupil voice to nurture groups this year to assess how the children feel the year has gone and whether they feel it has benefited them. This will take the form of a blank speech bubble for children to complete. For the younger children they will use emojis.

An afternoon group for older pupils looks a bit like this:

Circle Time	Hellos and explanation of the afternoon activities.
Circle Time Game	e.g., Simon Says, Fruit bowl, "I went shopping"
Activity	e.g,. cooking, arts and crafts, team work (den building, treasure hunt), frienship or social skills building
Free Play	With a range of toys/games suitable for all ages and stages of development available
Snack time	Using a dining table with place mats that the children decorate
Washing up/clearning away	Children take it in turns to wash or dry
Relaxation	e.g., game of silent ball, mindful colouring, yoga, relaxation listening
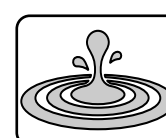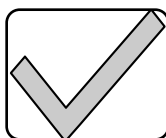
BENEFITS
Builds positive relationships within the group (adults and children)
Builds confidence and self-esteem
Adresses individual needs of children as highlighted by the Boxall
Helps remove social and emotional barriers to learning

LEARNING POINTS
Lighting is important
Free flow play for younger children
Keep activities short and don't try to do too much in one session
Follow the 6 principles of nurture

IMPACT
"Over the years, we have seen an increase in confidence in a number of children, as well as improvements in Boxall Profile results. We have had positive feedback from parents and teachers"
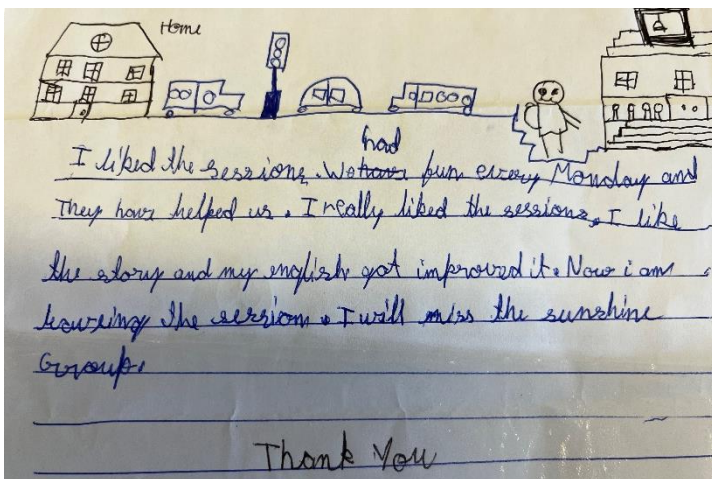
What do the children say?

"I love nurture because it's fun and we get a biscuit and there are lots of toys" (Girl aged 8, WPA)

I love Nurture and Me it stopp's from worrieing. I ♥ N
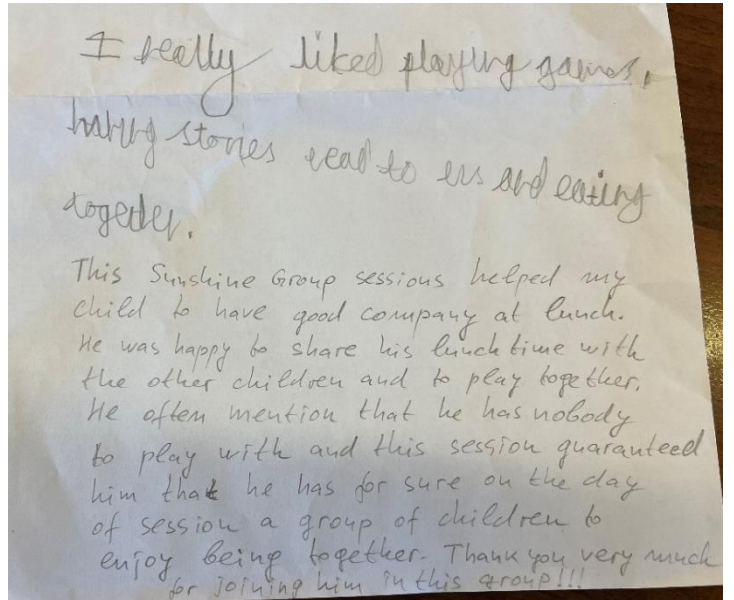
"Nurture helps me with my good manners at home and in the classroom and it helps me listen" (Girl aged 6, WPA)

I really liked playing games, having stories read to us and eating together.

This Sunshine Group sessions helped my child to have good company at lunch. He was happy to share his lunch time with the other children and to play together. He often mention that he has nobody to play with and this session guaranteed him that he has for sure on the day of session a group of children to enjoy being together. Thank you very much for joining him in this group!!!

Child, SPJ

Home

I liked the sessions. Wo had fun every Monday and They have helped us. I really liked the sessions, I like the story and my english got improved it. Now i am loureing the session. I will miss the sunshine Group.

Thank You

Child, SPJ

1. How did you find the sessions?

☺ Liked them   😐 Not sure   ☹ Did not like them

2. How did the sessions help you?
More help more communicating and my own group and laughseter

3. Is anything different now? Better, worse, the same?
everythings better and good so I know to tell when I'm worried

Child, SPJ

"I like making friends and playing with people. Nurture has helped me calm down and be in control of my anger, by teaching me I'm stronger than my anger" (Boy aged 8, WPA)

because it a happy Place to calm you Down and has lots of Games. ♥
Love nurture
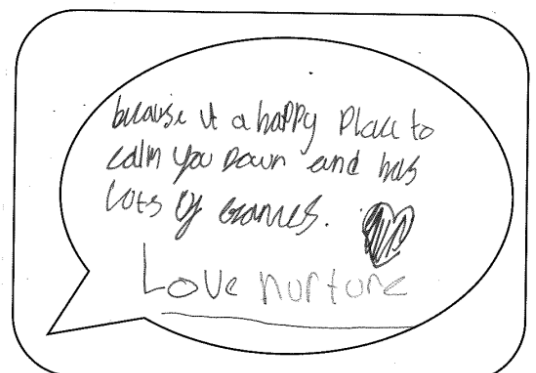
USEFUL RESOURCES

Bennett, H. (2014) Systematic review of NG literature. NurtureUK. Link

Colley and Seymour (2021) An evidence based guide to opening a successful secondary school nurture group, The International Journal of Nurture In Education Volume 7 Summer 2021. Link

Education Scotland. Attunement Profile. Link

NurtureUK. Nurture Groups for all educational settings. Link

Ruby, F. (2017) NURTURE PORTRAIT 2016/17 A snapshot of the social emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by pupils in the UK. The Nurture Group Network Limited, London. Link

Sloan, S., Winter, K., Lynn, F., Gildea, A. & Connolly, P. (2016) The impact and cost effectiveness of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland. Belfast: Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation, Queen's University Belfast. Link

Please contact Cognus Educational Psychology Service or your school EP if you are considering pursuing the introduction of a Nurture group, nurture intervention, or developing whole-school practice. Additionally, if would like any further information or support.