



Nurture Group Policy

Written in Consultation with Staff and Governors
November 2014

Why 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, in some classes there are 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 could 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 more typical of a toddler.

Quality Mark Award - Through the work that we do in school in conjunction with "The Nurture Group Network2 we have achieved; The Majorie Boxall Quality Mark Award. This award recognises the work of nurture groups and is an accreditation scheme for excellence in nurturing. The QMA is a real honour for the school and is reflected not only of the hard work of the pupils but the dedication of the staff, and provided a hard evidential base for the often quoted statement that **nurture works**.

The Principles of Nurture

Six important principles underpin the organisation and ethos of a nurture group.

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 structured to the day which is predictable, adults who are reliable and firm and can set boundaries without being punitive. Children see two adults working together and supporting each other. This provides security and reassurance. The nurture group room 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 wellbeing** - nurture is listening, being responsive, remembering and engaging in reciprocal, shared activities such as play, having meals, reading, 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 communication** - 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 more 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. This principle underlines the adult response to the children's often challenging or difficult behaviour. 'Given what I know about this child and their development what is this child trying to tell me?'

6. **Transitions are significant in the lives of children** - the nurture group helps the child make the difficult transition from home to school. However, on a daily basis there are numerous transitions the child makes, e.g between sessions and classes and between different adults. Changes in routine are invariably difficult for vulnerable children and need to be carefully managed with preparation and support.

The Sparkler Group

Our nurture group is called 'Sparklers'. This name was chosen by the children when the nurture group was first developed in school in 2005. Children attend nurture group for 5 afternoons per week. The group has a maximum of 10 children and its composition is carefully structured to create a balance and functional group.

The role of the Nurture Group Leader

To run the nurture group with the support and guidance of the SENDCo and to

- Be involved in formal reviews as required; to support curriculum development;
- Be involved with the selection and re-integration of pupils
- Maintain the Nurture Group principles- this is to provide a carefully structured session where this is a balance of learning and teaching, affection and structure within a home-like atmosphere.
- Organise and plan the activities and curriculum of the classroom, bearing in mind the needs of the children.
- Keep records of individual children's progress
- Co-ordinate the work of the Nurture Group assistant.
- Liaise with other professionals when appropriate including visits from local Community Support Officers.

- Activity work in partnership with parents in the development of their children including organising parent/pupil craft sessions as well as an after school group for ex-sparkler children.
- Support Nurture Group children on trips and whole school activities.
- Manage the Nurture Group budget.
- Carry out and contribute to school policies and procedures.

The Nurture environment

The sparklers room has 5 areas which provide a secure, safe base for learning. These are:-

- Kitchen area
- Dining area
- Play area
- Comfy area
- Work area

Teaching and Learning

The Sparklers children have their own themed curriculum with has a large emphasis on PSHE, Social and emotional learning. There are clear links to other core and foundation subjects. Activities are planned around a termly theme to provide a stimulating and fun environment for children. Weekly planning which where possible incorporate the progression of key skills is undertaken by the SENDCo and Nurture Group Leader, with planning then forwarded to the class teachers.

Each afternoon follows a similar pattern divided into 6 parts.

Welcome and circle time - a calming time where children are given the opportunity to share news and develop listening and speaking skills. It includes a structured circle time focusing on a key theme.

First Task- Adult led activity - this session is a curriculum based activity (with clear learning objectives and planned activities) where children work independently in their curriculum activity books without interruption from peers.

Second Task - Self chosen child activity - this session is about collaboration and successful interaction between the peer group. It gives the child an opportunity to develop social skills and build relationships through play based activities.

Snack time - this part of the afternoon 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. Throughout the afternoon children's achievements are acknowledged and celebrated and, where necessary, adult intervention takes place to develop and support skills, confidence and self-esteem.

Identification and Referral

The nurture group currently supports a range of children across school both in Key Stage 1 and 2. The identification process takes place during the Summer term before the child begins their new academic year.

Screening process - All children are screened using the Goodman's strengths and difficulties test (SDQ). This is a straight forward 'yes', 'no' or 'sometimes' tick sheet carried out by the classteacher. This will identify for the teacher any areas of social or emotional need that a child may have.

The results of the SDQ are discussed by the class teacher, nurture group staff and the SENCO. Between ten and twelve children are then identified to go forward to the next stage of selection.

Boxall Profiles - 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 areas of need.

From the Boxall profiles, a group of up to 10 children are identified to form the group. 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.

Parents are informed and invited to an informal session with the group leaders.

Involving Parents

- Parental support is vital to the child's progress
- Parents are fully involved and consulted about selection processes.
- Communication between nurture group staff and parents is critical
- Parents should be made to feel a part of the nurture group experience
- Parents are invited to nurture group events regularly
- Parents are welcome to meet with nurture group staff any time after the school day.

Assessment

The Boxall Profile (which allows for an individual picture of the child's social and emotional needs) is used as the assessment tool. This is carried out termly 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 assessment through the daily record sheets kept up to date by nurture group staff. These are recorded electronically and copies are forwarded to the appropriate class teachers at the end of each week.

Children are assessed termly in order to establish the impact the Nurture group is having on their academic progress. This is undertaken by the SENDCO (using the O track system)

Re-integration

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 by nurture group staff, the pupil, class teacher and parents.

Staffing

Our Nurture group has 3 members of highly skilled staff who have all participated in the Nurture Group training. It is overseen by our SENDCo - Mrs Liza-Jane Rawlings who is also our Assistant head teacher. She has also completed the appropriate training.

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 members of Sparklers, if possible nurture trained member of staff or the SENDCo may provide short term cover. However, if this is not possible the children whom access this intervention will remain with their mainstream class.

Visitors to Sparklers

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 to Sparklers 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 a part of what is happening in the nurture group and to carry the principles back to their classroom to provide consistency.

Arrangements to Monitor and Review

This policy was written in consultation with staff and Governors. It should be read alongside other policies in school (Behaviour, SEN, Equal Opportunities etc)