Cairns Early Childhood Centre

NURTURE POLICY

DATE CREATED: JULY 2024

DATE REVIEWED: AUGUST 2025

DATE REVIEW IS DUE: AUGUST 2026

RATIONALE

"A nurturing approach has a key focus on the school environment and emphasises the balance between care and challenge which incorporates attunement, warmth and connection alongside structure, high expectations and a focus on achievement and attainment. It is based on the understanding of 6 Nurturing Principles…" (Education Scotland. 2017. p. 13)

Alongside our stakeholders, we developed our vision, values and aims which align with the commitment to delivering a Whole Centre Approach to Nurture. Cairns Early Childhood Centre sits in the top 5% SIMD 1 areas in Scotland, and we serve a diverse demographic of children and families. Many of the key components of Getting it Right for Every Child can be found in a Whole Centre Approach to Nurture and provides us with a consistent approach to supporting our children and families.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is for our children, families, partner agencies and our staff team to ensure we are all aware of and clear how we will support our children through a nurturing approach in the ECC. This policy has been created to support and inform our Whole Centre Approach to Nurture. It has been created in collaboration with our parents and carers, our staff team, our partner agencies and our children.

We have worked with our Educational Psychologist to further develop our knowledge on using the nurture principles in practice to ensure we provide a consistent and informed approach to supporting our children and families. This policy will provide clear expectations and strategies for how we will embed the nurture principles in practice, and how this informs our vision and aims of supporting our children through a Whole Centre Approach to Nurture.

The content of this policy and the outlined procedures will be followed by all staff, at all times, and in conjunction with the East Ayrshire Council Respectful Relationships Policy.

PROCEDURE

When embedding a Whole Centre Approach to Nurture, it is important to include the voice of our children, our families, and our staff. Our children told us they knew they were safe in the ECC because they felt happy, they had friends, and they knew they could speak with any of the staff if they were scared or upset. To

further support children, we will use the Colour Monster to identify and discuss feelings, as well as using labelling language and Makaton signs/symbols, or real-life visuals and objects of reference.

Our families told us they need to feel welcomed, valued and included in the ECC as part of our Whole Centre Approach to Nurture. They told us they could see staff care and want to celebrate in their child's achievements, as well as being open and available to talk too regularly so families could receive feedback on how their child is getting on.

Staff want to have a consistent approach to support children; this allows them to feel clear on expectations and work more effectively together to nurture children in their care. A clear understanding of how the nurture principles support us to embed a nurturing approach is key.

Children's learning is understood developmentally (Nurture Principle 1)

- We have a clear knowledge of children's development, and we understand a child's chronological age does not necessarily fit with the milestones of their developmental age
- We work closely with children with additional support needs (ASN), and we recognise that sometimes this means they might require more time and encouragement to think and to process
- We understand our approaches may need to be adapted to suit the individual needs and circumstances, particularly for our children with ASN, who thrive on a routine built on predictability and desirability
- We achieve this using robust assessment and working in partnership with parents/carers, partner agencies and colleagues
- Children with ASN may have a "My Plan" and/or an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) which will set out the strategies to support the child, and an adapted curriculum tracker
- Boundaries and expectations are age and stage appropriate to children whilst being aware of the hierarchy of needs in keeping everyone safe: health and safety, child protection, medical/allergies, risk assessments, additional support needs, and our capacity as individuals
- We are clear on what is developmentally appropriate for a child therefore we do not discourage these behaviours, for example, babies putting objects to their mouths or toddlers being eager to climb
- Instead, we support our children to explore in a safe way, for example, providing appropriate resources for babies to chew or creating obstacles which allow toddlers to develop their gross motor skills
- We are role models to all and support one another, valuing the skills and knowledge we all bring as well as celebrating and nurturing each child as an individual

The classroom (playroom) offers a safe base (Nurture Principle 2)

- The ECC environment is safe and secure, and evaluated using the environmental rating tools to ensure we provide the highest quality environment for our children
- There are minimal changes to the physical environment and any changes are discussed as a staff team
- Risk assessments support staff to maintain a safe space for everyone

- We make very good use of our indoor and outdoor spaces: they are calm, free from clutter, and organised in a way which allows children to be enriched and engaged without feeling overwhelmed and overstimulated
- There are areas identified for quiet time or sleep / rest, and we promote children's rights to privacy and dignity by having changing rooms and quiet spaces to take medication, if required
- We understand the importance of routines and instil these through role modelling: communication is clear and adapted to meet the individual needs of children, for example, using now and next boards or visual timetables
- The Oasis, in the Jungle Room, provides an area where children can be supported to regulate when this isn't achievable within the main spaces of the Jungle Room indoor and outdoor area

The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing (Nurture Principle 3)
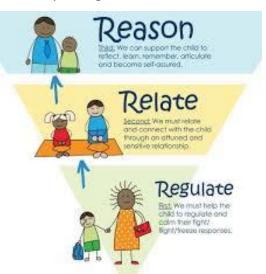
- We take the time to get to know all the children in the playroom
- We take the time to build relationships; with children, with families and with each other
- We respect and value the relationships children develop with our staff and support them if they want to speak with or be around a specific adult in the playroom
- We use labelling language, supported by the Makaton signs/symbols
- We use the Colour Monster to support children's understanding of wellbeing and feelings
- We further support and nurture children through health and wellbeing or nurture groups
- We are caring and approachable to all
- We show empathy towards all, and we work in an inclusive and equitable way
- We promote our Golden Rules to develop children's understanding of the behaviour expectations in an age and stage appropriate way

Language is a vital means of communication (Nurture Principle 4)

- We use calm voices when talking; with children, with families and with each other
- We are down at children's level as much as possible
- We use the Hanen strategies to support children's developing speech, language and communication: we observe, we wait, we listen (OWL)
- Makaton signs and symbols, or visuals, further support children's language and communication
- The only time a member of staff may be heard raising their voice is to catch the attention in an unsafe situation which they aren't able to get to quickly/safely, whilst also giving consideration to situation, for example, if they raise their voice, is this going to startle a child and lead to them hurting themselves anyway
- We use a calm and appropriate tone, and facial expressions, supported by Makaton signs/symbols to convey how we are feeling
- We make very good use of assessment to further support our children's language and communication skills, linking in with our partner agencies and Communication Champions for further strategies
- We use lots of praise and celebrate children's achievements

All behaviour is communication (Nurture Principle 5)

- We are curious – what are a child's actions, emotions and words trying to tell us? Are they hungry, tired, excited, overstimulated, unwell?
- We think about what children need and how they communicate what they need, and we think about how they might do this if they don't have the language to do this
- We use our knowledge of a child to support them, using language to reinforce, for example, "I can see you're sad about something, that's OK, I can help"
- We use distraction / diversion to support children to regulate; children love a job
- We make very good use of assessment to further understand children's behaviour and implement strategies as guided by our partner agencies, such as Educational Psychologist or Health
- We: Regulate – Relate – Reason (Bruce Perry)

The importance of transition in children's lives (Nurture Principle 6)

- We keep transitions to a minimum throughout the day by having predictable and desirable routines which we instil, reinforce, and revisit
- We ensure transitions are well-planned and well-led by using the 5 C's of a positive transition: child-centred, communication, consistency, culture and collaboration
- If there are any unsuspected changes, we manage our reactions, support one another, and the children: we work together and we always ask for help if needed
- We talk about changes that may be coming up, for example, "on Friday we're going to visit the school for the morning" and ensure these events are communicated to families in advance to enable them to talk to their child about these changes at home
- Visuals are used to further support children to make sense of and feel secure in their routines and transitions, for example, hand-washing routines, snack and lunch routines, the run of the day

How staff will support children's behaviour in the ECC

Natural consequences

Natural consequences are those that occur without adult interference for which children can learn a lot from, including cause and effect and how to link their actions with consequences. Natural consequences is the

approach used in the ECC unless it puts someone at significant risk of harm (going back to the hierarchy of health and safety, child protection etc.) An example of a natural consequence might be:

- All the toys getting wet and rusty if we don't tidy them away when we're finished playing outside
- Not having any crayons to mark-make with if we don't put them back where they belong
- Our tops getting wet if we don't put an apron on when playing in the water tray

In these situations, we will talk to the children about the natural consequence, for example, "your top is all wet so let's get changed so you can carry on playing – maybe next time we could put an apron on, so we don't need to get you changed again".

The language of choices

"The social environment of interactions should provide children with opportunities to continue to develop positive relationships with others; while also supporting and developing an understanding of the notion of boundaries; self-regulation, negotiation and choice" (Education Scotland. 2020. P47).

In the ECC, we use the language of safe choices and not safe choices whilst encouraging children to be problem-solvers and risk assessing their own environment, for example, "I wonder if there is a safer way to do this…" or "what might happen if we do that…? Yes, maybe that's not a safe choice". Offering children a choice supports them to develop their problem-solving skills, their capacity to accept responsibility and their ability to become independent thinkers. It also promotes their self-esteem. In the ECC, our approach is child-centred which means we offer children choices about their learning and play and facilitate the development of their skills through our interactions, experiences and spaces.

In terms of supporting children's behaviour, we can resolve almost all situations by offering a choice whilst reinforcing restorative practice: this is the language of choices. For example, if a child has thrown toys all over the floor and we would like them to pick these up, we would use the following approach:

- We use clear language: "No thank you, that's not a safe choice, let's tidy up" which can also be reinforced with Makaton and a visual
- If the child refuses to tidy up, we will use the language of choices
- We have both palms facing up to represent the choices and say "first you can help me tidy up, and then we can go and play"
- If the child isn't at the stage of being regulated to tidy up, we will use the 3 R's – Regulate, Relate, Reason
- Sitting with a member of staff gives the child that time to regulate either through co-regulation or self-regulation
- Children might like to regulate with a story, a cuddle, or time in the Oasis; we're not rewarding the behaviour by doing this, we're supporting a child to regulate so they understand their emotions are real and valid however a natural consequence of throwing toys is we need to tidy them up so we can play with them again – but children who aren't ready to learn, aren't ready to tidy up
- We always use restorative language; "thank you for helping to tidy up, let's go and play!"

Support for families

We will support our children and families to understand how this policy will support them through regular communication and role-modelling of the expectations and strategies. Communication will include newsletters, social media updates, our display boards, verbally and in-person, and through children's Learning Journals. We use Personal Plans to record children's individual needs to ensure these are considered, responded to and planned for with their families, and these are reviewed at a minimum of 6-monthly. We will signpost families to our partner agencies and Community Practitioners, who can provide specialist support both in and out of the ECC. This may be done informally through drop-ins or parent/carer progress meetings, or through a Team with the Family meeting.

REFERENCES

Getting it Right for Every Child

A Whole School Approach to Nurture

Realising the Ambition