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Nurture groups: A handbook for schools



Information

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Nurture groups: A handbook for schools

Audience	Headteachers and classroom teachers in primary and secondary schools.
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Further information	Enquiries about this guidance should be directed to: Pupil Engagement Team Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Welsh Assembly Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ Tel: 029 2082 1556 Fax: 029 2080 1051 e-mail: PETshare@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Assembly Government website at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills
Related documents	<i>National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) Report Behaving and Attending: Action Plan Responding to the National Behaviour and Attendance Review</i>

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	What do we mean by 'nurture group'?	1
1.2	Types of nurture groups	3
1.3	Are there nurture groups in my area?	3
	What the research tells us	7
2.	Setting up a nurture group	9
2.1	Planning and running your group	9
2.2	Selecting the staff	9
2.3	Preparation	10
2.4	Further information on setting up a group	10
3.	Running a nurture group	11
3.1	Resources – What do you need?	11
3.2	Selecting your pupils	12
3.3	Key assessment tools	13
3.4	Promoting a whole school approach to nurture	13
3.5	Involving parents and carers	14
3.6	Evaluation	14
3.7	Next steps	15
4.	Nurture groups in practice	16
4.1	Primary nurture groups	17
4.2	Key Stage 3 nurture groups	20
4.3	Cluster groups	21
4.4	Local authority perspective	22
5.	Strategic/policy fit	24
	Annex 1: Case studies	26
	Annex 2: Sample materials	46

1. Introduction

This handbook is intended as an **information pack on nurture groups** for primary and secondary schools.

Nurture groups are a contemporary approach to inclusive education and are designed to increase the access to learning for children who are often marginalised. There is growing interest in developing nurture groups to support children with social, emotional and behavioural problems in schools because of the evidence pointing to the positive outcomes achieved for vulnerable children and their families. This handbook provides information about the principles and practices of nurture groups and gives practical advice on starting, using and developing effective practices in nurture groups.

While this handbook describes the classic or core Nurture Group model, the guidance and the case study examples provided here refer to a wider range of nurture groups than the classic model as this is more representative of the situation in Wales.

The Handbook implements one element of the Welsh Assembly Government's Behaviour and Attendance Action Plan (see Section 5).

1.1 What do we mean by 'nurture group'?

A nurture group:

- is a small discrete class;
- provides a safe and predictable structured environment;
- gives children opportunities to revisit early missed 'nurturing' experiences.

Teaching staff and teaching assistants **model positive relationships** and there is an emphasis on the development of **language and communication skills** and a focus on **social, emotional and challenging behaviour**.

As well as developing curriculum-based skills, young people are encouraged to celebrate their own progress with acquiring skills such as listening, sharing and turn-taking that will reduce or remove barriers to learning thus enabling success back in the mainstream classroom.

Nurture groups:

Small group provision in primary schools, usually for children identified as having difficult behaviour, and/or traumatic early experiences.

Estyn 2003 Support for Children with Special Educational Needs
An Estyn Overview, October 2003

The classic nurture group conforms with six basic principles, listed here. These are all underpinned by the essential components of trust and relationships.

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally

In nurture groups staff respond to children not in terms of arbitrary expectations about 'attainment levels' but in terms of the children's developmental progress assessed through the Boxall Profile, a structured framework for the observation of students' behavioural, social and cognitive engagement in classrooms. The response to the individual child is 'as they are', underpinned by a non-judgemental and accepting attitude.

2. The classroom offers a safe base

The organisation of the environment and the way the group is managed contains anxiety. The nurture group room offers a balance of educational and domestic experiences aimed at supporting the development of the children's relationship with each other and with the staff. The nurture group is organised around a structured day with predictable routines. Great attention is paid to detail; the adults are reliable and consistent in their approach to the children. Nurture groups are an educational provision making the important link between emotional containment and cognitive learning.

3. Nurture is important for the development of self-esteem

Nurture involves listening and responding. In a nurture group 'everything is verbalised' with an emphasis on the adults engaging with the children in reciprocal shared activities e.g. play/meals/reading/talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and thought about as individuals, so in practice this involves noticing and praising small achievements; '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

This principle underlies 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?' Understanding what a child is communicating through behaviour helps staff to respond in a firm but non-punitive way by not being provoked or discouraged. If the child can sense that their feelings are understood this can help to diffuse difficult situations. The adult makes the link between the external/internal worlds of the child.

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.

Adapted from Nurture Group Network, online at http://www.nurturegroups.org/pages/the_six_principles.html

1.2 Types of nurture groups

The 'classic' nurture group model is described as being 'a school based learning environment specifically designed to address the unmet social, emotional and behavioural needs of children and young people'. A nurture group usually contains up to twelve children and two staff, both of whom have trained in Nurture theory and practice. The small group size of up to 12 is educationally designed to give the pupils the experience of involvement in group activities and to enable the teaching of group participation skills that will be necessary for successful engagement in a mainstream classroom.

There are further variations on the 'classic' nurture group model, all based on the principles underpinning the classic model but with differing structure and/or organisational features e.g. age ranges catered for, site(s) and the amount of time pupils spend in the group. However these groups retain the core features of the classic model such as small group size, staffing by two members of staff and focus on developmental emphasis and the holistic curriculum. Further details on the variations are contained in Section 2.

1.3 Are there nurture groups in my area?

Nurture groups have become a very popular form of provision due to their effectiveness, both with teachers and carers, at a time when there is considerable concern about the ability of mainstream schools to meet the needs of students with special educational needs, and those with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) in particular. There are currently over 1,300 nurture groups or groups with nurturing principles in schools in the UK covering the age range from

three to eighteen. Some run for as little as two sessions a week while others run for eight sessions a week. Some groups are set up by individual schools and others are set up by local authorities to cover a cluster of schools within a locality.

There are 101 nurture groups in Wales (see table 1), according to the Nurture Group Network figures from 2007.

Table 1: Nurture Group numbers by local authority area

	Early Years	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Primary Mixed age	Secondary	Special School
Anglesey	0	1	0	3	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	0	0	0	2	1	0
Bridgend	0	0	0	3	0	0
Caerphilly	1	2	2	1	2	0
Cardiff	0	0	0	0	1	0
Carmarthenshire	0	0	1	2	0	0
Ceredigion	0	1	1	0	1	0
Conwy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denbighshire	0	0	1	0	0	0
Flintshire	0	0	1	0	1	0
Gwynedd	0	0	1	0	2	0
Merthyr Tydfil	0	1	1	0	1	0
Monmouthshire	0	1	0	0	0	1
Neath Port Talbot	2	6	12	6	2	1
Newport	1	2	2	1	1	0
Pembrokeshire	0	2	6	0	3	0
Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rhondda Cynon Taf	0	2	5	0	6	0
Swansea	0	1	4	0	0	0
Torfaen	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wrexham	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	19	37	18	21	2

Source: Nurture Group Network in-house research carried out in 2007.

Some Welsh local authorities are supporting just one or a few schools to pilot nurture groups for them. These pilots usually involve:

- local authority educational psychologists;
- local authority behaviour support services;

- local authority advisory teachers;
- on Track support;
- primary Mental Health Teams;
- NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Some local authorities, for example Neath Port Talbot, have helped schools set up their groups and ensured the right training has been received. The authority is now promoting nurture groups as a mainstream early intervention throughout the authority (see Case Study H in the appendix).

What the research tells us

Over the past fifteen years an increasing body of literature on Nurture Groups has been published. Most of the available literature focuses on describing Nurture Groups or provides case studies of success in practice – this section provides a summary of the key literature.

Background to the development of Nurture Groups

Nurture Groups were started in the 1970s in inner London as a response to the large number of children reported with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) on entry to primary school. Since the growing emphasis on inclusion of all pupils in mainstream school in the 1990s there has been a resurgence of interest in Nurture Groups. It is recognised that pupils with SEBD present the greatest challenge to inclusion. This growth has been supported by the development of the Nurture Group Network which now links, trains and supports over 1,000 Nurture Groups across the UK. These are currently most commonly found in primary schools but the number in secondary schools is now growing rapidly.

What is a Nurture Group?

The Nurture Group is designed to provide pupils with SEBD with specific activities and experiences as identified in the assessment profile. It brings together the National Curriculum with a curriculum designed to address the unmet social, emotional and behavioural needs of these children. A Nurture Group consists of up to twelve children and two staff, a teacher and a classroom assistant, both of whom have trained in Nurture theory and practice. It sets out to provide a safe, welcoming and caring on-school-site environment for learning and positive emotional experiences to increase the potential for re-engagement with the mainstream and future academic progress.

How does a Nurture Group work?

Children attend the Nurture Group for regular sessions throughout the week but are expected to return to mainstream education as full time pupils after three or four terms. A range of structured activities are undertaken that aim to help these young people to develop trust, communication skills and enable growth in their confidence and self-esteem. These activities often involve the sharing of news, emotional literacy sessions, turn-taking games, group activities, formal curriculum tasks, and the 'Nurture Breakfast' whereby the

pupils and teachers share a snack and engage with each other. Pupils' access to, and progress in, the Nurture Group is monitored through a framework named the Boxall Profile.

The success of Nurture Groups

Many academic studies have found that the classic Nurture Group pupils improved in their social, emotional and behavioural functioning and to a far greater extent than pupils with SEBD that did not attend nurture groups. They also point to widespread improvement in pupils' self-management behaviours, social skills, self-awareness and confidence and skills for learning. Those studies that have tracked pupils over time have indicated that a large majority of pupils have successfully returned to mainstream education. The research also demonstrates that schools with nurture groups show significant improvement in outcomes for all pupils.

Further Reading:

Here are some suggestions for further reading and information:

The Nurture Group Network: www.nurturegroups.org/

Bennathan, M. and Boxall, M. (2000) Effective intervention in Primary Schools: Nurture Groups, 2nd edition London Fulton

Cooper, P. and Tiknaz, Y. (2006) Nurture Groups in School and at Home – Connecting with Children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, JK Publishers

2. Setting up a nurture group

To set up a nurture group and achieve the desired outcomes there are a number of steps to take in order to ensure that it will address the needs of pupils and be sustainable. These steps are planning the group, selecting the staff and ensuring that suitable preparation is undertaken.

2.1 Planning and running your group

- To ensure success, all the governors, senior management team and staff of the school need to understand the purpose and the rationale of nurture groups. Invite someone from outside the school to provide the first awareness-raising session. This can be provided by any professionals within your own local authority who have received training themselves, are working in nurture groups or supporting them.
- Alternatively, the Nurture Group Network and some local authorities have teams licensed to run the four-day accredited course.
- Arrange for some or all staff to visit an existing nurture group.
- Reach agreement that a nurture group is needed in the school.
- Fit the development into the whole-school development plan.
- Establish funding, monitoring and evaluation procedures that are right for your school.
- It is good practice to have school policy guidance on nurture groups.

2.2 Selecting the staff

- Choose your two nurture staff carefully. How these staff members interact with the pupils and each other is crucial to the success of the group.
- At least one, preferably both, of these members of staff need to receive training in nurture group theory and practice.
- The four day certificate course in nurture group theory and practice is available from the Nurture Group Network or the universities of Cambridge, Leicester and London. At the time of writing the course costs ranged from £450-£700 per person.

Nurture Group Network training:

http://www.nurturegroups.org/pages/train_conf.html

The University of Leicester:

http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/departments/lcc/SECONDARY_SS12F-10C1.html

Institute of Education:

<http://www.le.ac.uk/se/ppdteachers/ppdteachers.html>

Cambridge University: <http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/ppd/courses/>

2.3 Preparation

- Develop a pupil selection process that will be understood by staff and parents/carers.
- Plan how you will ensure the nurture group runs alongside your other classes.
- Plan how you will enable staff to balance the needs of curriculum with nurturing activities and how you will be able to develop effective planning and recording systems.
- Make sure you know what will happen if any staff member is absent.
- If you need to raise funds, inform parents/carers about the new initiative you would like in your school, first making sure it is seen as something that all children could benefit from.
- If you have established funds, fit out a 'nurture' room first then inform parents/carers.
- Hold an information meeting in the room or in the main hall but giving everyone the opportunity to see the 'nurture' room. It may be possible to invite a parent of a pupil in another nurture group to speak to parents about how a nurture group has helped them.
- Depending on age and confidence, some pupils are even able to speak about the experience themselves. Make sure you allow opportunity for questions and comments.
- Try leaflets, coffee mornings or evenings to promote the idea of nurture groups.

2.4 Further information on setting up a group

The Nurture Group Network, co-authors of this handbook, is a national membership charity that promotes and supports the development of nurture groups. It offers membership services, training, access to quality assurance and support through publications. Much of the material on its website, www.nurturegroups.org is freely available to non-members, but annual individual membership is £30. School membership costs £96.00 for primary schools and £125 for secondary schools.

3. Running a nurture group

The sections below give practical advice about the resources needed to start a nurture group, how to select the pupils who would most benefit from being placed in a nurture group, the role that the school, parents and teachers need to play and the qualifications and training required by staff. This section also illustrates how to monitor the progress of pupils and evaluate the overall impact of the nurture group on pupils' behaviour, social development and academic achievement.

3.1 Resources – What do you need?

1. Two good, well trained staff.

You must be confident that these staff will be able to:

- have the respect of other staff members and parents;
- have the essential personality qualities of perseverance and humour;
- create effective learning environments;
- secure motivation and concentration;
- set realistic demands and state them explicitly;
- use positive behaviour management;
- teach pupils to value and respect the contributions of others;
- have the support from mainstream staff for the school for planning.

2. A room where there is equipment and materials that help to provide learning opportunities for emotional and behavioural growth set in a curriculum working area:

- a work table;
- soft seating in a area of the room where informal activities can take place;
- food preparation and sharing area;
- an age appropriate role-playing area;
- play resources;
- a mirror;
- access to age and developmentally appropriate curriculum resources.

3. Systems in place to run the group effectively:

- careful selection of the children/young people;
- engage parental support;
- engage other agencies where appropriate;
- monitor progress;

- assessment, planning and IEP development (see section 3.3);
- communicate regularly with all involved;
- agree resettlement.

3.2 Selecting your pupils

Children who benefit from nurture group intervention are unable to regulate their responses to stress and anxiety and get easily frustrated. They find it difficult to:

- trust adults and build relationships;
- share resources and the attention of adults and other pupils;
- ask for help;
- have a feeling of self worth;
- explore the world around them;
- attempt new things confidently without fearing failure.

They come from families which for a wide variety of reasons have not been able to provide them with the consistent support and guidance which all children need to prepare them for the demands of life in school.

Points to consider

1. Involving all staff so the whole school community knows how and why some pupils need additional support to cope with school.
2. No staff member should worry that they will be seen as a failure if they recommend a pupil for this additional support.
3. Sharing information whilst protecting confidentiality.
4. Knowledge of the pupil and family/carer background.
5. A portfolio of observations, checklists and assessments evidencing suitability for inclusion in the nurture group. Suggestions for these can be found in 'Running a Nurture Group' SAGE Simon Bishop 2008.
6. The balance within the group is really important so think about:
 - the number of girls and boys;
 - the age range;
 - the mix of pupils who are acting out and those who are withdrawn; and
 - sibling rivalry if you start with pupils from the same family.

3.3 Key assessment tools

Boxall Profiles

The Boxall Profiles are assessment tools for identifying the pupils' blockages to learning which then allows the planning of effective intervention. The original Profile, developed for use with primary age children, is contained in *The Boxall Profile; Handbook for Teachers*, published in 1998 by the Nurture Group Network. In 2010 a new Profile in the *Handbook The Boxall Profile for Young People* was published aimed at secondary schools. This was based on new research on the behavioural norms of an older group. Its terminology is changed to be age-appropriate. The rationale of nurture group work informs both Profiles. The Boxall Profile handbook is available for purchase at £20 at <http://www.nurturegroups.org>. Additional forms can also be purchased from the site at £4 for ten.

It is essential that the assessments are used with the Handbooks in order to interpret the results correctly. It can highlight a wide range of concerns that might not be initially obvious and help ensure transparency in communication between staff within the school setting and can also open discussions with parents.

The Boxall Profile consists of two sections:

1. developmental strands which describe different aspects of the pupil's developmental process;
2. diagnostic Profile describing behaviours that inhibit or interfere with the pupil's involvement in school.

Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

A second key assessment tool is Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which complements the Boxall Profile. Conduct problems, emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, peer problems and pro-social behaviour are assessed over the previous six months. The SDQ can be used with parents giving starting points for discussion on developing an intervention. The assessment tool is available for free on www.sdqinfo.com.

Both tools can be used as a pre entry assessment tool, as well as to monitor progress throughout the time in the nurture group and to help decide on a suitable resettlement time. This decision can be further informed and supported by the Rebecca Doyle reintegration scale.

3.4 Promoting a whole school approach to nurture

Research has shown that the effectiveness of nurture groups is linked to a whole school approach to nurture. This means that schools are likely to get the best out of nurture groups:

- when the school as a whole community is committed to maximising the social and educational engagement of all;

- essential that the principles underpinning nurture work are accepted and its complex and demanding nature is understood by all the staff members and others concerned with the school;
- when nurture groups are fully integrated into mainstream schools and local authority policies and structures;
- creating meaningful actions to facilitate a more ‘nurturing’ environment throughout the school through teacher interaction and communication and exchange of good practice;
- when nurture groups are positively contributing and affecting whole school culture and practices, facilitating a more ‘nurturing’ environment throughout the school.

3.5 Involving parents and carers

It is crucial that parents and carers are informed and involved in the running of the nurture group. Parents/carers should be regularly invited to join in nurture group activities and their feedback gathered. It is also good practice to provide materials for them to read about nurture groups. A sample leaflet for parents, a sample leaflet for children and a sample letter for parents are provided in Annex 2.

Many nurture groups link their work to the local parenting strategy, Triple P, Parenting Puzzle or the SEAL materials¹. The results are extremely positive with many schools reporting that they have engaged parents successfully for the first time since inviting them to work with the nurture staff.

3.6 Evaluation

There will naturally be an intense interest in how the nurture group is progressing and what difference it is making. Schools may well be asked to provide evidence on the difference that they are making for the purposes of inspection or application for future funding.

Up until recent years there has been limited research into the effectiveness of nurture groups; however a growing number of evaluations have been published. Some of these large scale evaluations involved control groups, comparing pupils in schools with and without nurture groups.

Some points to bear in mind when undertaking an evaluation:

- record the following: attendance levels; punctuality; number of exclusions; assessment information and value added results; changes in behaviour; attitude; function; attainment; and social skills of the pupils;
- collect feedback from teachers (and parents too);

¹ *Triple P* – Positive Parenting Programme; *Parenting Puzzle* – a guide with practical activities for parents/carers; *SEAL, Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning* resources to help schools develop children’s social, emotional and behavioural skills.

- record changes in behaviour; attitude; function; attainment; social skills of the pupils; attendance levels; exclusion rates; assessment information and value added results;
- look for positive effects on the whole school;
- record data on time spent in the nurture group.

3.7 Next steps

As part of the process of being reintegrated back into the classroom some schools use follow-on groups such as after school Pyramid clubs led by ContinYou (see http://www.continyou.org.uk/children_and_families/pyramid/home) and the school-based counselling service Place2Be (see www.theplace2be.org.uk).

4. Nurture groups in practice

Whatever age pupil and whatever funding you have available, there is a nurture group that could help the pupils of your school. Without doubt the most successful nurture groups are those run by schools from their own budgets. Yet different models have been set up around the country and evidence suggests that success is probable within a variety of approaches if they follow the six basic principles set up by Marjorie Boxall over forty years ago.

The original nurture groups were set in a primary school mainly aimed at school entry. They consisted of:

- groups of up to 12 children;
- children attended for most of the day, returning to their base class for the end of the afternoon session and for Wednesday afternoons when the staff would review and plan;
- staffed by a teacher and classroom assistant;
- children returned to class between 2 to 4 terms after being in the nurture group.

The new 'primary' model consists of:

- groups of up to 12 children;
- KS1 (4-7 yrs) minimum 4 sessions;
- KS2 (7-11 yrs) minimum 4 sessions;
- Friday morning for planning, meeting and observing; wednesday afternoon for parent work;
- often staffed by two NNEB or equivalent qualified staff (but some groups with learning mentor, teacher etc).

Although nurture groups are set up to answer need, budget often influences what can be offered.

- Some groups are set up by individual schools (Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 4).
- Others are set up by LAs to cover a cluster of schools within a locality (Appendix 5).
- Some groups with nurturing principles run for as little as two sessions a week while other nurture groups run for up to nine sessions a week.
- Some nurture groups have been running a number of years and have adapted and developed throughout that time.

The remainder of this section outlines some of the different types of nurture groups running in Wales.

4.1 Primary nurture groups

In primary settings, children work in pairs, in small groups and 1:1 with an adult when necessary. Usually the same group of pupils have to be supported in the nurture group for twelve hours a week (and to achieve the Marjorie Boxall Quality Award from the Nurture Group Network this must be the case).

This description has been carefully worded as some groups are set up in such a way that different pupils are supported at different times in the day. An example of that would be Gors Community School in Swansea where key stage 1 pupils are supported in the group in the mornings and key stage two in the afternoons.

Case Study – Gors Community School, Swansea

Gors Community Primary School is on the north side of a large social housing estate in Swansea, an estate that has pockets of severe social and economic deprivation. Significant progress was made on improving behaviour in the last twenty years; however there were a number of pupils at the extremes where no progress was made at all and early disaffection was evident in their attitudes to work. The school then heard of nurture groups, examined good practice in such groups in the London area, recognised immediately their worth and potential, and committed to them. Four staff were trained at the London Institute of Education, a Nurture Room was set up, followed by whole staff training, engagement with parents and governors and selecting pupils for the first groups.

The KS1 and KS2 Nurture Groups are now a well established aspect of a school which has received a succession of excellent inspection reports and in its January 2010 report Estyn noted that the “needs of vulnerable pupils are addressed exceptionally well through the outstanding Nurture Group which caters particularly effectively for their social and emotional development. It is funded by the local authority and is staffed by a teacher and a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) who have been trained by the Nurture Group Network. The work of the Nurture Group has changed the character of the school, the ethos in the classes and the whole-round experience for pupils. In short, the introduction of Boxall Profiling and Nurture Groups at this school has enabled children to be emotionally and socially prepared for their academic work in the classroom, has greatly improved the quality of life for those who have attended the Nurture Group and their families, but most dramatically, has made the kind of difference in the local community that will so much better serve the society of tomorrow.

See Case Study A for further information

Another nurture group set up for the youngest pupils is at Gorseinon Nursery and Infants School, Swansea where the group is run by two practitioners who are LSAs and who work closely with the staff in the base classes.

Case Study – Gorseinon Nursery and Infants School

Gorseinon Infants School has just over 200 pupils and is in an area which has a growing number of social problems, including drug and alcohol abuse and a high rate of domestic abuse. Many children used to find it difficult to settle in school, showing early signs of emotional and behavioural difficulties, low self-esteem and failing to achieve across many areas of the curriculum. They also found mainstream learning difficult and were not always ready to meet the social and intellectual demands of school as a result of their impoverished early nurturing. Awareness of the success of other nurture groups led to the creation of a nurture group in the school using Raise Attainment and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE) funding.

A nurture room was identified and two LSAs were enrolled onto the 4 day Nurture Training course. The deputy head and the head teacher spoke to individual parents about the new facility to ensure their co-operation. The nurture group has impacted on engagement with 'harder to reach' families as well as strengthening links with other agencies such as social services, Cafcass and the local authority behaviour support unit. Close monitoring through evaluation indicates that the nurture programme of intervention is continuing to be successful and enabling the most vulnerable pupils to fully access education in order to unlock and achieve their full potential. The school was awarded the Marjorie Boxall Quality Mark in 2009.

See Case Study B for further information

Pillgwenlly Primary in Newport originally set up four nurture groups within the school in an attempt to improve behaviour, attendance, punctuality and relationships with parents. As all these aspects improved, the number of groups in the school was reduced. They now run only one group but still continue to have two members of staff trained in nurture group theory and practice.

Pillgwenlly Primary in Newport

Pillgwenlly Primary School is an inner city, multi cultural school catering for the individual needs of 650 pupils from 3-11 years. It is situated in an area of social and economic deprivation in Newport, Gwent with some of the lowest deprivation wards in Wales. The core principles of the 'classic Nurture Group' are embedded in the school and have enabled it to move away from concerns over pupil behaviour and develop into a learning environment where 'We learn, play and work together' – 'together' being the key word.

Through dialogue with the local authority the school established a KS1 nurture group which has successfully run every year since January 2004 and involves two members of staff trained in nurture group theory and practice and a full time LSA also trained in nurture. Two KS2 nurture groups were also established on a temporary basis for the first 18 months. Evidence shows the nurture group has assisted children in reaching their true academic performance at the end of Key Stage Two and the first 'nurture children' from 2004 have now moved on to high school. In March 2009 the school was awarded the Marjorie Boxall Quality Mark Award and in June of that year Nurture provision also received an 'outstanding' judgement by Estyn.

See Case Study C for further information

Some schools believe that the curriculum should always be introduced by the teaching staff so that lessons are introduced in the mainstream class, the work taken to the nurture group to complete before nurturing activities are led there by two LSAs qualified to introduce and develop them. One such school is Ysgol Wdig/Goodwick Primary School in Pembrokeshire.

Ysgol Wdig/Goodwick Primary School

Ysgol Wdig is a Welsh speaking primary school in Pembrokeshire with six classes for the 133 pupils aged 3-11. One of these classes is the Dosbarth Disglair, the Nurture Group. The school was faced with serious behavioural issues that greatly compromised the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. The school received money from the Welsh Government's RAISE initiative and set up a nurture group to address these issues. Two members of staff were immediately identified and trained and a classroom was refurbished as the Nurture Room. With the support of a nurture group advisory teacher children were identified for the group.

The school considers that it is essential for the curriculum planning to be done by the class teachers, and so the daily routine begins with every child attending the mainstream class for registration and teacher input for both language and maths sessions. The nurture group staff then break down the tasks into achievable amounts for each pupil. The nurture group has grown in strength and is now an integral part of the school. This has been a result of the consistent approach across the school that has ultimately led to improved behaviour and the raising of academic standards and was recognised by the Marjorie Boxall Award in July 2009.

See Case Study D for further information

4.2 Key Stage 3 nurture groups

Key Stage three nurture groups are the newest nurture groups throughout the country and offer nurture support in different ways.

- As an aid to transition with pupils identified in year 6.
- Supporting pupils at the beginning of the day and during unstructured times of the school day such as lunchtime.
- Offering a number of sessions of support but not available throughout every school day.
- A staffed, safe base should be available throughout the day with support given to individuals and groups in the safe base and in mainstream classrooms.
- Being the central part of a package of support (see Appendix 5 for further details).

Training programmes and resources that guide secondary staff and assess young people for nurture group support have recently been researched. These are discussed in a new handbook, *The Boxall Profile for Young People* published in response to the rapidly growing interest in nurturing work at the secondary stage and beyond (see also 3.3 above).

Llangatwg Comprehensive

The Nurture Group has been in existence for 4 years. It was set up as it was widely acknowledged that some pupils required specific time and help in order to develop their skills, experience, confidence and self-esteem. The goal is still to get the pupils back into mainstream education for as much time as possible, equipped with the necessary skills and motivation to further their knowledge and maximise their ability to learn. The school operates a year 7 and 8 Nurture Group each consisting of 12-14 pupils. The aim is to develop social skills, enhance self confidence and self-esteem and generally help the pupils with transition from primary to secondary school.

The Group also participates in an outdoor pursuits program specifically designed to develop team cooperation and team building skills as well as confidence and self-esteem. The school believes that this program has been an outstanding success in previous years. The pupils are selected by liaising with year 6 teachers and form teachers early in year 7 using the Boxall Profile. A pupil support unit has also been set up as a continuation of the nurture group and caters for pupils from year 7 through to year 11 and is run closely along the lines of a Classic Nurture Group setting. The only aspects changed were the room settings, as the school did not want all the characteristics of a primary setting.

See Case Study  for further information

Another KS3 nurture group is run by Mounton House Special School in Monmouthshire, a predominantly residential school.

Tŷ Seren Nurture Group at Mounton House Special School

At Tŷ Seren, a special school for boys, the nurture group has been operational since autumn 2007. They initially started with six pupils but have now grown to the 24. Teaching staff expressed concerns about age inappropriate behaviour, and there were discussions with the governors on how to use the RAISE funding with the nurture group being chosen as the most effective way to spend it. The school's dining room has been partitioned to provide the space for the nurture group. The group is run by two teaching assistants with the deputy head maintaining overall responsibility. The Nurture Group was incorporated into the school development plan on a staffing costing level and on a resourcing level. The big advantage of having a Nurture Group on the site is that the nurturing ethos permeates the whole school – staff are more tuned in to the feelings of pupils and pupils are more tuned in to the feelings of staff.

See Case Study [F](#) for further information

4.3 Cluster groups

Some local authorities have set up cluster nurture groups that take pupils from many schools to a nurture host school. The pupils are taxied from home first thing in the mornings and taxied back home at the end of the day. They spend one day a week in their mainstream school and the staff from the nurture group visit their home school to ensure that targets are agreed, improvements agreed and a re-settlement process acceptable to all is set up.

The major difficulty that has to be avoided with this type of nurture group is that only the acting out pupils get referred and the groups can be seen as mini pupil referral units. That is not the case in some cluster nurture groups that have also received pupils with selective mutism and extremely withdrawn pupils. It is essential that the pupils keep that contact with their mainstream schools. Keeping in touch with parents is obviously more difficult and 'ownership' of the pupils too can be lost.

Ynysddu

Ynysddu school hosts two nurture groups, one for reception/year 1 children and a key stage two class for Years 3 and 4. The class is local authority funded and takes up to eight children for four days a week. On a Wednesday the children return to their home school and staff from the Nurture Group visit the schools. The class was set up five years ago as part of a pilot project for Caerphilly. The selection process is broadly the same as the selection for the typical nurture group, in that a panel is held and the children are selected on a priority basis. A member of staff will visit the school and carry out the Boxall Profile assessment and observe the child in the home school setting. A report is then produced for the panel and each child is discussed individually.

It is considered important to consider the balance of the group at all times. Any authorities setting up nurture groups in this way will need to raise awareness in the cluster of what Nurture provision is and highlight that it is a partnership. Ynysddu held awareness raising training for head teachers in the Islwyn region and for SENCos through the SENCo forum. They also produced information leaflets and handbooks for schools to use when talking to parents about possible Nurture referral. The awareness raising sessions are something that needs to be revisited from time to time because of changes in personnel in schools. Open days and Stay and Play Days give the opportunity for teachers to see the children in the nurture setting and for parents to see staff from both schools – promoting partnership in their children’s development.

See Case Study G for further information

Ysgol Glancegin

Nurture groups are relatively new to Gwynedd and virtually unknown to the majority of its schools. In collaboration with the LA and through RAISE funding, it has been possible to set up a cluster group of schools to introduce the nurturing concept since October 2009. Glancegin Welsh-medium Primary School is the lead school in this project, and is the only school where a nurturing room has been set up. It is a growing school of 200 pupils drawn from the Maesgeirchen council estate on the outskirts of Bangor. Pupils in the other schools, a secondary school, a feeder primary and an infant school, share a teaching assistant to deliver nurturing activities.

See Case Study H for further information

4.4 Local authority perspective

At a local authority level, Neath Port Talbot recently evaluated its nurture groups and concluded that they are having an impact both on individual pupils and on whole-school improvement.

Neath Port Talbot Local Authority

Since opening its first nurture group in 2005, Neath Port Talbot has made great progress in getting nurture into its schools. To date more than 80 staff have attended the Nurture Group Network four-day training course. There is growing evidence of the direct benefits of nurture groups to pupils, parents and schools, not only on individual pupils but also contributing directly to whole school improvement. There was evidence of marked improvement in school-parent and staff-pupil relationships, higher attendance, a changed atmosphere with improved communication among staff who have developed a greater understanding of children with difficulties.

Pupils have shown increased confidence and self esteem and improved social and literacy skills. Behaviour towards adults and other pupils has improved and exclusions have decreased as has referral to specialist provision. In September 2009, 19 staff trained to become part of the Nurture Group Network's Training the Trainers system and nurture groups in the Authority are now working with 300 children. Head teachers agreed that the Welsh Assembly Government's RAISE grant should be used within the Authority to promote and develop nurture groups. Such has been the impact of the development of nurture groups that many schools from other authorities have been keen to visit and learn from the Neath Port Talbot experience.

See Case Study [\[link\]](#) **for further information**

5. Strategic/policy fit

Nurture groups align well with a number of current Welsh Assembly Government educational policies. These include the National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) and subsequent Action Plan which aims to identify effective practice in promoting positive behaviour and the School Effectiveness Framework which promotes a culture of social inclusion and personalising learning which are key features of the nurture group. Nurture groups focus on the personal, social and emotional well-being of pupils and have a strong correlation with many aspects of the Foundation Phase, e.g. those relating to children's self-esteem and forming relationships.

National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR)

The NBAR was tasked with exploring ways in which parents, children and young people and the community as a whole can be more effectively supported and engaged in a range of specific tasks. These included the promotion of positive behaviour and attendance in school and identifying effective practice in promoting positive behaviour and attendance.

Relevance to nurture groups:

The NBAR report of May 2008 contained 19 core recommendations with 73 supporting recommendations. Core recommendation 2 is of particular relevance –

The Welsh Assembly Government should prioritise early intervention strategies on work with attendance-related and behavioural-related problems amongst children and young people.

The associated Action Plan seeks to put in place new processes to improve the approach to promoting positive behaviour. Action 4 against this recommendation is the Nurture Group Project which seeks 'to assess current work in Wales with particular focus on Key Stage 3 to inform future work in this area'.

School Effectiveness Framework (SEF)

The SEF sets out a tri-level approach to improving the effectiveness of schools through working cooperatively between the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities and schools. At the core of the Framework lies Children and Young People's Improved Learning and Well-being.

Relevance to nurture groups:

As part of the SEF, the Welsh Assembly Government and its partners have developed a statement of national purpose for schools. Two elements of this describe the purpose of schools as being to:

- enable all children and young people to develop their full potential by acquiring skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes, including personal, social and emotional skills, to enable them to become economically, socially and personally active citizens and lifelong learners; and
- promote a culture of social inclusion and respect for diversity, particularly through developing the wellbeing of learners and personalising their learning.

Establishing a culture of social inclusion and personalising learning are key features of the nurture group and they clearly have the potential to contribute to this agenda.

RAISE (Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education)

The Welsh Assembly Government's RAISE seeks to address the link between socio-economic disadvantage and pupils' educational underachievement. One of the Welsh Assembly Government's current priorities is to ensure that the outcomes of the RAISE programme figure prominently in developing the School Effectiveness Framework, so that it appropriately recognises the implications of poverty in education.

Relevance to nurture groups:

Over the past three years, RAISE funded schools have increasingly given more attention to the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. A number of the schools in receipt of RAISE funding have used their funding to support nurture groups. By now there is a growing bank of materials and case studies associated with RAISE, including case studies of schools' success in developing nurture groups. Two case studies are available here:

<http://www.raise-wales.org.uk/raise/raise-resources.htm?region=all&resid=4>.

Annex 1: Case studies

This section provides details of the following nurture groups:

- a. Gors Community School, Swansea;
- b. Gorseinon Nursery and Infants School;
- c. Pillgwenlly Primary School, Newport;
- d. Goodwick Primary School, Pembrokeshire;
- e. Llangatwg Community School;
- f. Tŷ Seren Nurture Group at Mounton House Special school;
- g. Ynysddu Primary School;
- h. Neath Port Talbot.

Case Study ^A

Gors Community School, Swansea

Written by Keith Atkins, Head Teacher.



Successive Governments have insisted that the way to improve society and communities in Wales and the wider UK is through Education. There have been many responses to this, some giving “more of the same”, others trialling projects or products that address aspects of the change we are driving towards and some having huge impact in changing children and families.

If you are a parent, you will well know what these changes are attempting to achieve, for as parents we strive to guide our own children in these directions. The changes needed range from more academic success with happy children and the skills for life long learning to the more subtle and less obvious skills needed to enable the forming of appropriate friendships and relationships with emotionally secure and confident young people.

Gors Community Primary School is on the north side of a large social housing estate in Swansea, an estate that has pockets of severe social and economic deprivation. I became head of the newly amalgamated Community School some ten years ago, and prior to that had been head of the Junior School for some ten years. Twenty years ago the school was a challenging and difficult place to teach, where learning was severely inhibited by challenging pupils’ behaviour and attitudes in all

classes, and teacher energies were taken up with class control rather than quality teaching.

After a great deal of work on positive behaviour management and whole school policies and approaches, significant progress was made on improving behaviour, however there were a number of pupils at the extremes where no progress was made at all and early disaffection was evident in their attitudes to work. The then Chair of Governors wisely suggested to me that we needed to “untangle their minds” so that they could then work properly, my only problem was “HOW?”

It was about this time, approximately eleven or twelve years ago that I heard about Nurture Groups. We started by looking at good practice in such groups in the London area, recognised immediately their worth and potential, and committed to them. Four staff, including the deputy and myself, were trained at the London Institute of Education, we spent money on the setting up of our Nurture Room, had whole staff training (including an inspirational visit from Marion Bennathan, one of the main developers of Nurture Groups) and set about speaking to parents, involving Governors and selecting pupils for our first groups, KS1 and Early Years in the morning, and KS2 in the afternoons, a part time classic Nurture Group run by a teacher and a teaching assistant.

We have come a long way since then, the school is a different kind of place to work and enjoy, the children are well adjusted and happy, the former introvert pupils have a much better outgoing and confident quality of life, and the acting out pupils still full of character and mischief, but making better decisions regarding their behaviour, and again feeling confident, valued and happy in school. We behaviour profile all children each year using the Boxall Profile, and select for the Nurture Group from this. Profiling the whole school has great advantages. It is not too time consuming, but does ensure that we know these aspects of the children well. It also builds up the social and emotional development of each child over time, invaluable information to share with parents and to use ourselves! Most importantly however, it ensures that those pupils who would benefit from a time in our Nurture Group are identified early, and early intervention is the most effective.

Our nurture group is now a well established aspect of a very successful school. It is funded now by the local authority, but for pupils of this school only, and is staffed by a teacher and an LSA who have been trained by the Nurture Group Network. There is no longer a need for a KS2 group as the work that has been carried out in early years and KS1 has been successful, however there are some “counselling” sessions built in to accommodate KS2 needs, where children come out for much less time per week, but the support mechanisms remain in place for these pupils.

The work of our Nurture Group has changed the character of the school, the ethos in the classes and the whole-round experience our pupils have at Gors, I guess the most dramatic feed-back I have received is from the local Community Police who have suggested that there has been a direct correlation between our work on Nurturing and the improvement of attitudes and behaviour in the local community, not just with children, but as a whole community!

In short, the introduction of Boxall Profiling and Nurture Groups at this school has enabled children to be emotionally and socially prepared for their academic work in the classroom, has greatly improved the quality of life for those who have attended the Nurture Group and their families, but most dramatically, has made the kind of difference in the local community that will so much better serve the society of tomorrow.

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Case Study ^B

Gorseinon Infants School

Written by Gorseinon Infants school.

Background to the project

Gorseinon Infant School has just over 200 pupils and is in an area which has a growing number of social problems, including drug and alcohol abuse and a high rate of domestic abuse. Many of our parents are single and 31% of our children have free school meals. Fifty seven per cent of the children are living within most deprived areas. Many of our pupils enter school with speech and language delays and poor social skills.

With this as a background I had some very serious concerns for many of the young children in my care. They have been involved in many difficult and distressing events at home. Many children used to find it difficult to settle in school, showing early signs of emotional and behavioural difficulties and failing to achieve across many areas of the curriculum. Having this barrier to early learning in school could have serious long term effects on achievement and we wanted to adopt an early intervention programme in order to provide these children with support in school in order for them to reach their potential.

Some of these children with underdeveloped social and linguistic skills found mainstream learning difficult and were not always ready to meet the social and intellectual demands of school as a result of their impoverished early nurturing. They generally had low self esteem and low self confidence.

Innovation



With this information we embarked on setting up a nurture group within the school. We knew that there have been many success stories linked to nurturing within school environments and we felt that a nurture group would enable us to target those children who don't always qualify for special needs funding and yet have specific 'needs'. We were eligible for RAISE funding and decided that the money would be invested in setting up our own nurture group.



Setting up the nurture group

We had two main tasks. One was to train staff and the other to find a suitable area of the school in which to establish the nurture room. The RAISE funding paid for the physical set up of the room, furniture, resources and equipment as well as the cost of two part-time LSAs to run it.

Our nurture group room is designed to be reassuring and informal.



We were given just over £11,000 in RAISE funding and this paid for two part time LSAs. Initially the nurture group was set up in a little used resource room, however, after evaluating the entire school building it was decided unanimously by all staff to relocate the large school library into a smaller area and use the old library room as the new nurture room. The two LSAs were enrolled onto the 4 day Nurture Training course and I was fortunate that my deputy head had not only done the training herself many years earlier but had a very comprehensive knowledge of nurturing, having set up the very first nurture group in Wales and we were therefore able to quickly start our pupil monitoring.

The next step was to involve parents. The deputy head and the head teacher spoke to individual parents about the new facility that we wished to offer their child and we were met with firm approval from everyone. It was very important to have the cooperation of parents as we had plans for them to be very involved in the nurture group through a variety of activities.





The nurture group has impacted on our engagement with some of our 'harder to reach' families, as well as strengthening links with other agencies. We have opened our doors to the parents of our nurture children and encourage them to not only come into school one half day twice a term to 'stay and play', but to accompany staff and children on local shopping trips, join the children in cooking classes and to come most weeks to our Family Learning classes.

It has been an important breakthrough in engaging with some of these parents who prior to the child being in the nurture group would have had very little to do with the school.

The Marjorie Boxall Quality Mark

In addition to all the successes our nurture group has achieved we were assessed in 2009 for the Boxall Quality Mark and were very proud when we were given the award.

Through our nurture group we have also strengthened contacts with other professionals who unanimously applaud the provision that this facility is able to offer our most disadvantaged children. Social Services, Health, Cafcass and the Local Authority behaviour support unit have had involvement with the children or their families and this whole team effort has had a positive impact on progress.

Professional meetings take place once a month within school and comprise of the nurture staff, class teacher, SENCO, deputy head and head teacher when observations and progress are shared by all staff. This close monitoring reinforces our view that the nurture programme of intervention is continuing to be successful. Unfortunately the RAISE funding has ended but through the support of the Governing Body we have managed to continue by setting money aside in our budget to continue with the group. We have estimated that we can continue for the next three years and would like to see the provision remain indefinitely but have to be realistic and realise that it will only continue as long as we are able to afford it. For the past three years we have managed to extend the provision to full time, with reception children in the morning and year 1 and 2 in the afternoon.

The selection process has really brought to the forefront the need for staff to be aware of the social background of their pupils. Positive intervention can then take place. We strongly believe that our nurture group supports our most vulnerable

pupils and enables them to fully access education in order to unlock and achieve their full potential.



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Case Study ©

Pillgwenlly Primary in Newport

Written by Karen Green, Nurture Leader, Pillgwenlly Primary in Newport.

NURTURE GROUP ACHIEVEMENT at Pillgwenlly Primary School

Our school

- Pillgwenlly Primary School is an inner city, multi cultural school catering for the individual needs of 650 pupils from 3-11years.

It is situated in an area of social and economic deprivation in Newport, Gwent with some of the highest deprivation wards in Wales.

- The ***core principles of the 'classic Nurture Group'*** lie at the heart of our school. These principles have enabled us to move away from concerns over pupil behaviour six years ago and develop into a learning environment where 'We learn, play and work together' – 'together' being the key word.
- Through dialogue with the L.A. the school established a KS1 Nurture Group which has successfully run every year since January 2004. Two KS2 nurture groups were also established on a temporary basis for the first 18 months.

- In March 2009 we were awarded the Marjorie Boxall Quality Mark Award and in June of that year our Nurture provision received an 'outstanding' judgement by ESTYN.
- We believe in the importance of early intervention!

We currently run a KS1 Nurture Group. Rainbow class – as it is called – is open for 4½ days each week, 9a.m.-2.30p.m. The children are supported for 2-6 terms by two Nurture trained teachers 'job sharing' the role of managing the children aged between 4 and 7 years, and a full-time LSA (also Nurture trained).

Achievements

- Our first 'nurture children' from 2004 have now moved on to High School.
- We continue to watch over our KS2 'nurture children' as they grow and develop, and have 'been there for them' during the tough times and happier times, carefully monitoring both their social/emotional development and academic progress.
- It has taken some of our nurture children longer than others to become confident in forming relationships but now, having made these relationships, the children are more able to make the right choices and are now engaging in their academic learning. This has enabled the children to develop self esteem and confidence to make further progress.
- Parents are encouraged to play a central role in supporting their child; they are more willing to listen, learn and understand the complex nature of their children.
- We believe that some of the children in this group would have found school life extremely hard at times, but for the fact that they have always felt secure in the knowledge that we have always been there for them to listen and talk through their problems.

This has been our priority – to enable our children to form attachments with others, to make the right choices and to understand why they make these choices – to be resilient and reflective.

As a school we remain consistently optimistic of the achievement of our Nurture Group children. Early evidence shows Nurture as an early intervention programme assists children in reaching their true academic performance at the End of Key Stage Two.

For us as a school, during the current economic climate Nurture will be the last intervention programme this school will lose.

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Case Study ^D

Goodwick Primary School

Written by Mari Brame, Head Teacher, Goodwick School.

Background

Ysgol Wdig is a Welsh-speaking primary school in Pembrokeshire with six classes, one of which is the Dosbarth Disglair, the Nurture Group, for the 133 pupils aged 3-11. They come mainly from a large council estate or from scattered farms or houses in the surrounding countryside. There is much unemployment in the area. On the whole, parents are very supportive and all the school staff know all the pupils and their families.

How we set up a nurture group

When I began my journey as Head Teacher of Ysgol Wdig in September 2005, I was faced with serious behavioural issues that greatly compromised the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. A small group of children, then in Years 3 and 4 were badly behaved and thus disrupted life for the other children in their class. Having attended an introductory conference on nurture groups during that year and then hearing the news that the school was to receive money from RAISE (the Welsh Assembly Government's Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education initiative), the obvious answer was to establish a nurture group.

Two members of staff were immediately identified and trained. A classroom became redundant and was refurbished fittingly. With the support of a nurture group advisory teacher the children began in the nurture group, which we named Dosbarth Disglair (Shining Class), in September 2006.

Linking nurture with the curriculum

The staff feel that it is essential for the curriculum planning to be done by the class teachers, and so the daily routine begins with every child attending the mainstream class for registration and teacher input for both Language and Maths sessions. The nurture group staff then break down the tasks into achievable amounts for each pupil. They withdraw to the Dosbarth Disglair to complete tasks before taking part in Circle Time and other strategies to support their needs.

Impact of the nurture group

The impact of the group was immediate. We had some initial comments from parents, such as, 'So if you're naughty in this school you have a piece of toast and a cup of tea.' But this attitude hardly lasted more than about two weeks. Six weeks later, Ysgol Wdig was inspected by ESTYN and the newly formed Dosbarth Disglair received the following comments, 'Good support is given to pupils with emotional needs and oppressive behaviour. One of the school's strengths is the caring environment in the nurture group'.

A whole school approach to nurture

The nurture group has grown in strength and is now an integral part of the school. We still identify children in need of nurturing for a variety of reasons. The group is a safe haven, and other children in the school find their way there for comfort. We as staff like to congregate there occasionally as well!

In order to ensure that all the children could benefit from nurturing principles, September 2008 saw the launch of the Values Education programme. The children are introduced to a different value every month. The nurture group staff follow the programme as do all other staff in the school. With staff training in nurturing principles as well this has led to a consistent approach across the school and has ultimately led to improved behaviour and the raising of academic standards.

We have opened our doors to many visitors. Children, members of staff, governors, and the community regularly come to have breakfast with the nurture group. It's been a pleasure to share good practice with schools in Pembrokeshire and from other authorities.

Receiving the Boxall Award in 2009

We were delighted to receive the Marjorie Boxall Award in July 2009 and even though the RAISE grant came to an end in July 2009, the nurture group remains, now funded from the school budget. We are very proud of comments made during a recent midterm review:

'Totally caring and nurturing ethos throughout the whole school.'

'The use of nurturing principles and Values Education is promoting emotionally intelligent pupils.'

There is a positive ethos in Ysgol Wdig now with a climate for learning. It is a school that is now respected in the community. We've certainly travelled a long way in 4 years. As we look at our mission statement displayed in the entrance, – 'Dyro dy law i ni, Ac fe awn i ben y mynydd' – ('Let us take your hand, And we'll take you to the top of the mountain'.)

We feel that we are fully supporting every child in the school to reach their full potential, not only educationally but as future citizens. I truly believe that it's thanks to the nurture group that we are well on our way up that mountain.

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Case Study

Llangatwg Community School

Written by: Gavin Thomas, Pupil Support Unit Leader.

How we went about setting up a Nurture Group

At Llangatwg we have developed a Nurture Group and Pupil Support Unit that meet the needs of pupils that we have identified that require additional support that was not available previously.

We work with pupils that experience confidence and self-esteem issues. We also aim to help those with behavioural issues and identify the underlying issues that pupils experience and work with the pupil to meet their individual needs.

The Nurture Group and PSU have been in existence for 4 years. They were set up as it was widely acknowledged that some pupils required specific time and help in order to develop their skills. The goal is still to get the pupils back into mainstream education for as much time as possible, equipped with the necessary skills and motivation to further their knowledge and maximise their ability to learn.

Nurture Group

We operate a year 7 and 8 Nurture Group each consisting of 12-14 pupils. We meet 4 mornings a week for breakfast and there is a scheme of work the pupils undertake in order to develop social skills, enhance self confidence and self-esteem and generally helps the pupils with transition from primary to secondary school.

The Group also participates in an outdoor pursuits program specifically designed to develop team cooperation, team building skills as well as confidence and self esteem, this program has been an outstanding success in previous years. The pupils are selected by liaising with year 6 teachers and form teachers early in year 7.

We then complete a Boxall Profile for each pupil. This provides us with an accurate synopsis of each pupil and what aspects we need to develop with that pupil.

Pupil Support Unit

The Unit is a continuation of our Nurture Group and caters for pupils from year 7 through to year 11. There are currently 41 pupils on roll, each pupil is on an individual agreed timetable and spends a varied amount of time in the PSU, ranging from 4 hours a week to being in attendance on a full time basis.

We complete a Boxall Profile on each pupil as we do with NG pupils. There are always two members of staff present as with the NG and the PSU is run closely along the lines of a Classic Nurture Group setting. The only aspects we decided to change were the room settings, as we did not want all the characteristics of a primary setting. We firmly believe we have developed a setting, which is best suited to our pupils and their needs.

During their time in the PSU setting pupils complete a range of tasks, ranging from:

- basic skills Maths and English;
- voluntary work in the community;

- SEAL Worksheets;
- social skills and confidence building;
- outdoor pursuits program;
- group tasks;
- mainstream work in preparation for return to class;
- coursework (KS4).

Where we go next

- Need to develop better links with parents.
- Without doubt we are still evolving.
- New projects within school and community.
- Working with feeder schools.
- Linking with other schools within the Local Authority.

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Case Study

Mounton House Special School, Monmouthshire

Written by Teresa Munting, Assistant Headteacher.

Our school

Mounton House is a residential special school for boys aged 11-16. All pupils are subjects of full statements of Special Educational Need (SEN). Our pupils are referred from several neighbouring authorities as well as from Monmouthshire schools. Currently we are working with 13 LAs. Currently we have 61 pupils on roll.

We offer a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum at KS3 and KS4 to all pupils, including individual 14-19 pathways for KS4 pupils. Pupils are entered for GCSE, Entry Level and Key Skills examinations as well as vocational qualifications through college/youth service links.

Our pupils

Pupils arrive at Mounton House usually with very negative attitudes towards themselves and learning. Their routes to us have been many, with exclusions,

non-attendance, anti-social behaviour etc to name a few. We work with lads for whom schools and learning in general have not been successful experiences. Often they are suspicious of adults, have trust, aggression, anger issues, lack confidence, are anxious, withdrawn and have low self esteem. Lack of school attendance has resulted in low literacy and numeracy levels with poor communication and social skills. Emotional issues also make learning difficult and cause our pupils to behave in inappropriate ways.

Emotional well-being is a priority for our pupils and we have Emotional Literacy and SEAL lessons timetabled weekly.

Tŷ Seren – Our Nurture Group

Staff concerns were raised about some pupils who did not seem to be flourishing educationally, socially, emotionally and behaviourally. Age inappropriate behaviours were logged.

We looked at attachment disorder and developmental difficulties and identified pupils who even at the age of 11-16 needed a “nurturing” environment in which to flourish. Staff were trained by Nurture Group Network and plans made to set up Tŷ Seren as an additional learning needs intervention. We needed to raise staff awareness of the issues and especially of the work of nurture groups. INSET took place for all staff and a presentation was made to governors. Parents were informed via the newsletter. The Senior Management Team were on board and plans began for our nurture group, using RAISE funding.

We partitioned off a large dining room and Tŷ Seren was born! (Autumn 2007)
Tŷ Seren follows the core principles of nurture groups and the ethos has permeated throughout the school - an area of huge success. Referral and identification of pupils is by the Boxall Profile and we eagerly await the Secondary Profile!

As a KS3/4 intervention we work on sessions rather than whole days in Tŷ Seren. Pupils generally access 4 sessions weekly, with lunch club and before school access.

Tŷ Seren is run by a HLTA and a TA with the Assistant Head Teacher maintaining overall responsibility.

Parents were contacted and invited in and pupils began their sessions. An “open door” policy is operated for staff, governors, external agencies, and parents. We have also assisted other schools in Monmouthshire to set up their own nurture groups.

Quantifying data is often difficult for us; how do you measure smiles, eye contact, comfortable communication, happiness feelings of self worth and security, etc? What we do have is increased levels of attendance, improved levels of literacy and numeracy, decreases in self harming, increases in “on task” behaviour and decreases in physical and verbal aggression, damage, swearing, absconding etc. Pupils engage in and take responsibility for their learning and behaviour and actually enjoy it!

Activities in Tŷ Seren

Literacy and numeracy support
Emotional literacy sessions
Social and life skills
Lunch club/tea and coffee sessions
Enhancing self esteem activities
Topic work
Classwork/coursework support
Relaxation activities
Anger management

Practical activities
Communication skills
Drama, gardening, play
Brain gym
SEAL (Social and Emotional
Aspects of Learning)

Concerns

As always, money for resourcing is an issue. We had the RAISE funding and used it to support our most vulnerable pupils by establishing Tŷ Seren. We also incorporated aspects of staffing and resourcing into our School Improvement Plans over 3 years. The human resource is vital. There is no substitute for effective staff.

Pupils attending Tŷ Seren and returning to their classes for some lessons can cause some concern if work isn't differentiated by staff. Pupils must be able to access the curriculum in classes they return to.

Where we go next

- Improve parental involvement.
- Prepare for Boxall Quality Award.
- Training with Secondary Boxall Profile.
- Develop quantifiable data to measure outcomes.



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Case Study ©
Ynysddu Primary School

Written by Alison Hughes, Ynysddu Primary School.

The Cluster

Ynysddu School hosts two nurture groups – one for reception/yr 1 children and a Key Stage two class for Yrs 3/4 which take children from the Islwyn region of Caerphilly.

The Nurture Group

The class is local authority funded and takes up to eight children for four days a week. On a Wednesday the children return to their home school and staff from the Nurture Group visit the schools. The children are with us for between two and four terms.

How it all started

The class was set up five years ago as part of a pilot project for Caerphilly. Initially the group took children from the cluster. This was extended in the second year to include children from the larger Islwyn region. The class was set up by the staff at the school with support and training from the Nurture Group Network.

Running the Group

The selection process is broadly the same as the selection for the typical Nurture Group in that a panel is held and the children are selected on a priority basis. We usually send a reminder to the schools in our region of the date of the panel and set a deadline for the receipt of referrals - but there has to be flexibility with this! The children are referred directly to the school using the local authority referral form. This gives parental permission and a history of previous interventions. A member of staff will visit the school and carry out the Boxall Profile assessment and observe the child in the home school setting. A report is then produced for the panel and each child is discussed individually.

The panel is made up of head teachers from the host school and the home school, staff from the Nurture Group, representatives from local authority inclusion services – including behaviour support services (BSS) and educational psychology services. BSS will then notify schools and parents if the child has been allocated a place and arrange transport. If a child has been identified as needing a place in a nurture setting and the nearest class is full they will be considered for a place in an alternative provision. This is decided by head teachers and inclusion staff in a meeting following the panel.

It is important to consider the balance of the group at all times, and ideally you will have an equal mix of the more boisterous child and the withdrawn ones. It is also important that parents are aware from the outset that selection is a panel process

and that there is no guarantee of a placement in the nearest school and in some cases Nurture may not be the most appropriate intervention for the child.

Any authorities setting up nurture groups in this way will need to raise awareness in the cluster of what Nurture provision is, and that it is a partnership. We held awareness raising training for head teachers in the Islwyn region and for SENCoS through the SENCo forum. We also produced information leaflets and handbooks for schools to use when talking to parents about possible Nurture referral. It also needs to be stressed that Nurture is another intervention and that is not a cure all, and like any other intervention it may or may not work for some children. The awareness raising sessions are something that needs to be revisited from time to time because of changes in personnel in schools. We also invite head teachers, SENCoS and class teachers to join us for open days and Stay and Play Days. The benefits of this are twofold – it gives the opportunity for teachers to see the children in the nurture setting and parents to see staff from both schools – promoting partnership in their children’s development.

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**Case Study 
Ysgol Glancegin**

Written by Bethan Morris-Jones, Headteacher.



Background

Nurture Groups are relatively new to Gwynedd and virtually unknown to the majority of its schools.

In collaboration with the LA and through RAISE funding, it has been possible to set up a cluster group of schools to introduce the nurturing concept since October 2009. Glancegin Primary School is the lead school in this project, and is the only school where a nurturing room has been set up. Pupils in the other schools, a secondary school a feeder primary and an infant school, share a teaching assistant to deliver nurturing activities.



A growing school of 200 pupils, Glancegin serves the three thousand resident Maesgeirchen council estate on the outskirts of Bangor. It was taken out of Estyn special measures a year ago and continues to work hard to ensure that pupils are ready and open to learning, and to improve the standards that they achieve.



How we set up our Nurture Group

In September 2008, through the decentralisation of SEN funding, an Inclusion Team was established and a new whole-school strategy of intervention developed, with the initial focus on improving literacy. Led by a specialist SEN teacher, and through the creation of three full-time teaching assistants posts, the team was set up and in-house training given. Working closely with the LA's Educational Psychology Service, a three-tiered strategy based on Provision Mapping was developed through Solution-Focused Thinking, with a view to introducing behaviour interventions as a second phase.



Although creating systemic change at a previously failing establishment was relatively straightforward, reducing the long-term effect of failure, and changing

attitudes from being problem focused to being solution focused and inclusive, took much longer and a far greater effort . Although much has been achieved there is still a great deal to be done, but setting up the *Aelwyd* Nurture Group came just at the right time for people not to get too disheartened with the struggle of dealing, on a daily basis with the effects of challenging behaviour, low self-esteem or a lack of confidence, and all the other consequences of social and economic deprivation on the youngsters in our care.

We were now in the position to do something different again and to offer a new type of intervention for pupils with worried parents, who are grateful, and show a growing respect towards the school and its partnership with home.



The key to the success of the Aelwyd is the status that it's been given. It runs for 50% of the time and is led by two teaching assistants from the Inclusion Team. Nearly two years down the line since the creation of the team, the staff are by now highly skilled, having taken full advantage of all the training opportunities made available to them.

The two Aelwyd staff member along with the Head Teacher and Deputy attended training given by the LA's Educational Psychology Service, and a twilight training session was arranged for all the school staff. The location of the Aelwyd, at a quiet end of the building where other pupils and staff don't pass, adds to the exclusivity of the room and the nice décor and furniture makes it a special place for the children who attend.

Success and effect of our Nurture Group



What is interesting to notice, although it's only been eight months since the Aelwyd opened is the rippling effect it's had through the juniors department.

In a short time, the Aelwyd has had a positive impact and two pupils have succeeded in returning to their class full-time. Another child now only attends for two out of the five sessions and will return full-time to his class in September.

The school is calmer, children and adults are happier and there is a feeling of optimism that we've managed somehow to overcome the greatest challenges that we faced.

Although the nurturing concept is still new to us we look forward to building on links already made with other nurturing schools to work in partnership and develop our expertise.

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Case Study | Neath Port Talbot

Written by Huw Davies, Neath Port Talbot.

Since opening its first nurture group in 2005, Neath Port Talbot has made great progress in getting nurture into its schools. To date, more than 80 staff have attended the Nurture Group Network four-day training course.

There is growing evidence of the direct benefits of nurture groups to pupils, parents and schools. Referrals to the authority's primary pupil referral unit have slowed down. The number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs is falling since the authority had adopted a policy of early identification of additional learning needs.

The Authority recently evaluated its nurture groups and concluded that they are having an impact not only on individual pupils but also contributing directly to whole-school improvement. There was evidence of marked improvement in school-parent and staff-pupil relationships, higher attendance, and a changed atmosphere with improved communication among staff who have developed a greater understanding of children with difficulties.

As for the children, they show increased confidence, self esteem, and improved social skills. Behaviour towards adults and other pupils has improved, literacy skills have increased. Exclusions have decreased as has referral to specialist provision.

In September 2009, 19 staff trained to become part of the Nurture Group Network's Training the Trainers system. Nurture groups in our authority are now working with 300 children. Impressed by their impact, head teachers agreed that the Welsh Assembly Government's RAISE grant (Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education) should be used within the Authority to promote and develop nurture groups.

To support nurture group staff, there are termly meetings which we see as signalling that the work they do with some of our most vulnerable pupils is valued. Recently trained staff will work with and support other schools about to embark on establishing their own provision.

“Nurture has had a huge impact on the atmosphere in schools. After a period of intervention pupils are able to access the curriculum alongside their peers,” comments Wynne Griffiths, Head Teacher of Rhydyfro Primary. “Our nurture provision has worked with some children who have been going through serious family trauma. Since establishing a nurture group we have not had a single exclusion.”

Such has been the impact of our development of nurture groups that many schools from other authorities have been keen to visit and learn from our experience. Even more importantly our pupils, parents and staff acknowledge that our schools are succeeding as never before.

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Annex 2: Sample materials

Checklist for selecting pupils

Checklist for choosing your pupils is dependent on how the group is seen in your school. Clear channels of communication are very important.

A. If entry to the nurture group is seen as the first part of a package of support on offer in your school:

Step	Completed?
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Step 1: Discuss pupils who meet criteria with class/subject teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 2: Keep records of meetings and suggested outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 3: Discuss possibility of entering nurture group with parents/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 4: Use assessment tools chosen by the school to ensure need is accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 5: Look at mix in group to decide when entry is appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. If entry to the nurture group is seen as an opportunity to be offered when other measures have been tried then the following may be more appropriate.

Step	Completed?
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Step 1: Discuss pupils who meet criteria with class/subject teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 2: Discuss concerns and possible strategies with parents/carers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 3: Refer pupil to outside agencies Behaviour Support Service Educational Psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 4: Try the strategies suggested by the above two agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Step 5: Keep a record of strategies tried and outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the next step would be support from the nurture group then follow list 'A' above

Observation checklist

An observation checklist is provided as a free resource by the Special Needs Information Press. It is copied below but the original is available at: http://www.snip-newsletter.co.uk/pdfs/downloads/behaviour_audit.pdf. The idea was to develop a scale that does not take up a great deal of staff time but provides information on a pupil's perceived EBD attainments on that occasion.

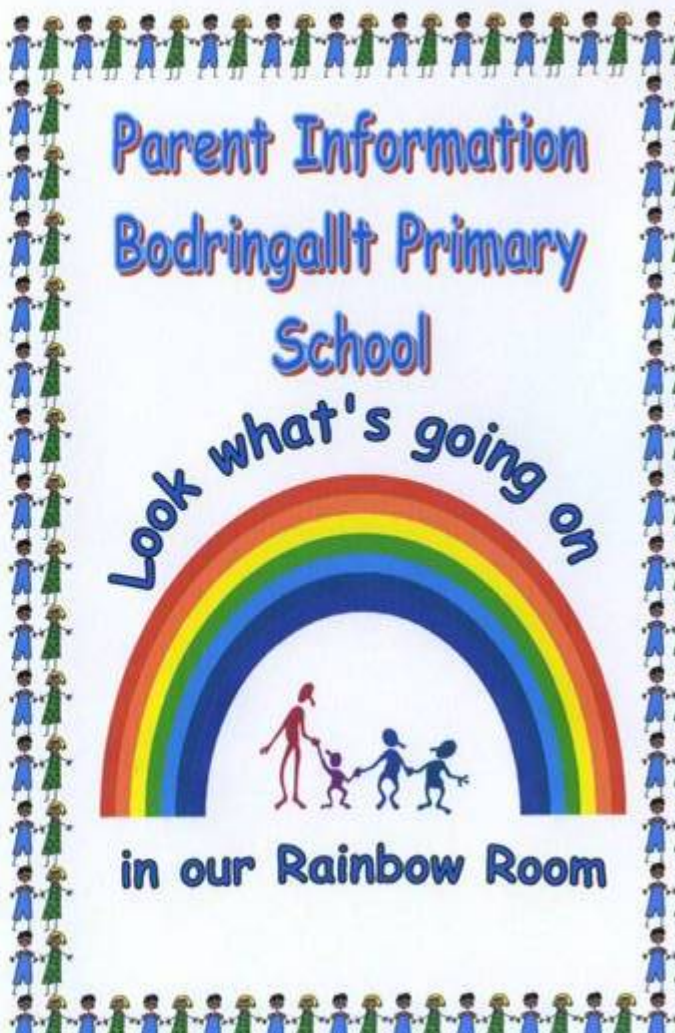
LEARNING BEHAVIOUR	Date					
Name of pupil	Year					
1) Is attentive and has an interest in school						
Gives appropriate attention to the teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
Starts on tasks without undue delay	1	2	3	4	5	6
Maintains task despite attempts at distraction by peers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can work without high levels of adult intervention	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shows motivation to complete tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6
Completes out of lessons assignments e.g homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
Listens to and acts on verbal instructions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can work without distracting other pupils	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shows pleasure in achieving good marks	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is prepared to continue when work becomes difficult	1	2	3	4	5	6
2) Has good learning organisation						
Can manage individual learning situations	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shows pride in producing well presented work	1	2	3	4	5	6
Works at a reasonable pace	1	2	3	4	5	6
Has the necessary equipment for the lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6
Asks permission to use items belonging to others	1	2	3	4	5	6
Achieves deadlines	1	2	3	4	5	6
Does not misplace books	1	2	3	4	5	6
3) Is an effective communicator						
Communicates clearly and contributes to discussions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Addresses staff and pupils appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	6
Able to alter voice, pitch and tone appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	6
Uses non-verbal signals e.g. eye contact	1	2	3	4	5	6
Uses speech conventions – turn taking in conversation	1	2	3	4	5	6
4) Works effectively in a group						
Co-operates in a group situation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Works collaboratively with others	1	2	3	4	5	6
Listens to and considers others' points of view	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is able to accept a variety of roles in a group	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can accept disappointment if not selected for a task	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can sustain work when unsupervised by an adult	1	2	3	4	5	6
5) Seeks help when necessary						
Seeks attention from adults appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	6
Uses unstructured time appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	6
Does not become disruptive if help not available	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can wait for adult response without impatience or irritation	1	2	3	4	5	6

CONDUCT BEHAVIOUR	Date					
Name of pupil	Year					
1) Behaves respectfully towards staff						
Is co-operative and responds positively towards staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
Listens and responds to verbal instructions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is polite/restrained with teaching staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is polite/restrained with non-teaching staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
Adds to conversations at appropriate times	1	2	3	4	5	6
Allows other to view their opinions without interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Understands and applies social distinction	1	2	3	4	5	6
Always responds honestly to situations	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can accept responsibility without denial	1	2	3	4	5	6
Apologises without reminder	1	2	3	4	5	6
2) Maintains appropriate relationship with pupils						
Treats all other pupils with respect	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is verbally passive and lacks prejudice	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can be trusted not to intimidate other pupils	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can relate to situations from another's point of view	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can cope with a large group of pupils	1	2	3	4	5	6
Does not seek to externalise blame	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can offer emotional support to others	1	2	3	4	5	6
3) Only interrupts and seeks attention appropriately						
Seeks teacher attention appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	6
Settles to tasks without avoidance behaviours	1	2	3	4	5	6
Allows peers to learn without disruption	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is self motivated requiring little adult input to complete tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can wait for attention to be given	1	2	3	4	5	6
4) Is physically peaceable						
Controls emotions appropriately when faced with difficulties	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is passive at all times (verbal/physical) towards adults	1	2	3	4	5	6
Avoids conflict with others	1	2	3	4	5	6
Looks for solutions to problems and acts upon them	1	2	3	4	5	6
Controls emotional outbursts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Acts as a peacemaker when disputes arise between pupils	1	2	3	4	5	6
5) Respects Property						
Is able to take care of own property	1	2	3	4	5	6
Respects and cares for the property of others	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rejects vandalism and deliberate damage to property	1	2	3	4	5	6

EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOUR	Date					
Name of pupil	Year					
1) Has Empathy						
Indicates tolerance of others' views	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shows consideration of others' feelings	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reacts in an appropriate way to resolve situations	1	2	3	4	5	6
Displays emotions appropriate to the situation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can accept discipline without argument	1	2	3	4	5	6
Behaves in a socially acceptable way in dining room	1	2	3	4	5	6
Behaves in a socially acceptable way on outings	1	2	3	4	5	6
2) Is socially aware	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indicates age-appropriate social interactions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Interacts appropriately with others of the same age	1	2	3	4	5	6
Indicates social inhibitions e.g. invasion of personal space	1	2	3	4	5	6
Interacts with others for the majority of the time	1	2	3	4	5	6
Actively participates in activities within the class	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is able to maintain friendships	1	2	3	4	5	6
3) Is happy	1	2	3	4	5	6
Has a positive outlook	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is able to participate and have fun with adults and peers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Has a sense of humour	1	2	3	4	5	6
Appears happy and content most of the time	1	2	3	4	5	6
4) Is confident	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is forthcoming in group situations	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is interested in undertaking new challenges	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can accept public praise	1	2	3	4	5	6
Has expectations of achieving success	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can risk failure	1	2	3	4	5	6
5) Is emotionally stable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Remains emotionally buoyant without extreme mood swings	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shows emotional resilience when upset or excited	1	2	3	4	5	6
Shows self-control and can manage own feelings	1	2	3	4	5	6
Is able to wait for gratification or recognition	1	2	3	4	5	6
Can own problems and locate internal solutions	1	2	3	4	5	6




If you would like more information please contact us on: 01443 434292



Parent Information
Bodringallt Primary
School

Look what's going on



in our Rainbow Room

The Principles of a Nurture Group

1. Children's learning is understood **developmentally**, i.e. stages not ages
2. The classroom is a **safe** place
3. Nurture is important for the development of **self-esteem**
4. **Language** is a vital means of communication
5. **All behaviour** is communication
6. The importance of **transition** in children's lives

What is it?

A nurture group is a small class that has a structured environment that is set and predictable. The children in the group are given opportunities to re-visit early 'nurturing' experiences.



Positive relationships are modelled by the teacher and teaching assistants. There is an emphasis on developing language and communication skills.



Children that need extra help to settle, listen, concentrate, share or just to make friends will benefit from attending a nurture group. They are shown how to understand and moderate their emotions.



Children work in small group, in pairs and 1:1 with an adult. Careful targeted teaching and learning opportunities enable children to raise the levels of their achievement.

The National Curriculum and all school policies are taken into account.

Parents and carers are kept informed and are encouraged to work in partnership with the school.



Our Rainbow Room environment is set up like a home, with a living room, kitchen and dining area. The children attending the group remain with their mainstream classes also, and take part in all school activities.

The children that attend our nurture groups say it better than anyone:

We play, share and have fun.

The room is really comfy and it makes me feel safe and happy

It helps me be kind to other children.

The rainbow class has helped me stop fighting with my brother. They taught me to count in a special way.