

Maidensbridge Primary School



Nurture Group Policy

Written by	Sarah Mason
Date	April 2021
Approved by Governors	8.7.2021
Review Due	April 2023

Version 1

Nurture Group Policy

What are Nurture Groups?

Most children start school with assumptions based on early experiences at home, about their capacity to enjoy learning; they are willing to try something new and can learn from their mistakes. They have developed expectations about how adults will behave; whether they will be helpful and interested or disapproving and easily angry. Most children therefore enjoy the challenge of school and will be supported at home if difficulties arise.

However, there are some children who arrive in school without having the necessary positive early experiences. This could be for very many different reasons depending on their personal situation. For them, the complex activities and bustle of a large class can be overwhelming; they might be unable to listen or take in what the teacher says, they could be easily distracted and quickly feel defeated. Some withdraw, others express their frustration by aggressive or impulsive behaviour.

The Principles of Nurture

There are six important principles that underpin the organisation and ethos of Nurture Groups.

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally

The foundations of learning begin at birth and develop via a close relationship with an adult. Independence develops through dependence. Social empathy as well as learning develops from being thought about, valued and encouraged. Staff in the nurture group respond to each child at whatever emotional or social age s/he appears to be with the appropriate degree of control and nurture. The quality of this response enables the child to move on. Children's developmental progress is assessed through the Boxall Profile handbook.

2. The nurture room offers a safe base

There is a structure to the day which is predictable, adults who are reliable and firm and can set boundaries without being punitive. Children see adults working together and supporting each other. This provides security and reassurance. The Nurture Group offers a balance of educational and domestic experiences aimed at supporting the development of children's relationship with each other and with the staff.

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

Nurture is listening, being responsive, remembering and engaging in reciprocal, shared activities such as play, having meals, reading, learning, talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and being thought of as individuals. This involves calling the children by their name, noticing and praising every small achievement. Nothing is hurried in Nurture Groups.

4. Language is understood as a vital means of communications

Language is more than a skill to be learnt, it is the way of putting feelings into words. Nurture Group children often 'act out' their feelings as they lack the vocabulary to 'name' how they feel. In nurture groups, the informal opportunities for talking and sharing, e.g. welcoming the children into the group or having breakfast together are as important as the formal lessons teaching language skills. Words are used instead of actions to express feelings and opportunities are created for extended conversations or encouraging imaginative play to understand the feelings of others.

5. All behaviour is communication

Understanding what a child is communicating through behaviour helps staff to respond in a firm but not-punitive way by not being provoked or discouraged. If the child can sense their feelings are understood this can help to diffuse difficult situations. The adult makes the link between the external/ internal worlds of the child- *Given what I know about this child and their development, what is this child trying to tell me?* This principle underlines the adult response to the children's often challenging or difficult behaviour.

6. Transitions are significant in the lives of children

The Nurture Groups helps the child make difficult transition from home to school. However, on a daily basis there are numerous transitions the child makes, e.g. between sessions, classes and different adults. Changes in routine are invariably difficult for vulnerable children and need to be carefully managed with preparation and support.

Aims of the Nurture Group

- To provide a flexible and preventative resource which is responsive to the particular needs of the children attending the school.
- To provide ongoing assessment and support for children showing signs of emotional stress and behavioural difficulties with the aim of enabling the child to access the curriculum and participate fully in school life.
- To provide a secure and reliable environment where children can learn by re-experiencing pre-school nurture from caring adults who actively work towards their successful integration into their mainstream class.
- To help children to learn to behave appropriately, use their curiosity constructively, improve their self-esteem and develop confidence through close and trusting relationships with adults.
- To work in partnership with class teachers and parents to enable consistency of approach, both at home and at school.

Maidenbridge Nurture Group

Our Nurture Group is called 'Treetops.' The Nurture Group is based in a separate room with a home-like area and area set aside for formal learning.

Children can attend our Nurture Group for up to 5 sessions per week in key stage groups. The group has a maximum of 8 children and its composition is carefully structured to create a balanced and functional group.

The children will be on the register of their mainstream class and they will join their class for appropriate activities. The children will spend lunchtime and playtimes with other children in the school. Some children may need extra support at these times.

The Role of the Nurture Group Strategic Leader (SENCO)

Nurture Group Strategic Leader: Mrs S. Mason

To oversee the Nurture Group with support and guidance of the SLT and to:

- Lead the selection, assessment and re-integration of pupils.
- Be involved in formal reviews to support curriculum development.
- Ensure that nurture groups principles are promoted- this is to provide a carefully structured sessions where this is a balance of learning and teaching, affections and structure within a home-like atmosphere.
- Oversee the organisation and weekly planning of activities and the curriculum with the nurture group staff, bearing in mind the needs of the children in relation to the Boxall Profile targets.
- Maintain Pupil Profiles that record and track individual progress and attainment.
- Co-ordinate and support the work of the Nurture Group Leader and Assistants.
- Liaise with other professionals when appropriate including visits.
- Oversee activity work in partnership with parents in the development of their children including organising parent/ pupil sessions.
- Support nurture groups on visits and whole school activities.
- Ensure regular communication between nurture group staff, teachers, teaching assistants and parents.
- Manage the Nurture Group budget.
- Co-ordinate and supervise the review and maintenance of nurture learning environments to ensure they meet Nurture principles.
- Report developments to SLT and Governors as appropriate.

The Role of the Nurture Group Leader

Nurture Group Leader: Mrs H. Bott

To run the Nurture Group with the support and guidance of the Strategic Leader and to:

- Be involved in formal reviews as required as support curriculum development.
- Be involved with the selection, assessment and re-integration of pupils.
- Promote the Nurture Group principles- this is to provide a carefully structured sessions where there is a balance of teaching and learning, affection and structure within a home like atmosphere.
- Organise and plan weekly activities with the Nurture Group Team, taking the needs of children into account based on the Boxall Profile targets.

- Contribute to the maintenance of Celebration Books that record and track individual children's progress and attainment based on Boxall Profile targets and additional targets set by Outside Agencies.
- Liaise with other professionals when appropriate.
- Support the work of the Nurture Group Assistants.
- Plan and conduct activity work in partnership with parents in the development of their children including organising parent/ pupil sessions.
- Support nurture group children on visits and whole school activities where appropriate.
- Engage in regulate communication between the Nurture Staff Team, Teachers, TA'S and Parents.
- Participate and engage in the review and maintenance of the Nurture learning environments to ensure they promote Nurture principles.
- Carry out all nurture work in line with school policies and procedures.

The Role of the Nurture Group Assistant

To run the nurture group under the guidance of the Nurture Group Strategic Leader and Nurture Group Manager to:

- Be involved in formal reviews as required as support curriculum development.
- Promote the principles of the Nurture Group- this is to provide a carefully structured sessions where there is a balance of teaching and learning, affection and structure within a home like atmosphere.
- Participate in the organisation and planning of weekly activities with the nurture group team, taking the needs of children into account based on the Boxall Profile targets.
- Keep and maintain to the maintenance of Celebration Books that record and track individual children's progress and attainment based on Boxall Profile targets and additional targets set by Outside Agencies.
- Liaise with other professionals when appropriate.
- Engage in regulate communication between the nurture staff team, teachers, teaching assistants and parents.
- Participate and engage in the review and maintenance of the nurture learning environments to ensure they promote Nurture principles.
- Carry out all nurture work in line with school policies and procedures.

The Nurture Environment

Treetops has 5 areas which provide a secure, safe base for learning both indoors and outdoors and is reflective of Nurture principles.

There are the:

- Snack Area
- Play Area
- Comfy Area
- Quiet Area
- Discovery Area
- Garden Area

Teaching and Learning

The Treetops children have their own personalised learning pathway which is linked to the whole school with a large emphasis on PSHE, social and emotional learning. Activities are planned to provide a stimulating and fun environment for the children.

Medium term planning plots the pupil's areas for development based on the Boxall Profile data. Short term (weekly) planning demonstrates key activities to support these areas for development. This is undertaken by the Nurture Group Manager and Assistant, with planning easily accessed on Teams system for relevant staff.

Nurture Sessions

Each session follows a routine pattern:

- **Welcome and Circle Time**
A calming time where children have the opportunity to record their current emotions on entry to the room, share news and develop speaking and listening skills.
- **Storytime**
This is time to share a story, for example a social story, to support the development and explicit teaching of key social skills. Questioning and conversations will link to personal experiences, feelings and reflection.
- **Task 1**
Adult 1 leads a group to support children in developing skills to meet their Boxall Profile targets.
Adult 2 supports and observes the remaining children.
- **Task 2**
Adult 2 leads a group to support children in developing skills to meet their Boxall Profile targets.
Adult 1 supports and observes the remaining children.
- **Snack Time**
This part of the session aims to provide opportunities to socialise with peers in an adult setting. Children take responsibility for tasks relating to serving drinks and snacks.
- **Celebration Time**
This is time for reflection, praise and celebration. Children have an opportunity to identify and praise other children in the group. Where necessary, adult intervene to develop and support skills, confidence and self-esteem.
Children will return to class with a member of staff in preparation for home time.

Planning, Preparation and Assessment

The nurture group team will meet to review pupil progress, plan and resource activities for the next week on a Thursday at 2.30pm. Children will participate in an activity with their class during this time.

Identification and Referral

The Nurture Group will support children across the whole school. Nurture Group placement will be considered for children who are underachieving for social, emotional or behavioural reasons. This will include:

- Children who are very restless, cannot listen, behave impulsively or aggressively.
- Children who are withdrawn and unresponsive and who have difficulty relating to others.
- Children whose known history suggests that they may be at risk.
- The Boxall Profile and Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) will be used to objectively assess children's needs and their suitability for placement in the Nurture Group.

The identification and review process takes place on an ongoing basis. All referrals will be discussed with the Headteacher, Class Teacher and Nurture Group Team.

- **Raising Concerns**
Staff complete the referral form to raise awareness of current pupils with issues and an Admission Criteria Checklist will be completed and discussed with the Nurture Team and the child's parents.

A variety of assessment procedures will be used to inform referrals. These include the Boxall Profile and (SDQ):

- **Boxall Profiles**
All children are screened using the Boxall Profile. This is a series of questions covering various aspects of a child's social and emotional development. It provides a clear and personalised picture of a child's area of need. The Class Teacher, Nurture Strategic Leader, Manager and Nurture Team will discuss the results.

From the Boxall Profile, a report will be created where children are selected for the group according to their need.

- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**
The SDQ is a useful assessment tool that provides a graded score- 'normal', 'borderline' or 'abnormal'.
An 'abnormal' score is an indicator that the child could benefit from placement in the Nurture Group.
SDQ- www.sdqinfo.com

This grouping can be flexible to include other children in some of the sessions. Children will leave and join the group as progress is made.

Involving Parents

- Parental agreement is necessary, and support is vital to the child's progress.
- Parents are fully involved and consulted about selection processes.
- Children's targets are shared and reviewed with parents.
- Communication between nurture group staff is critical.
- Parents should be made to feel part of the nurture group experience.
- Parents are invited to nurture group events regularly.
- Parents are welcome to make arrangements to meet with nurture group staff at a convenient time.

Involving Staff at Maidensbridge

- Class staff will be responsible for the registration of pupils in the nurture group both in the morning and afternoon.
- Staff will be asked to contribute to discussions, review, meetings, liaise with nurture staff to share information and complete assessment questionnaires in relation to pupils in their class.
- Continue with strategies and use of resources as agreed in his/ her Individual Nurture Plan (INP).
- Staff will be invited to attend nurture sessions as appropriate. Cover for sessions will be planned by the Nurture group Strategic Leader.

Assessment

The Boxall Profile is used to assess a child's social and emotional needs. This is carried out in line with the school assessment system in order for staff to be aware of any progress or change in the areas of need to be developed.

Alongside the formal assessment process is the informal, daily evidence recorded in Celebration Books by the nurture group team. Pupil's progression over the course of the week is discussed during the Planning, Preparation and Assessment time to decide upon key focus areas for the next week.

Children are assessed in line with the school assessment system, including the DAPA scales, in order to establish the impact that the nurture group is having on their academic progress. This is undertaken by the Nurture Group Strategic Leader. Attendance is also monitored and informs the Pupil Profile.

Reintegration

The most effective length of time to be a member of a nurture group is 2-4 terms. At any time throughout this, depending on the progress of the child, a re-integration programme may begin.

This programme is developed on an individual basis for each child to slowly build them back into their mainstream class on a full-time basis. The re-integration process is fully supported and planned by the nurture group team, the pupil, class teacher, parents and any external agencies working with the child.

Careful plans are required to resettle children back into their class (*Appendix 1*).

Staff Absence

In order to maintain consistency and security, the Nurture Group is never covered by Supply Teachers. In the event of staff absence, the Nurture Group will be supported by another familiar member of staff. However, if this is not possible, the children who access this intervention will remain with their class. Every effort will be made to ensure that nurture staff are not required to cover absent colleagues.

Visitors

Visitors can cause disruption and change to an otherwise ordered and structured day. Any change from routine can be difficult for some children, therefore visitors should always be pre-arranged in order to prepare the children for what will happen. It is best to involve the children in the preparation for the visit- making invitations, planning the menu, setting the table etc.

It is important for the children's class teachers to feel part of what is happening in the nurture groups and to carry the principles back to their classroom to provide consistency. Teachers and members of SLT will be invited to the nurture group throughout the academic year.

Links with other policies and documents

This policy links to the following policies:

- Accessibility Plan
- Behaviour
- Confidentiality
- Equal Opportunities
- GDPR
- Intimate Care
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions

Reintegration of Nurture Group Children to their Class

1. Purpose

At Maidensbridge, we intend to help all children attain the highest level of achievement of which they are capable and to be able to function successfully within their class. This will require a balance of Nurture Group activities and the children attending a growing number of carefully selected lessons or activities within their class. The Class Teachers, TA's and Nurture Group Team will need to work in partnership to ensure that the needs of the children are met throughout this process and ensure that parents have a clear understanding about the reintegration process.

2. Reintegration Procedures

- The Nurture Group Team will use a variety of assessments to ensure that children's needs are being met and that they are moving towards reintegration as appropriate.
- When the child is assessed as being ready to be reintegrated to their class, an initial meeting will be arranged with the Class Teacher and other key adults so that a reintegration programme can be planned and instigated.
- Parents will be kept fully informed so that they are able to offer support and discuss any concerns.
- Appropriate lessons/ activities, timings and key adults will be discussed and agreed.
- All staff will need to be aware of rewards/ sanctions that can be used.
- All staff need to be aware of issues such as furniture and equipment for the child.
- Time will need to be given to developing relationships between the child and key adults through activities such as Snack Time in Nurture Group.
- Reintegration to be completed over a two to six-week timetable.

3. Plan for Implementation

- Nurture Group Team to organise, carry out and record appropriate assessments.
- Initial discussions between the Nurture Group Team, Class Teacher and TA's concerning activities/ lessons which the child can continue to take part in within the class to ensure that contact is not lost.
- Nurture Group Team to meet with parents to discuss the aims of reintegration.
- Headteacher to be kept fully informed.