

NURTURE POLICY

Introduction

At The Pioneer Academy (TPA), we are committed to ensuring that our children feel safe and happy in school so that they can build positive relationships and have the ability to approach their learning confidently and successfully. However, we recognise that, for some of our children, the demands of a busy school environment is difficult for them to manage and leaves them struggling to cope with their emotions and anxieties and we need to give them more tailored support.

Our Nurture Group Intervention, called The Nest, provides a modified curriculum in a self-contained, safe and welcoming environment and is based on the principles advocated by Marjory Boxall. It is a small group intervention, run by qualified nurture staff for children who, for specific Social, Emotional or Mental Health reasons, find learning in the mainstream classroom difficult. Our Nurture room follows the Six Principles of Nurture as explained below.

The Six Principles of Nurture

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally

Children are given opportunities to experience what they may have missed in their earlier lives and learning is planned to meet these developmental gaps as identified by Boxall Profiles. Adults respond to children "as they are" and by being accepted in this non-judgmental way, they are encouraged to develop and grow.

2. The Nurture Room offers a safe base

Nurture staff understand that children need to build trust in adults and to feel contained in a safe environment. Through the provision of a welcoming space and a predictable routine alongside calm, consistent responses, adults provide a safe place for the child. This is the heart of nurture. Staff are trained and supported in their work to build their resilience and understanding of children's needs.

3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing

The nurture group has a focus on developing self-esteem, acknowledging and celebrating achievements and successes in a way that is acceptable for each child. Staff are sensitive to the needs of individual children and offer highly personalised approaches to building wellbeing. Nurture involves listening and responding and the staff constantly engage with the children in shared activities and play to encourage talk about feelings and events. Every contribution is valued and nothing is hurried or left unacknowledged.

4. Language is a vital means of communication

Language is more than a skill to be learned; it is how feelings are put into words. In nurture, children are given both formal and informal opportunities to develop language skills. Children are encouraged, through sitting together at the table, games and imaginative play to understand their feelings and put them into words as well as recognising the feelings of others. Nurture staff consciously model the language and coping skills that the children are encouraged to learn.

5. All behaviour is communication

Staff understand that all behaviour is a means of communication and will work hard to make sense of what a child is trying to tell us through an understanding of their background and individual challenges. Having this understanding allows staff to respond in a calm and yet firm way. They will aim to find links between the external and internal worlds of each child and, by doing so, help them to make connections between thoughts, feelings and actions.

6. The importance of transition in children's lives

Transition and change is often difficult for the children who attend nurture. The nurture group recognises these vulnerabilities and provides a safe and secure space in which children can learn to manage their anxieties. By giving them this safe and secure environment, the foundations are laid for them to gradually increase their flexibility in accepting the unexpected. Children are carefully prepared for transitions whilst helping them to develop emotional resilience when faced with new or different situations.

Aims of a Nurture Group

To provide a small group setting where children can experience nurturing from 2 or 3 caring and suitably qualified adults who work together to enable successful reintegration into the classroom.

To have a predictable, calm and purposeful environment and timetable, free from curriculum pressures.

To develop self-esteem and social skills.

To develop trusting relationships with adults and other children.

To develop personal responsibility.

To help children to recognise and choose appropriate behaviour through self-regulation.

To support children to understand consequences of certain behaviour choices.

To work in partnership with teachers and parents to achieve consistency between home and school.

To provide ongoing assessment to monitor progress against targets.

To prevent exclusion.

To ensure a full reintegration into a mainstream classroom environment.

Environment

The nurture room provides a secure sanctuary for the children, giving them a safe space to feel relaxed and be themselves. The room has a homely feel with specific areas for playing, cooking, eating and relaxing. Space is also given to a separate area where children can take time out to regulate their emotions or spend time alone with sensory support equipment. The children also have access to an outdoor area.

Timetable

Children typically attend the Nurture Group for a period of between one and four terms and either attend in the mornings or in the afternoons, usually for Monday to Thursday or Friday.

We ensure that pupils do not miss out on special assemblies, guests in school, outings or special events that the rest of their class are taking part in. Pupils remain with their class when they are not attending the Nurture Group.

Typical Nurture Session Timetable and Structure

Each session usually runs for around 1.5 to 2.5 hours depending on whether the children stay for lunch.

Children self-register using the emotions board at the entrance. Staff sensitively follow up later in the session, on a 1:1 basis, if a child indicates they are feeling angry or sad.

Greeting song or routine which welcomes each person, child and adult, by name. Revisit expectations and individual targets and go through the timetable for the day.

Snack and Chat; a chance to share food, drink and news or to do a short, focused social skills activity if needed

Daily activity such as cooking, gardening, arts and craft or drama.

Adult supported free play and curriculum learning opportunities

Prepare for and eat lunch together

Story time

Ending song or routine

Nurture Provision

Nurture Group provision has a large emphasis on Social, Emotional and Mental Health aspects of learning which gives children the skills and confidence to engage with the learning in their class, alongside their peers. Activities are planned around a termly theme and provide a stimulating environment for the children.

- Weekly planning incorporates developmental and age appropriate skills informed by individual Boxall Profiles.
- The Nurture Group follows a predictable routine of activities and tasks each day and over the week, all of which encourage children to share news, talk about their feelings and develop their speaking, listening and social skills.
- Children will have the opportunity to work on their individual targets.
- Children will share snack time or lunch, providing them with the opportunity to socialise with peers and adults as well as take responsibility for preparing food and clearing away.
- Activities and targets are designed to ensure children feel a sense of success every day.
- Mainstream curriculum basic skills are covered within the planned nurture activities and will be identified on a half termly curriculum overview.

Identification and Referral

Typically, children who are considered for nurture will find it difficult to:

Trust adults

Share resources or attention from adults or their peers

Ask for help

Explore the world around them

Lack resilience

Understand their emotions

Regulate their behaviour responses

Have a feeling of self-worth

The identification and review process takes place on an ongoing basis but children may need to go on a waiting list until a place is available.

- Teachers complete a referral form through the usual SEND assess, plan, do, review procedure and share with the SENDCo to raise awareness of concerns, having tried quality first teach strategies.
- The class teacher and SENDCo carry out an initial assessment using the TPA suitability tool and/or SDQs.
- Once it has been decided that Nurture offers appropriate support for a child, the class teacher will invite parents/carers to discuss Nurture support, how it can help their child and gain agreement for them to access the support. They will be offered a tour of the nurture room and the opportunity to meet nurture staff.
- Boxall Profiles are completed for suitable children – This provides a clear and personalised picture of a child's areas of need.
- The SENDCo and nurture group staff discuss the results. From the Boxall profiles, a report will be created where children are selected for the group according to need. Children will leave and join the group as progress is made. Pupils usually remain in Nurture Group for between 1 and 4 terms.
- During their time in Nurture Group the pupils will agree on Personal Targets (linked to the areas of need identified in the Boxall Profile). The SENDCo will meet half termly with the Nurture Staff to discuss the progress of each pupil.
- When it is felt that a pupil may be ready to return to their mainstream class, a further Boxall Profile will be completed and analysed. The transition back into class will be discussed with the pupil and their parents and undertaken gradually.

Assessment

- Children involved in the group are assessed using the Boxall profile at least once a term and more if progress is observed in both in nurture and classroom settings which may indicate that a child is ready for transition.
- Children are observed by nurture staff in their mainstream classroom at least once a week.
- Pupil, teacher and parent feedback will be sought at least once a term.

Involving Parents / Carers

- Parental support is vital to the child's progress and parents are fully involved and consulted about the selection process.
- Termly curriculum overviews are shared with parents at the start of each half term and are available on the website.
- Children's individual targets are shared with parents termly.
- Parents are invited to and are welcomed and encouraged to attend Nurture Group events.

Involving school staff

- Class teachers will still take responsibility for the children in nurture and are responsible for the registration of Nurture Group pupils both in the morning and afternoon and dismissal at the end of the day.
- Class teachers will be asked to contribute to discussions, review meetings, liaise with nurture staff to share information and complete assessment questionnaires in relation to pupils in their class.
- Teachers will put in place nurture strategies and resources as agreed in provision plans to create consistency.

- Class teachers and TAs will be invited to attend nurture sessions/parent workshops as appropriate. Cover for sessions will be organised by the SENDCo if needed.
- Staff responsible for safeguarding, attendance and family liaison will be asked to support the success of the children in nurture as part of the wider view of the inclusion team.

Staffing

- The Nurture Group is run by two members of staff who have completed the required accredited Nurture UK training.
- Staff sustain nurturing relationships with the children and act as good, consistent role models of desired behaviour. They maintain an unconditional positive approach to the children which encourages self-esteem.
- In the event of a member of staff being absent the Nurture Group pupils will remain with their class group. In order to maintain consistency and security, the Nurture Group is never covered by supply teachers.
- The Nurture Group staff are responsible for undertaking the weekly planning and assessing the pupils' progress.
- The SENDCo oversees the strategic direction of the Nurture Group, is responsible for the Long-Term planning and works closely with the Nurture Group staff to identify pupils in need of Nurture support and assess pupils' progress.