



Bagshot Infant School

Nurture Group Policy

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Why Nurture Groups?

Most children start school with assumptions based on early experiences at home, about their capacity to enjoy learning; they are willing to try something new and can learn from their mistakes. They have developed expectations about how adults will respond: whether they will be helpful and interested or disapproving and sometimes easily angry.

Most children enjoy the challenge of school and will be supported at home if difficulties arise. However, some children arrive at school without having the necessary, positive early experiences. This can be for very many different reasons dependant on their personal situation. For some children, the complex activities and bustle of a large class can be overwhelming: they can be unable to listen or take in what the teacher says; they can be easily distracted and quickly feel defeated. Some withdraw, while others express their frustration through aggressive or impulsive behaviour, more typical of a younger child.

In order to support children who do experience some of these challenges, at Bagshot Infant School, we have established a Nurture Group.

The Principles of Nurture

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

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally – the foundations of learning begin at birth and develop through a close relationship with an adult. Independence develops from dependence. Social empathy; the ability to relate to others in a variety of situations, as well as learning develops from being thought about, valued and encouraged. Staff in the nurture group respond to each child at whatever emotional or social age s/he appears to be with the appropriate degree of control and

nurture. The quality of this response enables the child to move on. Children's developmental progress is assessed through the Boxall Profile handbook.

2. The nurture room offers a safe base – there is a structure to the day, which is predictable: adults who are reliable and firm and can set boundaries without being punitive. Children see two adults working together and supporting each other. This provides security and reassurance. The nurture group room offers a balance of educational and social/domestic experiences aimed at supporting the development of children's relationship with each other and with the adults.

3. The importance of nurture for the development of well-being - nurture is listening, being responsive, remembering and engaging in reciprocal, shared activities such as play, having meals, reading, talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and being thought of as individuals. This involves calling the children by their name, noticing and praising every small achievement; nothing is hurried in nurture groups.

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

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

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

The Willow Group

Our nurture group is called *The Willow Group*. Children attend Willow Group for four afternoons each week. The group has a maximum of six children and its composition is carefully structured to create a balanced and functional group.

The role of the Nurture Group Leaders

To run the nurture group with the support and guidance of the Headteacher and to:

- be involved in formal reviews as required; to support curriculum development
- be involved with the selection and re-integration of pupils
- maintain the Nurture Group principles- this is to provide a carefully structured session where there is a balance of learning and teaching, affection and structure within a home-like atmosphere
- organise and plan the activities and curriculum of the classroom, bearing in mind the needs of the children
- keep records of individual children's progress
- liaise with other professionals when appropriate
- actively work in partnership with parents in the development of their children for example organising parent/children craft sessions
- manage the Nurture Group budget
- carry out and contribute to school policies and procedures

The Nurture environment

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

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

Teaching and Learning

The Willow Group children have their own themed curriculum with a large emphasis on Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Social and Emotional learning. There are clear links to other core and foundation subjects.

Activities are planned around a termly theme to provide a stimulating and enjoyable environment for children.

Weekly planning which, where possible, incorporates the progression of key skills is undertaken by the Headteacher and Nurture Group Leaders, with planning then forwarded to the class teachers.

Each afternoon follows a similar pattern divided into six parts:

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

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

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

Snack time – this part of the afternoon aims to provide opportunities to socialise with peers in an adult setting. Children take responsibility for tasks relating to serving drinks and snacks.

Celebration time – this is time for reflection, praise and celebration. Children have an opportunity to identify and praise other children in the group. Throughout the afternoon children's achievements are acknowledged and celebrated and, where necessary, adult intervention takes place to develop and support skills, confidence and self-esteem.

Identification and Referral

The Willow Group supports a range of children across school both in EYFS and Key Stage 1. The identification process takes place during the summer term before the child begins their new academic year.

Screening process – All children are screened using the Goodman's *strengths and difficulties test* (SDQ). This is a straight forward 'yes', 'no' or 'sometimes' tick sheet completed by the class teacher. This will identify, for the teacher, any areas of social or emotional need that a child may have. The results of the SDQ are discussed by the class teacher, nurture group staff and the Headteacher.

Between 10 and 12 children are then identified from across the school to go forward to the next stage of selection.

Boxall Profile – this is a series of questions covering various aspects of a child's social and emotional development. It provides a clear and personalised picture of a child's areas of need.

From the Boxall profiles, a group of up to 6 children are identified to form the group.

Children will leave and join the Willow Group as progress is made.

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

Involving Parents

Parental support is vital to each child's progress

- Parents are fully involved and consulted about selection processes
- Communication between nurture group staff and parents is critical
- Parents should be made to feel a part of the nurture group experience
- Parents are regularly invited to nurture group events
- Parents are welcome to meet with Willow Group staff any time after the school day

Assessment

The Boxall Profile (which allows for an individual picture of the child's social and emotional needs) is used as the assessment tool. This is carried out termly in order for staff to be aware of any progress or change in the areas of need to be developed.

Alongside the formal assessment process is the informal, daily assessment through the daily record sheets kept up-to-date by Willow Group staff.

Children are assessed termly in order to establish the impact the Willow Group is having on their academic progress. This is undertaken by the SENCo and Headteacher.

Re-integration

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

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

Staffing

Willow Group has three highly-skilled members of staff who have all completed in Nurture Group training. It is overseen by our Headteacher – Miss Katie Aldred who is also a fully qualified teacher.

Staff Absence

In order to maintain consistency and security the nurture group is never covered by supply teachers. In the event of staff absence a nurture-trained member of staff, the SENCo or Head teacher may provide short term cover. However, if this is not possible the children whom access this intervention will remain with their mainstream class.

Visitors to Willow Group

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

It is important for the children's class teachers to feel a part of what is happening in the nurture group and to carry the principles back to their classroom to provide consistency.

Arrangements to Monitor and Review the Policy

This policy was written in consultation with staff and Governors.