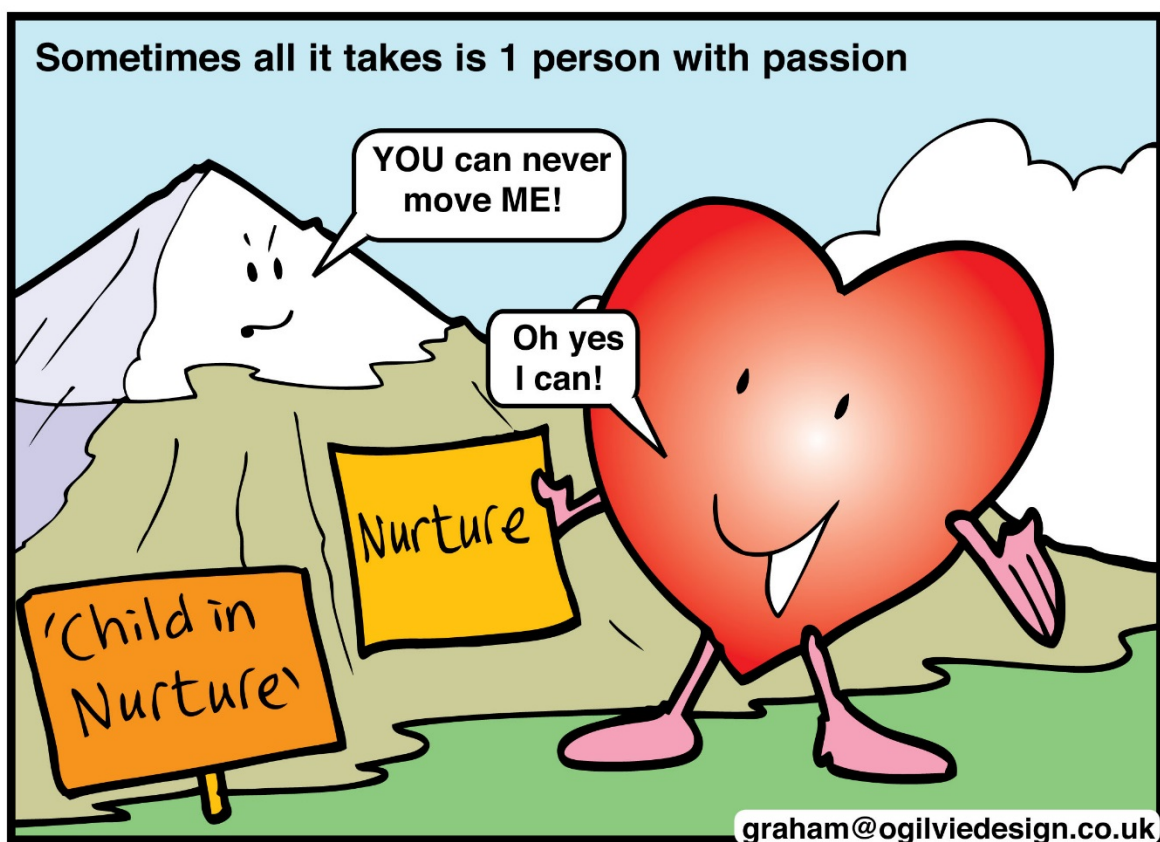# Nurturing Approaches: School Pack, Good Practice Guide

Volume 1

"Every child needs at least one person who is really crazy about him or her" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977)

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Nurturing Approaches: School Pack

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Introduction

What is Nurture?

"Nurture" is a buzzword in the world of education. Many people have come to associate the word Nurture with an educational intervention known as Nurture Groups. A growing body of research provides evidence for the effectiveness of Nurture in primary and secondary settings[1] as a means of supporting social and emotional wellbeing in children who are finding it difficult to thrive in the mainstream classroom.

All human beings are born to form attachments with their care givers. The formation of strong nurturing bonds from the very beginning of our lives is predictive of healthy relationships and essential for optimum health and wellbeing. All of us have an attachment style formed from the way we were parented and forged by our culture and the society we grow up in. Within some families the attachment style impacts on a child's ability to form healthy relationships and interventions within education are necessary to ensure more positive outcomes into adulthood. Nurture is one such intervention which highlights relationships and a structured approach to working with this group of young people. The philosophy of a Nurturing Approach is applicable to us all.

Nurture Approaches have been an educational intervention since the 1960s, developed by Marjorie Boxall. The premise is that children with attachment difficulties do not benefit from education as much as peers with secure attachment to their parents. An intervention approach was devised to improve the social, emotional development of such children, which

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[1] (Binnie & Allen 2008; Colley, 2009; Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney 2009; Cooper & Tiknaz 2005)

in turn will improve their cognitive functioning and learning. This approach is called the Nurture Group. The Classic approach involves a small group teaching intervention of children in groups of between 6 and 10, aged between 4 and 8, with two staff. The children remain in their mainstream school for the period of the intervention and the intervention lasts for up to 1 year. It takes place in a separate room, usually called the Nurture Room. There are several variations from the classic approach of how the Group intervention is structured such as with different age groups, full time, part-time or a couple of times a week. There has been innovation in the area to extend the practices from within a small group to a whole school approach. This paper outlines the key approaches used.

What theories have supported the development of Nurturing Approaches?

Attachment theory[2] has become widely regarded as an important framework for understanding children's social and emotional development.   Attachment theory postulates that as part of the human condition we have an innate need for closeness to others. The conceptual rationale underpinning the nurture approach emphasises the importance of the relationship between the child and the adult in developing a sense of the autonomous self. The work of Bowlby (1969) is an evolutionary theory which pertains that attachment behaviour has ethological benefits. Normal infant behaviour is characterised by egocentrism which manifests in a disregard for the needs and feelings of others[3]. Children need to develop internal working models of consistent and predictable adults which subsequently influences the child's predictions of how they and significant others are expected to behave and interact. Boxall hypothesised that when children are appropriately nurtured and valued they progress from the early egocentric stage of development to a level of social competence that is required in the standard infant school classroom. This process is essential to healthy psychological development in general, since without such progress individuals will be impaired in their ability to understand and regulate their behaviour, form relationships, and communicate with others.

The relationships that are developed in nurture groups model the interactive process between child and primary care giver commensurate with the developmental level of the child. The adults in a nurturing environment provide opportunities to engage in conversation and model reciprocal behaviours and positive relationships. The process can be seen as having a vital role in forming the social and psychological foundations for learning as conceptualised from a sociocultural perspective[4]. Activities are appropriate to each child's developmental level; routines are predictable; and there are many opportunities for the consolidation of each new skill. According to Boxall through this process the child is able to develop an attachment to one or more key adults outside of the home, receive approval and experience positive interactions[5].

One of the messages of attachment theory which is of key importance to the Nurture Approach is that positive outcomes later on in life are dependent on attachments made in the early years and therefore it is important to ensure that children have the opportunity and are able to develop positive relationships with key adults. The learning undertaken in a Nurture Group recognises the importance of key attachment figures from the home being

[2] (Bowlby, 1969)
[3] (Cooper & Whitebread 2007)
[4] Vygotsky, 1987
[5] Boxall, 2002, as cited in Doyle 2004

involved in supporting their children's development at school and is supplemented with opportunities for parents and carers to take part in activities with their children at school.

Attachment difficulties can affect between 1% and 2.4% of the population and if left without intervention can present children and young people with lifelong barriers to learning and development that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people and future employment prospects. Nurture encompasses specific approaches that have produced effective results in assisting children and families overcome a wide range of barriers to the child's learning across the social, emotional and development.

Adapted summary of Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs

Self actualisation (morality, creativity, problem solving)

Esteem needs (confidence, achievement, respect)
Social needs (love, friendship, family)

Safety needs (security, resources, health)
Physiological needs (food, water, sleep)

Maslow's (1970) theory of self-actualisation is another theory which has contributed to the development of nurture groups and nurturing Approaches[6]. Maslow described a hierarchy of needs in which basic needs for food and warmth had to be met in order for higher order needs such as motivation for learning to develop. Nurture groups and nurturing establishments seek to meet the physical and psychological needs of the children first through activities such as snack and breakfast club and by providing spaces for them to feel safe and settled to learn in their environment before expecting them to progress onto higher order learning activities.

Modern schooling systems are based on many assumptions, one of which is that children will have had their basic needs met on coming to school and that they will be willing to trust and develop relationships with their teachers. For various reasons, neither of these assumptions necessarily holds true for all children. In order to have the capacity to develop a trusting relationship with the class teacher and other adults in the school children need to have an awareness of how relationships function and need to be sufficiently organised to listen to and follow instructions and routines[7]. Some children enter school without these

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[6] (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Kearney, 2005; Cooper, Arnold, and Boyd, 2001)
[7] (Boxall, 2000)

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capabilities and with internal working models that do not always represent adults as trustworthy and consistent figures. There are many reasons why children may not have these skills on entry to school, some of which can be linked to their early life experiences and both physical (for instance such as the case of a child who may have spent time in hospital away from key attachment figures) and emotional separation (for example a family dealing with domestic abuse or parental ill health) from people close to them in their early life The nurture approach suggests meeting each child at their developmental stage and using strategies and creating targets to help a child progress towards being comfortable in relating to and receiving instructions from others and working in groups, as is expected in a mainstream classroom.   In the nurture approach professionals understanding of the child is holistic and based their strengths and areas for development rather than on purely academic targets. There is also an awareness of the importance of the ecosystem[8] around the child in contributing to their development. In this way it fits with current government policy such as the Curriculum for Excellence[9] and Getting it Right for Every Child[10].

Children experiencing difficulties in their social, emotional and behavioural development can be described as requiring support or intervention across three broad areas. These can overlap (see Diagram 1 below).
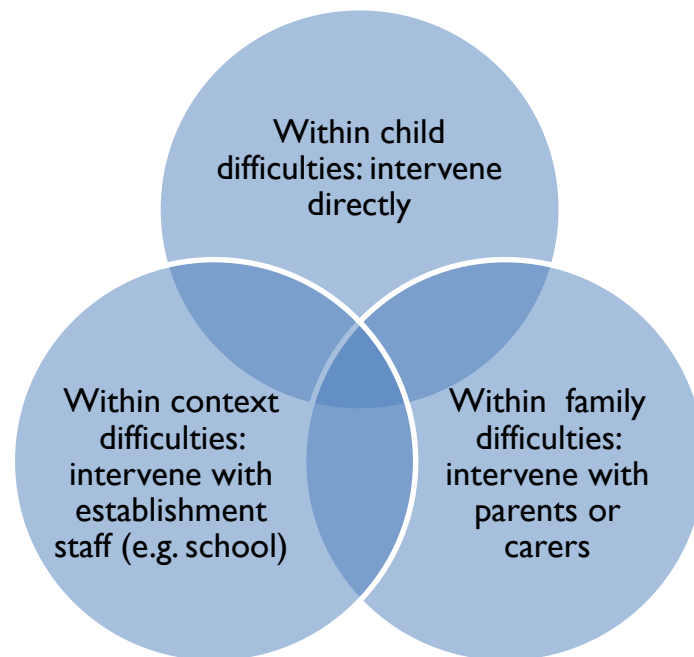
Diagram 1 – areas for intervention leading to successful outcomes for children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural development difficulties

Assessment within the Getting it Right for Every Child approach will help to identify the appropriate area for intervention for each child and their circumstances. Social and emotional difficulties in children do not occur in a vacuum, but have a highly dynamic relationship between the environment, the key people within it and their attitudes, values and behavioural responses.

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[8] Bronfenbrenner, 1977)
[9] Scottish Government, 2005
[10] Scottish Government, 2008

The Nurture approach is not simply about improving the social and emotional development of children. Its premise is that through better emotional regulation in the child it improves his or her cognitive functioning and ability to learn.

Summary of Key Points:

Theoretical underpinnings of a Nurturing Approach

- Nurture groups have been successfully evidenced to support children's learning and development
- Attachment theory can be a useful tool for explaining some of the difficulties children and young people may have with relating to others
- Children's basic requirements need to be met before they can learn
- Children's learning requires to be met at their developmental age and stage
- Children require a holistic assessment which the Getting it Right for Every Child approach is well suited to

Key theorists – Bowlby, Boxall, Vygotsky, Piaget, Maslow

The Nurturing School Process
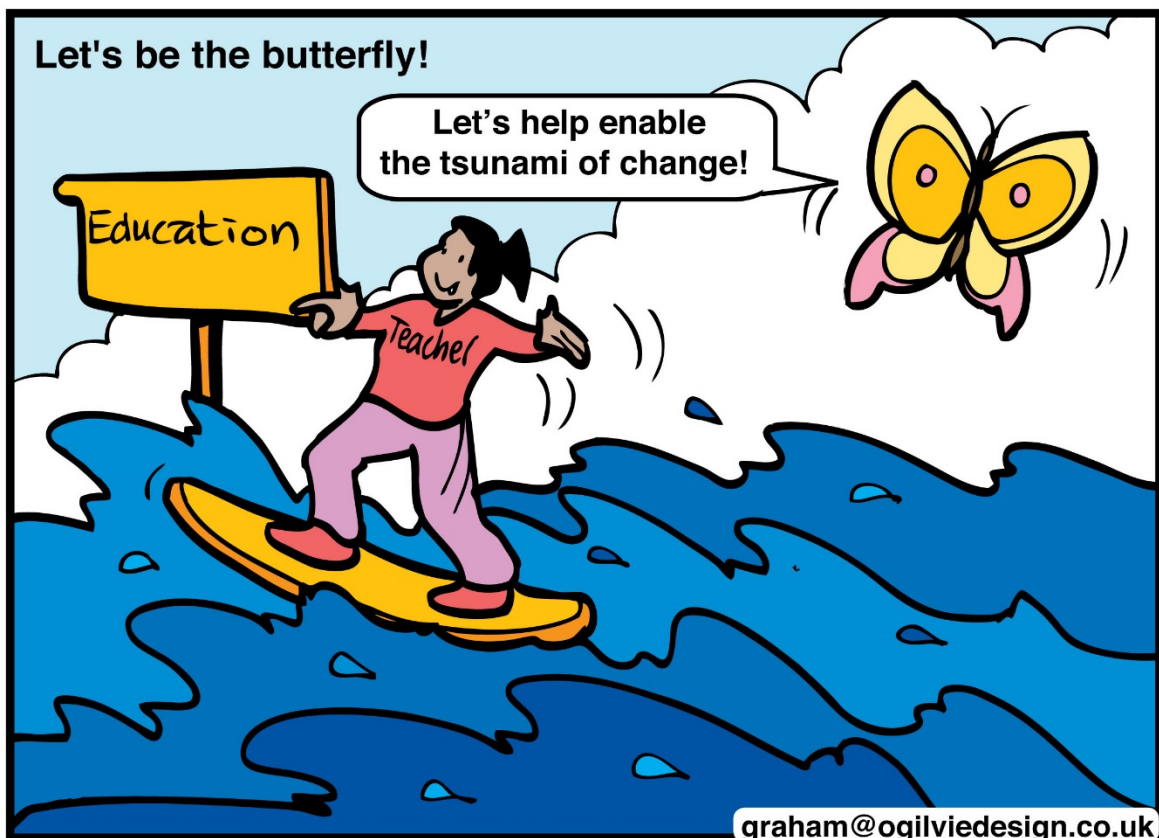
What is "a nurturing establishment"?

"A Nurturing School values people and seeks above all to understand and respect them as unique individuals. It puts the personal development of all its children, parents, staff, and governors, as the highest of its priorities. It recognises that for this development to be

authentic it must take place within the context of relationships in a family, a group, a community, and sees this to be integral to the educational process."[11]

The likely significance and benefits of using nurturing principles as a whole class or whole school approach has been highlighted by a number of authors[12]. There have been a number of examples of good practice where individual schools, which had started nurture groups, reported consequential benefits to whole school ethos and realised the benefit of employing nurturing principles at a whole school level (including our own Falkirk Evaluation). Recently there has also been a revival of interest in and increasing awareness of attachment theory[13] which has led to professionals seeking to translate attachment principles into the school setting. Nurturing approaches that were once, within some schools, confined to use within nurture groups can be used across the school with principles and practices being embedded into the classroom and the playground to the benefit all children.

Using nurturing approaches can help schools target support to those most vulnerable pupils but importantly the approach is beneficial to all children and staff. The ethos of nurture views children as individuals and enables plans for their learning to be tailored accordingly, not just based on academic outcomes but additionally taking account of social and emotional development targets. Nurturing Schools seek to involve parents in the school community and through sensitive attempts at parental engagement to promote children's development across the contexts of both school and home.

The Nurturing School is a relatively new concept therefore there is little formal published information on how schools can take forward whole school nurturing approaches. Somerset Council were the first to publish a school improvement framework to promote nurturing school practice which recommended evaluating the school's current position and then working collaboratively as a staff team to develop a nurture specific school improvement plan through the use of the Somerset Nurturing School Improvement Process Framework (2008). An extended evaluation document How nurturing is our school?[14] was subsequently developed in Glasgow as a tool to facilitate the dissemination of nurture principles throughout the whole school. It uses a format similar to How Good is our School (HGIOS) but instead focuses on self-evaluation through an attachment orientated framework based on nurturing principles. It was developed to help schools identify areas of development for Nurturing practice through the use of quality indicators in a self-evaluative framework.

Academic papers which discuss a whole establishment Nurturing Approach or Nurturing School have mainly emerged from schools with Nurture Groups within them and discuss disseminating the practices of the Nurture Group to the schools as a whole[15]. However incidental information indicates that whole school Nurturing Approach projects are taking place in a number of authorities across Scotland and being disseminated to schools who have never had nurture groups. Many authorities who have been long standing supporters of Nurture Groups are now seeking ways of facilitating the dissemination of nurture

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[11] *Lucas, 1999*

[12] *see, for example, Lucas, 1999; Colwell & O'Connor, 2003; Doyle, 2004*

[13] *Reynolds et al. 2009*

[14] *March and Kearney 2011, updated in 2014*

[15] *Lucas, 1999, Doyle 2003 & 2004*

principles throughout schools and early year's establishments that have never been host to a Nurture Group or Class.

The Nurture Principles

The Nurture Principles[16] are the core principles which those individuals following the approach base their practice on and are key to any Nurturing School or establishment.
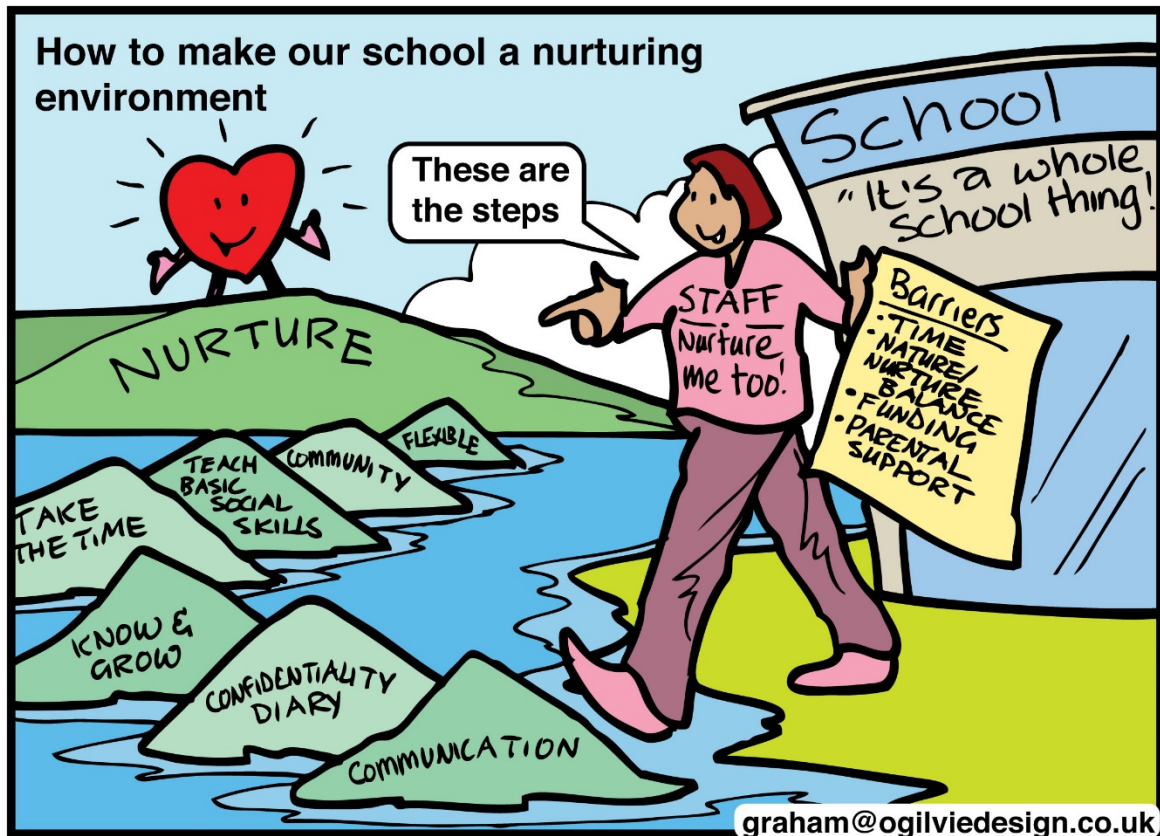
1. Children's learning is understood developmentally
   Independence develops through dependence. Staff responding to children at their emotional/developmental level enables them to move on.
2. The school offers a safe base
   Importance of structure and predictability with firm, clear boundaries and adults and children working together supportively.
3. The importance of nurture for the development of self-esteem
   Staff listening and responding to children in ways that shows they are valued and thought about or kept in mind.
4. The importance of transitions in children's lives
   Staff who acknowledge the feelings aroused by transitions and who understand that even small changes in routine (eg, a visitor, a supply teacher, going to lunch) can be overwhelming and unsettling for some children.
5. Language as a vital means of communication

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[16] From the Nurture Group Network, Lucas, Insley, and Buckland (2006).

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> Some children and adults in the school communtiy need to be helped to understand and to express their feelings and given opportunities for extended conversations.

6. All behaviour is communication
   > Children and adults use behaviour to communicate how they are feeling, sometimes when they don't have an opportunity to verbalise what they are saying or sometimes when they can't find the internal resources to translate their feelings into language.

Education Scotland[17] have identified a slightly different, overlapping set of principles which focus on good practice for the **implementation** of Nurture approaches:

1. Children's learning needs are to be understood developmentally.

2. Children have to be assessed. There are agreed selection criteria. Children remain part of their own class and school and spend time there on a daily basis.

3. The set-up is conducive to the replication of early experiences.

4. Staff work in a team. It is important to have a staff team of two at all times.

5. The room set-up has different areas and acts as a bridge between home and school.

6. Snack time is an essential part of this experience. Sharing round the table builds social skills and competencies.

7. Building emotional literacy is an essential focus within the group.

8. Skills are built formally and informally. It is essential to provide stimulating opportunities for play as a basis for the development of social skills as well as the usual curriculum."

Summary of Key Points:

Whole establishment approaches to Nurture have been evidenced to be successful and are becoming increasingly popular as a way of supporting children with social, emotional and behavioural needs in Scotland

Whole establishment approaches to Nurture involve carefully involving the whole staff team in creating a Nurturing Environment which will benefit all children

Schools undertaking a Nurture Approach should look to the Nurture Principles for guidance as these can be applied across establishments and do not relate to a purely Nurture group approach.

The principles of good practice should be adopted which includes assessment and careful consideration of the curriculum and intervention approaches within a team environment.

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[17] Education Scotland, Online 2015

Nurture – Evidence informed practice

Nurturing approaches can be used across all age ranges in education and have been used by different local authorities to support children at a variety of developmental stages (e.g. Glasgow Nurture Corner Pilot, West Lothian Secondary Nurture Bases). Whereas traditional nurture groups were usually used to support children in the early years of primary school a whole establishment nurturing approach more easily lends itself to being implemented across the years.

Evidence for the effectiveness of Nurture Group approaches is extensive; showing improvement in the social and emotional development of children. In a systematic review of Nurture Groups involving 13 studies, Hughes and Schlosser (2014) identified that children made significant improvement in their emotional development: "Out of the studies that conducted statistical analyses, all found significant improvements on at least some strands of the Boxall Profile". This was found across several variants of the small group intervention. There is far less evidence of the longer term impact, but where this does exist it suggests that either the group intervention was effective across some of the emotional development or the effectiveness is reduced due to insufficient intervention in the main casual factors such as the parent's care of, and attachment to, the child. Additionally there is evidence that schools offering a Nurture Group start to change their wider approach and improve their practices in mainstream classes to adopt the same principles. "Schools reported an improved ethos and an increased capacity to support children with social and emotional difficulties." Binnie and Allen (2008).

It has been an approach that is recommended by Education Scotland (2008 to current) and Ofsted (2011). In considering the impact of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools Education Scotland have recommended that the part-time variant is developed as this is found to be

more effective: "Those authorities which have piloted both full-time and part-time placements reported that part-time placement was more effective." (Education Scotland, 2009, p5).

Enfield Council had found the approach to be cost effective in reducing the need for placing children in special schools or units for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (see Balchin 2015).

The Nurture approach at whole school can consist of several methods:

- CARES – a communication framework to support Nurturing Practice
- Nurture Classes (small group every morning)
- Nurture Groups (small group once or twice per week)
- Nurture Spaces (nurture room timetabled for different groups or classes)
- Nurture Nooks (nurturing spaces created in mainstream classes or Nurseries.
- Targeted Assessment and intervention using the Nurture Approach tools in mainstream
- Nurture practices in mainstream classes, such as the social development curriculum (Universal)
- Relationships with parents

The Nurture Whole School approach is more than a series of methods. It involves, ethos and culture as well as practice development. The key features of a Nurturing School are also highly correlated with the key features of effective schools.

The Nurture approach is not simply about improving the social and emotional development of children. Its premise is that through better emotional regulation in the child it improves his or her cognitive functioning and ability to learn.

Nurture in the Primary School

Primary schools have been the main area of focus of most Nurturing School and Nurture Group interventions. Nurturing approaches lend themselves easily to a Primary School environment because of the consistency of staff and the opportunity to build strong relationships between children and key attachment figures. There is a strong research base indicating the positive impact of using Nurturing Approaches in primary school establishments[18]. This is particularly true of group work approaches where the evidence base is more robust. Nurture as a whole school approach is developing a growing body of evidence which Falkirk will contribute to.

A key feature is the identification of children who may benefit from a nurture approach, assessing in more detail their needs, designing an appropriate intervention using nurturing principles, whether in small group or in the mainstream class and evaluating the impact of this intervention. School staff need to have a good understanding of their context and make decision about how best to implement the intervention based on this.

The next two sections outline how Nurture approaches need to be adapted for other age groups.

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[18] Binnie & Allen 2008; Colley, 2009; Reynolds, MacKay, & Kearney 2009; Cooper & Tiknaz 2005

The Nurturing Approach in Early Years Establishments

Traditionally nurseries are considered to be very nurturing settings, however the focus of the nurture approach requires establishments to examine their practice from an attachment perspective which can be a direct contrast to the free flow pedagogy followed in many early years establishments.

Young children exposed to social and biological risk factors in the early years are at greater risk of not developing foundational competencies, placing them at future risk of poor school performance[19]. Early developmental delay tends to promote later developmental delay because the child arrives at each stage without the optimal resources to respond to the challenges of the next stage. A child's development score at just 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of educational outcomes at 26 years[20] suggesting that the early identification of social and emotional difficulties is crucial to optimal developmental outcomes.

In the early years the predominant curricular approach in the UK is one that stipulates the child at the centre of the curriculum. This free- flow child-centred curriculum assumes that a child is able to act independently without experiencing great amounts of anxiety, easily establish relationships with peers and adults, and is an active constructor of his/her own knowledge[21]. These are images of a child that has developed secure attachments with his or her caregivers. The current dominant child-centred early childhood curriculum appears to be designed primarily for children with histories of secure attachments. By not adapting to children's individual needs it might perpetuate attachment insecurities in those children who require a higher level of emotional support.

Whilst there has been less of a focus on Nurture in early years' establishments as these establishments have always traditionally considered themselves to be Nurturing environments there has been a recent move to considering how Nurturing Approaches may be implemented in these settings. Glasgow city council has recently been supporting a project to establish Nurture Corners (like nurture groups but in early years establishments) and promote nurturing approaches across early years establishments. Promoting attachment training and examining the nursery from an attachment perspective for example looking at the role of Key People and group work within the nursery was felt to be successful in the Glasgow pilot and impacted on staff practice and their understanding of the individual needs of children with social, emotional and behavioural needs[22].

Nurture in the secondary school

Recently there has been a focus in a number of authorities in supporting children from a nurturing perspective in secondary schools. In some local authorities, such as West Lothian and Glasgow, secondary school part-time nurture groups have been piloted and have been positively evaluated. Additionally local authorities such as Fife have piloted whole school secondary nurturing approaches.

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[19] Sameroff & Fiese, 2000
[20] Allen, 2011
[21] Cortazar & Herreros 2010
[22] Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2014

Children's brains have another developmental sprint during adolescence so this can also be an important time for supporting children to develop their capacity to experience meaningful relationships. In order to become an independent adult the young person needs to separate from their early attachment figures, accomplished by becoming less dependent on their families and increasingly associating with their peer group[23]. Hence adolescents are dealing with internal conflicting states of mind where their child and their adult personas co-exist, and external social expectations and pressures for educational attainment complicate matters further and increase the emotional chaos experienced by many (Cooke et al., 2008). With their emphasis on emotional development, a nurturing environment supports young people with these difficulties.

In previous research Cooke[24]argue that the sophisticated characteristics of empathy and a sense of responsibility may be absent in adolescents who have delayed social and emotional development due to attachment difficulties. Cooper[25] and colleagues have reported that securely attached young people have less likelihood of developing suicidal behaviour, anxiety disorders, antisocial behaviour and substance abuse. Given the underpinning role attachment theory plays, there appears to be justification for using nurturing interventions to target attachment issues in adolescence.

The field of neuroscience provides further support for having nurturing secondary school interventions and environments which can be used to address attachment issues. Massive brain development and reorganisation occurs in adolescence with a major process of pruning and myelination to help the brain become more efficient. This enables the specialisation and honing of specific skills, accompanied by huge leaps in cognitive skills, working memory, and the ability to manage competing information[26]. Therefore brain plasticity, the capacity for change, is at its height not only during the first three years but also during adolescence, providing an additional 'window of opportunity' in which to intervene to support adolescents with attachment type difficulties[27].

Summary of Key Points:

Nurturing Approaches can be found and have been positively evaluated in the early years sector, primary schools and secondary schools

As the Nurturing Approach looks at children's learning and behaviour from a developmental point of view it is applicable across all ages and stages of a child's life

Nurture is particular important over transition periods and Nurturing Establishments are aware of this and provide support over this challenging period for young people

Although early years establishments are typically Nurturing their pedagogical approach does not always support the needs of children with attachment related needs. The research regarding Nurture Corners in Glasgow City Council provides some examples of ways in which a Nurture Approach can be implemented in an Early Years Setting.

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[23] *Music, 2011*

[24] *Cooke et al., 2008*

[25] Cooper, Shaver and Collins (1998)

[26] Music, 2011

[27] *Cooke et al., 2008*

Primary Schools have been the main focus of Nurture Group and Nurturing Schools interventions. Falkirk have run a Nurture Group pilot in five local primary schools. The focus is now on developing whole school Nurturing Approaches as the research evidence suggests that this best meets the needs of all vulnerable young people.

Two secondary schools in Falkirk have been running their own Nurture bases. These have had a positive impact on young people and can provide examples of good practice for other interested schools in the authority.

Getting it Right for Ever Child – Mobilising the help of others to create a nurturing school
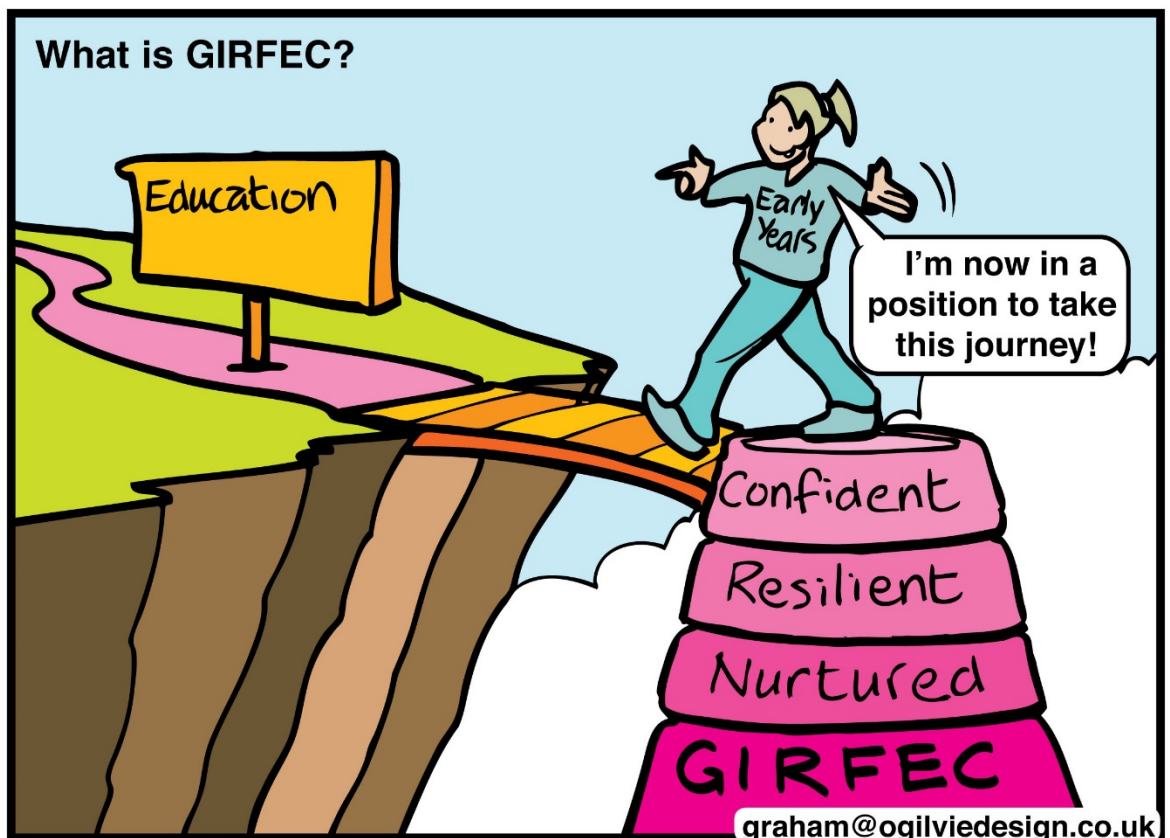
Getting it Right for Every Child is now at the core of thinking in every educational establishment. Getting it right for every child means working at the universal level to support all children within schools which is where a Nurturing Approach fits as a Nurturing Approach is about early intervention, prevention and building capacity in all staff and children. At the heart of the approach is the concept of Early Intervention which means providing support and the least obtrusive manner at the earliest point in the child's life. When this is achieved at a universal level such as through a nurturing approach children are not singled out or stigmatised. Children in Scottish schools all now follow the Curriculum for Excellence which also recognises the role of cross curricular development and the holistic nature of child development alongside the importance of health and wellbeing in a Scottish curriculum.

Recent policy and legislation has highlighted the importance of working collaboratively with other professionals to ensure the best outcomes for children. There are many professionals who link with schools who could be in a good place to offer advice or training to the school

on how best to meet children needs from a Nurturing perspective. Embedding the *GIRFEC* approach into local practice means critically examining procedures and practices across all agencies working with children and reviewing where they fit with the principles, values and core components as set out in the national guide and practice model. It also means working with some of the great resources we have within Falkirk such as family support workers as partners in supporting parents and vulnerable families. Within Falkirk there is a strong network of partners who work together to promote positive outcomes for children in school and being a Nurturing School means recognising their contribution and importantly seeking feedback from each member of a child's team to support planning around the family and child.

Summary of Key Points

Nurturing Schools should be following local authority guidance on Getting it Right for Every Child and Team Around the Child Processes

Sharing information with other professionals and meeting children's needs from an ecological and systemic approach is key to a successful Nurturing School

Parents/carers are central to the Nurture Approach and need to be included in any planning that takes place for a child

A plan, do, review approach with clear social and emotional targets best meets the needs of a child who requires Nurture

As part of the GIRFEC processes and a Nurture Approach the view of the child or young person is paramount. They should be represented in the form they feel most comfortable at every meeting and should be aware of and involved in Team Around the Child planning processes.
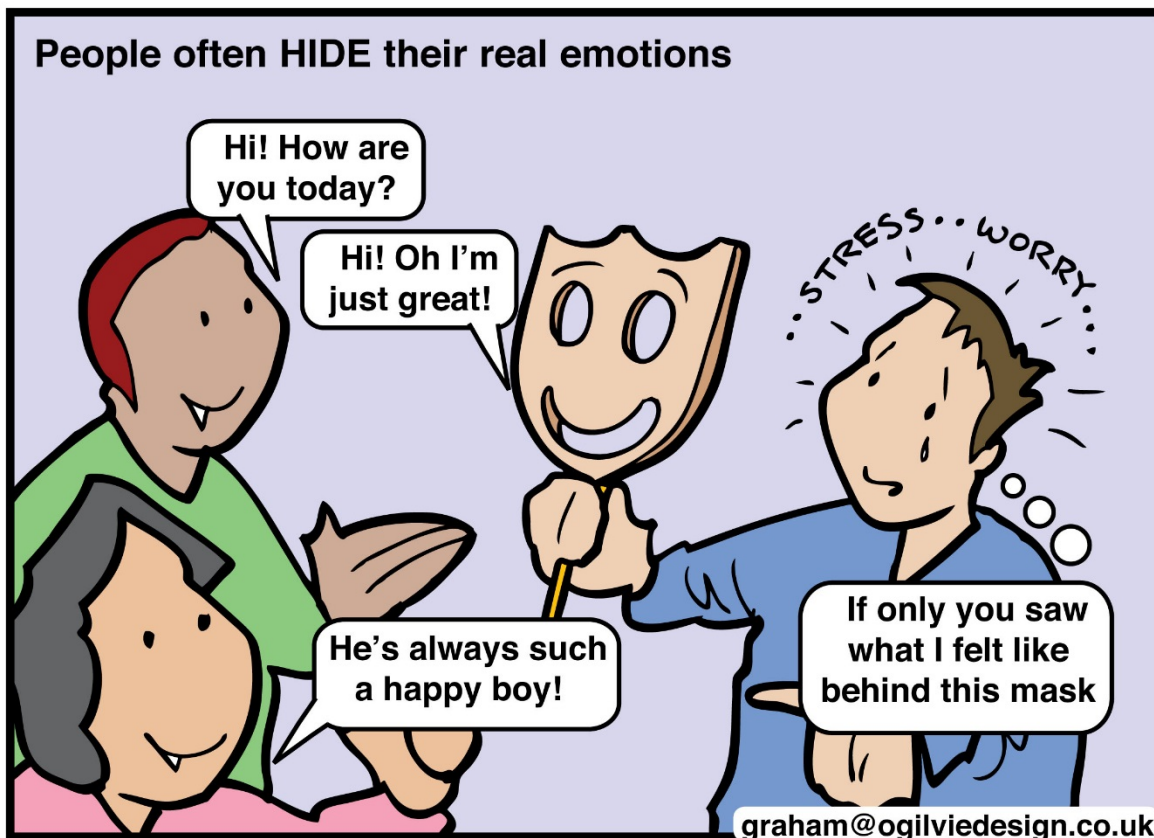
Nurturing Each Other

Forming a Nurture Team

"It's all about bringing a team together who complement and support each other - we wanted people in the group who could inspire and motivate us."

As part of the Nurturing Schools pilot each establishment is tasked with establishing a Nurture Team of key staff who are given different roles in taking forwards the Nurturing School initiative. These individuals should be from different areas of the school and should be keen to volunteer to take part in Nurture Team meetings. The core group will be the members of staff with the main responsibility for taking the Nurturing Approach forwards in the school and mobilising others within the school.

There are many important considerations when forming the Nurture Team

- Will volunteer staff be able to commit time to participating in the Nurture Team?
- Is it the 'right' mix of staff who will be supportive and not critical of each other?
- Is there a management representative on the core group or who will link with the core group?
- Do staff of the Nurture Team have a willingness to take on CPD as part of the Nurture Approach?

- Are staff on the Nurture Team sufficiently motivated and able to act as agents of change within the school?
- Do staff understand how the project will be evaluated?

A Nurturing School is a school in which staff make time for each other and take care of each other. Teacher and staff perceptions of nurturing approaches and Nurture groups have been found to be central to their successful implementation and development and although a Nurturing Approach requires a great commitment from staff it can also reap great benefits. Sanders (2007) found that head teachers in the three schools where nurture groups had developed as a reactive intervention reported that staff absenteeism and turnover had greatly reduced since the introduction of the nurture groups. In addition teachers commented they were able to access more support; share strategies with nurture class teachers and felt more empowered to help all children to extend their social and emotional development.

Positive relationships within and amongst the staff team are key to a Nurturing Establishment as staff understand that they need to take care of and support each other, in order to effectively take care of and support the children in their school.

The contribution of teachers to a Nurturing School

Teachers are pivotal in facilitating any change made in their establishment. As Gray at al. in 1999 explain, "Teachers are probably the most important resource of all and what is needed is a way of unlocking teachers' interest in changing their performance"[28]. Empowering teachers through distributed leadership approaches is also one of the main

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[28] Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, Wilcox, Farrell and Jesson, 1999, p. 151

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recommendations of the Curriculum for Excellence which acknowledges the power of harnessing the enthusiasm of teachers and empowering them to take on projects within their establishment. Teachers have the best relationships and knowledge of children and this knowledge can be capitalised on within a Nurturing school. Key to the nurture approach is staff development, with an emphasis on evidence-based practice involving teachers learning by collaboratively observing and reflecting on their practice, and through self-identified CPD which has been highlighted as central to facilitating school improvement[29] and has been practiced in other authorities through encouraging teachers to take on action research projects within their school to be able to evidence and measure the effectiveness of their practice themselves.

Research including that of Boorn and colleagues (2010) suggest that teachers need to feel empowered in managing challenging behaviours, and have an awareness of the significant contributions they make in enhancing protective factors in the children they support. Empowering teachers to make these choices means that the teacher's role is not just about curriculum delivery or managing the classroom environment but also one that takes account of the positive promotion of children's personal growth and development. Training and good quality CPD is central to a Nurturing School and it is important for all staff to have an understanding of the developmental processes underlying good educational progress and the importance of creating a positive school and classroom ethos[30]. Opportunities for staff peer support groups are important within a Nurturing School to look at solution focussed ways of supporting children with social and emotional difficulties and to offer opportunities for containment for staff who are regularly faced with challenging behaviours.

Summary of Key Points

Distributed leadership is key to a Nurturing Approach

All teaching staff need to be aware of the importance of Nurturing Approaches and empowered to support and manage attachment related behaviours in the class

Support for learning staff, janitorial staff and school lunch staff also have a key role to play in Nurturing children

CDP for all establishment staff is key to ensuring the Nurturing ethos is shared amongst all school staff

A Nurturing school means staff nurturing each other as well as the children and young people. Time should be set aside for staff for containment and support of the members of staff working with particularly challenging and or vulnerable young people.

A Nurturing school has an ethos where all staff have positive relationships and make time to cultivate these

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[29] MacGilchrist et al., 2004
[30] Boorn et al., 2010

Action planning
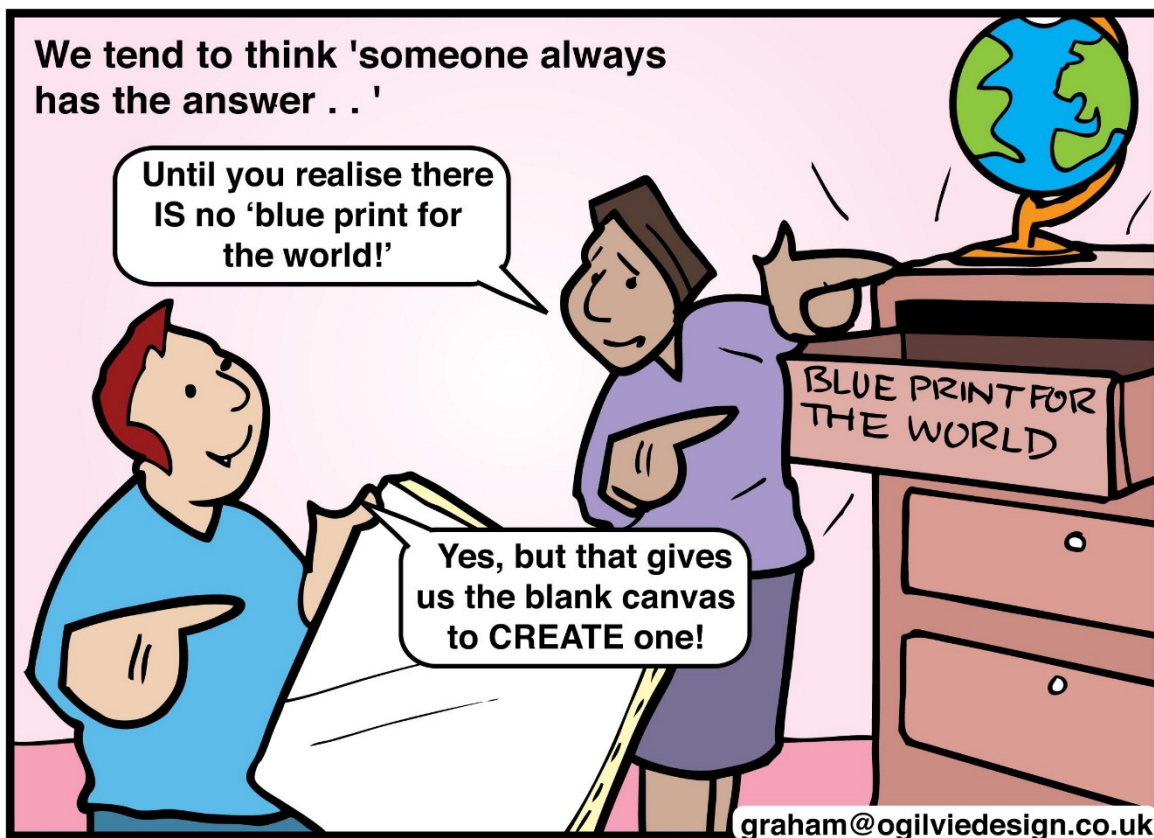
Identifying areas for development – creating an action plan

Once establishments have undertaken level one training they are ready to create an action plan for their establishment. Suggestions for specified areas for development within the nurturing school include: the curriculum; policy; environment; school community and relationships. Please note that these five areas of development are not exclusive and may be supplemented by individual schools according to the outcomes of the school needs analysis. Likewise schools may feel that that some areas mentioned above may not be potential areas of development for the school due to a variety of contextual factors.

As part of the action plan each school should try to plan long term and short term development targets. The expectation is that the Nurture Team re-assess these targets at regular Nurture Team meetings and then decide whether the targets have been met and move onto new targets or to seek new ways of meeting the unmet target. Your link educational psychologist can help with the development of an action plan and reviewing of the targets.

Policy

School policies reflect the values of the school community and therefore it is important to re-examine current school policy to decide if it fits with the nurturing school approach. If policies are written in collaboration with all stakeholders, including pupils, parents and staff they are more likely to reflect the view of the whole school community and it may be more likely that everyone within the school works to uphold these policies. All policies need on-going monitoring, review and amendment. If a discussion takes place around a policy – be it a staff group, parent group, class circle time, etc. – the summary of the discussion can be dated and gathered as evidence towards the school commitment to the nurturing approach. Policies should support the school's vision and ethos, whilst reflecting current national guidance and statutory obligations where applicable.

Curriculum

The Curriculum for Excellence has provided an opportunity and challenge for teachers to use their skills across the curriculum. School staff have a range of strengths and will have had a variety of differential learning and CPD experiences so can learn a lot from each other. If pupils are provided with opportunities to apply and consolidate knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in a wide range of meaningful and relevant contexts, they become holistically involved in their learning. It is the curriculum and the manner in which it

is differentiated that provides the context within which learning relationships are formed. This has implications for those pupils who do not have the skills to access the curriculum as it has traditionally been delivered. Nurturing establishments seek to develop the curriculum to meet pupils needs on an individual basis and to target social, emotional and behavioural learning needs as well as traditional academic targets. The focus of a Nurturing School is to prepare children for life outside the school environment including how to form positive relationships with others.

Environment

The environment is of key importance in the nurturing approach. The provision of a calm, yet stimulating and welcoming environment is critical to effective learning and is thus an area of tremendous significance, though one that is often overlooked. Wider aspects of safety in terms of emotional and physical wellbeing are paramount and include the provision of a range of differentiated, well-ordered, un-crowded spaces and "nooks" for children to retreat to when they need a safe space.

Community

Evidence from previous nurture research suggest that the role of parents, carers and the community as partners is crucial in promoting positive outcomes as part of nurturing approach. GIRFEC requires schools to actively encourage multi-agency collaboration and to build a multi-agency 'team around the child'. The skills of various professionals could be utilised to promote and support the nurturing approach, for example through mobilising staff through multi-agency planning meetings within schools and inviting partner agencies to sit on or visit as a guest nurture team planning meetings or contribute towards the action plan. School level, parental and community participation can be actively (and creatively) sought and cultivated as part of a nurture approach. This requires a good deal of planning but can promote positive outcomes for the school and all those who are part of its community.

Relationships

Good relationships are the most important component in any school. The nurturing approach emphasises the importance of great relationships and communication within the establishment. Good relationships take time and effort to create and maintain. As part of a nurturing approach there is a greater awareness of the need to value and involve each member of staff in the school community. For nurturing schools to have the best outcomes it is essential for them to include all school staff including dining hall staff and transport staff in information about the project as these are the staff that many children encounter at the times they are most vulnerable e.g. break time and lunchtime. All staff in a Nurturing school should have an awareness of attachment theory and its potential impact on their practice and the strategies they should be using to support children with social, emotional and behavioural needs. This awareness and understanding of children can enhance all relationships within an establishment.

Summary of key points

Relationships; policy; the environment; community and the curriculum are all essential aspects of a nurturing approach.

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Mobilising the children
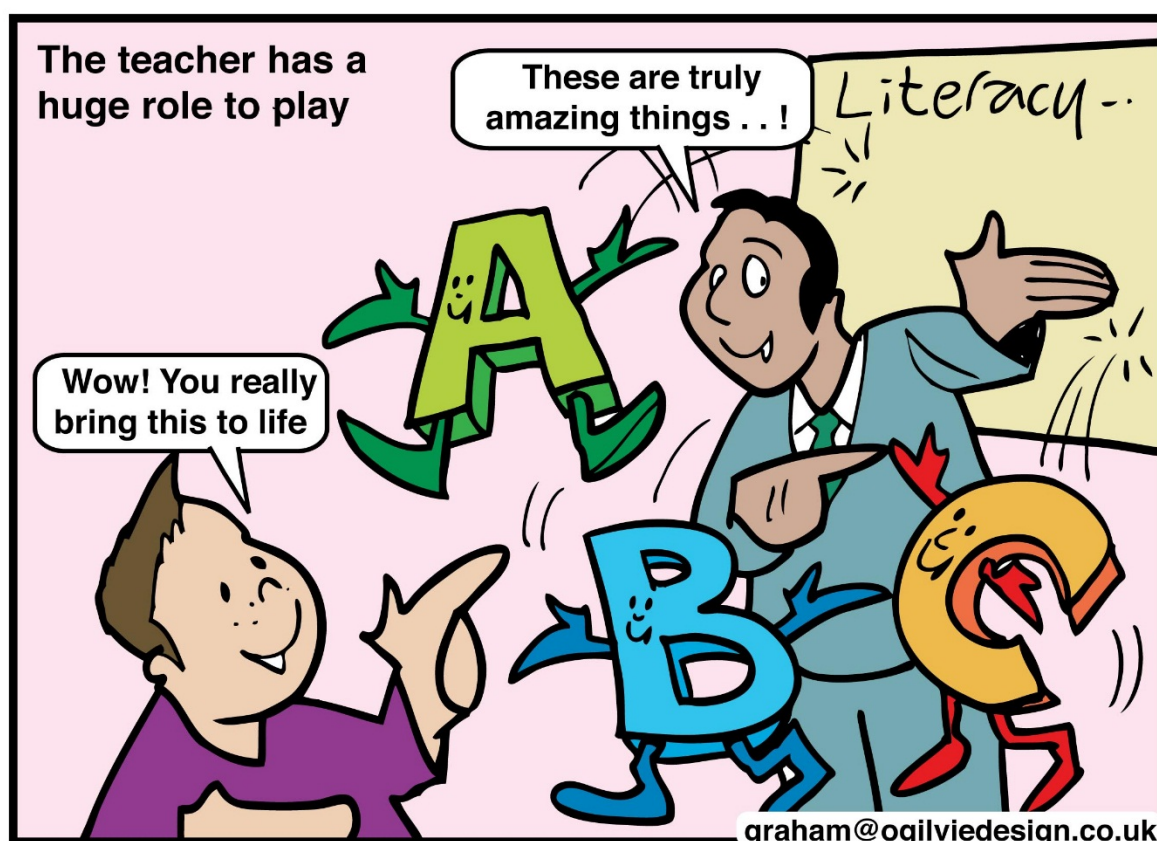
The role of young people in a Nurturing School

An important aspect of a Nurturing School is mobilising children to make a contribution to their school community and to have ownership of their school. In general in the Scottish school system children are viewed as guests in the teachers classroom and although they may have work on the wall, much responsibility for the decoration of classrooms and schools spaces is taken on by adults. Good practice such as children's councils which have meaningful engagement with the children to take forwards their suggestions for the school are an important element of a nurturing school.

The role of children in the Scottish schooling system contrasts somewhat to that of countries such as Japan in which children remain in one classroom the whole time (both in primary and secondary) and it is the teachers who rotate around the school to meet the needs of the children. In Japanese schools there are many instances where children are encouraged to have control of their classroom environment such as decorating the classroom with their homeroom teacher and taking responsibility for cleaning the classroom daily. Unlike the UK they do not have cleaners in the majority of Japanese schools; instead it is the children who are asked to take on different roles in cleaning the classroom and allocated 30 minutes at the end of the day to do this, so fostering the sense of community in both the classroom and the school. In addition children are expected to contribute to amongst other events a cultural day once a year where activities or performances from school clubs and examples of interesting classroom work and games are displayed. The children in the school are expected to organise this day and also other days such as litter picking days in the community as part of their curriculum to show they are effective

contributors. These events are child-led with minimal intervention from teachers and great causes for celebration in the school calendar.

This is a good example of how expectations of children's behaviour and contribution to the school can vary between different cultures. Taking on some aspects of a more collectivist approach to classroom dynamics and classroom management could be important in enhancing relationships in the nurturing classroom.

Being involved in their school also means that children become leaders of their own learning and are asked to set targets and to evaluate their own progress towards the targets they have set. Children experience increased motivation for learning as a result of their increased experience of success. This enables them to develop a better disposition to learn, improving their motivation and concentration. By working towards targets they have set children can see and feel motivated by their progress. In a Nurturing school children's skills in literacy, numeracy and health and well-being are developed and reinforced by the range of contextualised activities. These reflect the more natural approaches to learning found in the home and can also be created by the children. Children learn through play and through taking part in social development activities which facilitate their skills in turn taking.

As part of a Nurturing approach children are encouraged to take responsibility for their social and emotional wellbeing by naming their emotions and finding someone to talk to or some space they can feel secure in when something goes wrong. In this way they are building up resilience to the problems in their lives by identifying and naming them or just through finding their individual coping strategies within their context. Children learn to be more effective at communicating their opinion through being valued and challenged. They learn to be responsible and feel valued by taking on responsibilities.   When children are asked to take on jobs or responsibilities it means that people trust them and this can foster both self-esteem and independence skills. Caring for other younger peers, plants or school pets or taking on responsibilities in the school for their environment can build on social interaction skills that will be valuable as adults.

Gathering research evidence from children

To ensure that children's views regarding a Nurturing School are effectively collated research could be undertaken in your establishment to create a baseline of where the school is and the perceived needs and wants of the children in the school community. For this purpose a questionnaire could be designed to allow for collection of quantitative data or a focus group could be hosted in the school.   Other ways to gather children's opinions are through questionnaires or children's council representation at some of the Nurture Team meetings or through ideas such as Talking Mats or the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss 2001) which collects information based on photographs or pictorial cues of what is important to children. Research with children is time consuming but allows for a collective representation of the view of the child and helps to mobilise children to understand that they have the ability and a responsibility for making changes in their school community.

The importance of peer relationships

Peer relationships are central to any Nurturing school. Schools are familiar with many ways of supporting peer relationships and mediating peer disagreements as these are a central part of any school day! Within a Nurturing school different elements of peer relationships

could be examined and supported depending on the needs of the individual school and what is already in place   Some examples of this are:

Buddying - at times of transition for example before and after transition to a different class in the school having the older pupils talk to the young pupils and mentor them (as transition is of key importance); having an older mentor buddy to support younger children with their homework within school time is necessary (beneficial to both children because of scaffolding and consolidation skills in the older child); appointing a special buddy to anyone new to the school; appointing buddies for children who are vulnerable and perhaps need a bit of support and someone to talk to in the playground.

Peer playground monitors – playground monitors can be used to facilitate relationships and supervise conflicts in the playground. Trained older members of the school could be used to give advice and provide restorative type reflection sessions when something has gone wrong in the playground.

Paired reading – paired reading has been proven as a cost and time effective reading intervention (Topping et al 2000) and has time and again been named as effective in promoting positive literacy outcomes for both children in the pair. This type of intervention can also be beneficial in terms of social and emotional support for some children who may not be as responsive to an appointed peer buddy as the focus is on the task of reading and off the relationship.

Homework pairings – pairing children who have difficulty doing their homework with another child who will be able to help them and scaffold their learning is an effective way of ensuring homework gets done if for some reason it is not getting done at home.

Children's Meetings

In a culture that recognises the importance of good information sharing practice there are now many meetings about children. Sometimes children are informed and consulted about meetings and sometimes they are not. Some children may find it difficult to understand why staff are meeting about them but in a Nurturing school communication regarding meetings and involving children in their planning in a sustained and meaningful way is imperative. This may be done through pictorial or photographic representation if a child does not want or if it felt it would be detrimental to the child to attend the meeting. Everything should be done on the basis of the individual child's needs. Solution focussed meetings are an important way of engaging children in meetings. In these kind of meetings children's strengths are named and listed and the child can take away an age appropriate list of strengths – "nice things people have said about them" and challenges and goals for themselves. Having this visual reminder of what was discussed at a meeting is often a positive experience for the child and can help them in their understanding of the purpose of the meeting.

All children will feel differently about attending planning meetings. Introducing a child to what a meeting will look like by introducing them to the concept through a video for example is a good idea to prepare them for what they may expect. On the Education Scotland Journey to Excellence website there are various examples of good children's meetings. Children's views can also be collected creatively through tools such as Person Centred Planning. Your Educational Psychologist should be able to support you with materials and consultation that may help you with this.

Group work

Preventative group work looking at topics such as emotional literacy and positive psychology approaches can be useful as part of the Nurturing School in supporting children to develop emotional literacy capacities and social skills without isolating them from their peers. Group work at times of transition may be particularly beneficial to some children as part of a nurturing approach and group work can also help to facilitate relationships with key adults in the school.

The importance of transition in children's lives

The transition from primary to secondary school is considered to be a challenging process for all pupils, but particularly difficult for those with social and emotional difficulties (Parsons, 2012). Nurture groups are based upon six key principles, which focus upon the need to understand and address pupil needs developmentally and the importance of relationships and communication. The final principle states that: *"Transitions are significant in the lives of children"* (*Nurture Group Network*) and perhaps one of the most significant transitions during a child's school career is the move from primary to secondary school at age eleven (Sirsch, 2003). This finding has implications for Nurture Schools in that there should be a strong focus on preparing children for change not only between classes but particularly in p7 and perhaps in p6 on ensuring that children are ready for secondary school. A number of examples of good practice have been identified in this area such as:

- Familiarising children with staff and having pictures when there is going to be a change of staff
- Celebrating at times of transition – providing opportunities to say goodbye
- Enhanced transition processes between different classrooms and primary and secondary schools which allow children to become familiar with the new environment before their move
- Allowing opportunities prior to a move for children to ask questions of their new teacher or meet with peers who have just finished the year grouping they are about to move into

Summary of key points

The child should be at the centre of any nurturing school

Children/young peoples opinions could be sought through guest attendance at nurture team meetings

Action research with children is an important aspect of any Nurturing school

Transitions are key to children as part of a nurturing school

The contribution of children and young people as part of the Team Around the Child Process should be examined and supported through the nurturing establishment approach

Planned opportunities for developing positive peer relationships are essential in any nurturing establishment across all age ranges of children

The role of parents and carers in a Nurturing Approach
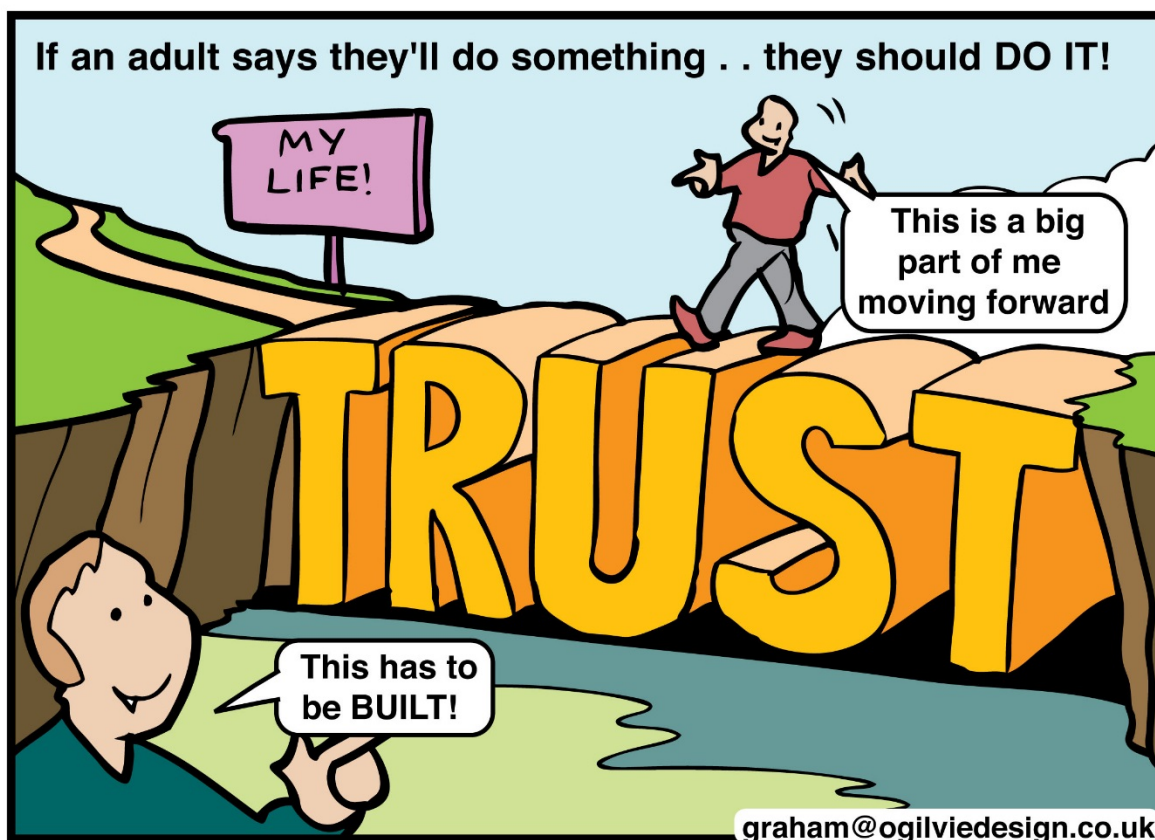
The involvement of parents is an essential feature of a Nurturing School[31]. In a Nurturing School there will usually be some form of home- school contract which includes support for the school ethos and rules and curricular requirements such as attendance, punctuality and homework (Lucas 1999). As Nurturing Schools focus on developing good attachments in the school they could also seek to have a role in enhancing the relationships between the adult carer and the child in order to break the negative feedback cycles which sometimes occurs for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs[32].

HMIe (2011) found that in best practice, parents and carers were centrally involved in the schools nurture delivery and as part of this delivery they were helped to support their child's learning at home. Examples of good practice in Nurturing Schools show that when parents are engaged sensitively they can become a part of the schools community and make an important contribution to improved outcomes for their child. The potential capacity to utilise parental involvement within a nurturing in school is huge. Carefully planned involvement in a Nurture schools project could empower parents and increase their awareness of the importance of strategies for meeting their child's social and emotional needs and could utilise the parental body of a school as a team to help support the school.

Suggestions for supporting parents in schools have included creating a parents room where they can feel at home which can be used to host meetings or parent coffee mornings and appointing a parental committee to the school to organise days out. In addition parent's

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[31] HMIe, 2011
[32] Sanders, 2007

skills can be utilised through the use of parents taking part in the running of school clubs or in curricular activities such as baking and by linking with the community to provide children with real life examples of people who have used their skills in for example, baking to develop a business. In some Nurturing Schools the last Friday of a month has been used to invite parents into the classroom for the last section of the day to learn with their children and "Parents Play" groups have been implemented after school in which parents had a chance to take part in structured and unstructured play activities with their child with support from a member of the school Nurture Team and family support worker.

Identifying areas for development

In order to work effectively with parents it is important to do a needs analysis as all establishments will have different relationships with their school community and will already be involved at different levels with engaging with parents. As part of a Nurturing Approach it is important to seek further opportunities for engagement through creative practice such as:

- Through soft finish with parents being invited into the classroom at the end of the day which helps break down home school barriers
- Health and wellbeing programmes and days with parents
- Parent games days/afternoons
- Creating environments parents can use in school
- Engaging with parents as classroom or school volunteers particularly if they have a skill or are undertaking a college course
- Utilising parental skill through the curriculum such as through a cooking class
- Helping parents to access training in areas of interest for example on attachment theory or the use of praise
- Inviting a parent into school for one on one time playing games or doing some work with their child and a member of school staff as a reward for a child or to facilitate the development of relationships if necessary
- Mobilising parental helpers to contribute to the school for example through teaching cooking skills or coaching a sports team
- Facilitating the organisation of parent/child days out such as "day out for dads" to build relationships with the school parent group

Summary of key points

Parents and carers are an essential part of a nurturing establishment

Creative approaches to engaging with parents allow for the development of positive relationships between home and school which in turn can affect outcomes for children and young people

Parents do not always have positive experience of school systems. They need to be "nurtured" as much as the children and young people!

The role of a "Key Person/Adult"
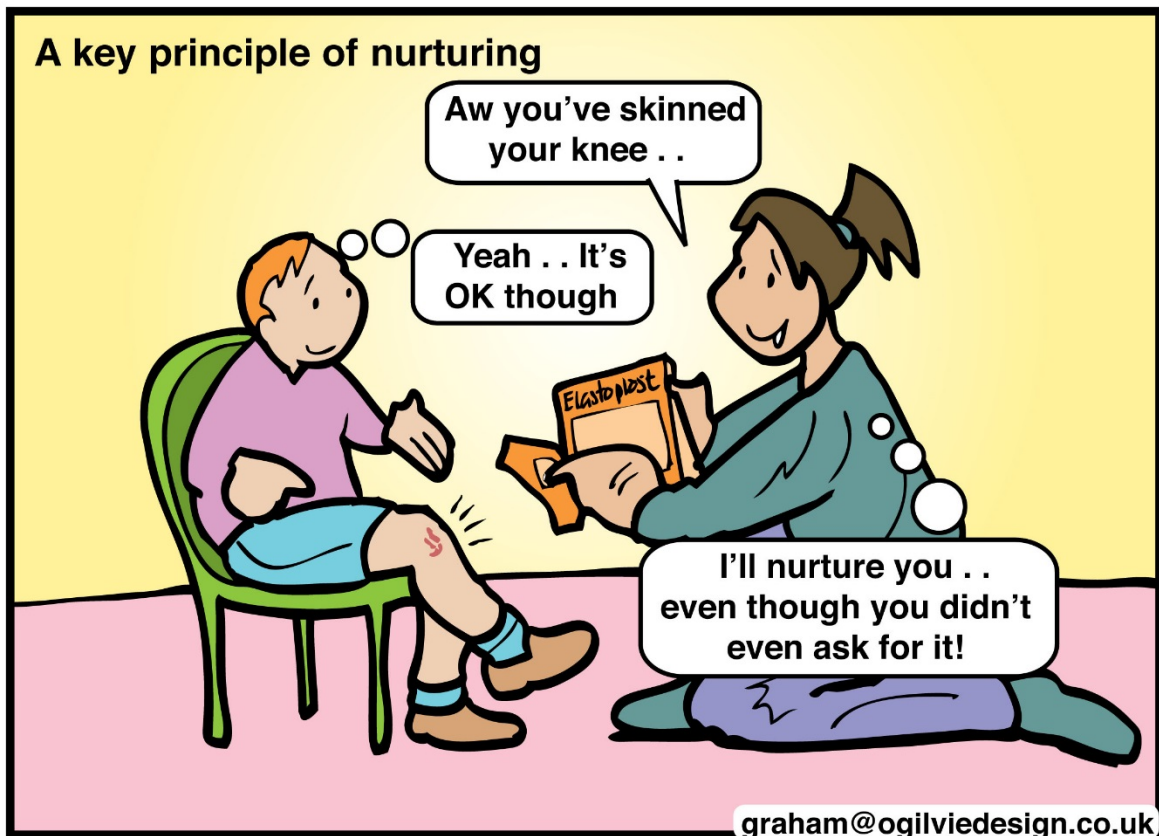
Within a Nurturing School good relationships are central to the health and wellbeing of all individuals. There should also be an awareness in schools of the significance of allocating a "key person" to a young person or child who seems to have difficulty forming relationships within school and the legitimacy of this role.

School support staff can have a place in offering relational interventions. Teaching assistants trained up to work as Key Adults to children, as part of a whole school Nurturing Approach can make a significant difference to pupils with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties (Bomber & Hughes, 2013). Teaching staff and support assistants will need to feel confident in the role they can have in providing a relational approach as opposed to the more traditional behaviourist approach and the likely challenges and benefits of using this approach. Resilient youth have been studied by Sroufe and colleagues (2005) who found that in every history of the resilient young adults they interviewed, who had overcome many personal difficulties the particularly resilient young people were able to identify at least one significant relationship with an adult, and this adult was central in supporting the development of resilience in the young person. Research now tells us that good relationships influence the positive development of both the structure and function of areas of the brain associated with social-emotional learning. A good relationship can help to provide the safe base that children and young people need in order to develop and can provide a safe haven to which the pupil can return to from time to time in order to be able to go off and explore their world, safe in the knowledge that there is someone within school who is holding them in their heart and mind. Teachers may find it difficult to do this as their responsibility is to their class as a whole. Support for learning or classroom assistants or

management staff could instead be allocated this role of key importance even if it only means that they are able to meet to briefly check in with the child a couple of times a day.

For children with disrupted attachment histories or early relational trauma the provision of an attachment figure in school, in addition to the primary attachment figure at home can make all the difference. These relationships cannot be expected to develop instantaneously; it will take time for trust to develop. Staff within a school are likely to get to know a child incrementally over time. School staff are in a crucial position to be able to develop relationships with young people who spend most of their waking hours at school. Therefore school staff as opposed to external agencies are ultimately the people who can be most important in providing emotional security and facilitating change in children.

Some ideas for roles of the key person

- Checking in with the young person every morning, finding out about what they did the night before
- Sharing any identified difficulties with other staff – identifying lines of communication
- Getting to know the things that motivate the young person
- Providing non contingent time for 10 minutes a day just to be with the young person
- Asking for and noting down the positive aspects of the young person's day at the end of each day, keeping a record of these
- Asking the young person to discuss what they are looking forwards to the next day/at the weekend/in their class
- Celebrating the successes of the young person with them and other staff
- Preparing young people and children for transitions between classes/between activities and sometimes before they go home

Support for the key people

Nurturing Schools take into account the emotional challenge it is being a Key Person for a vulnerable young person. They recognise and give time for formal support/training and time for communication between individuals undertaking a Key Person Role within the school and understand the challenges that this role brings.

Summary of key points

"Key People" are essential in nurturing establishments

Having a named key person role will allow for the development of positive relationships

Key people need to be supported in their role and offered, training and containment and discussion opportunities

A legitimate role of the key person is spending time with the young person for example "claiming" them in the morning and checking in with them at lunch and break times. This development of relationships may not have traditionally been considered "learning" but it is key as part of a nurture approach

Environment and practical steps
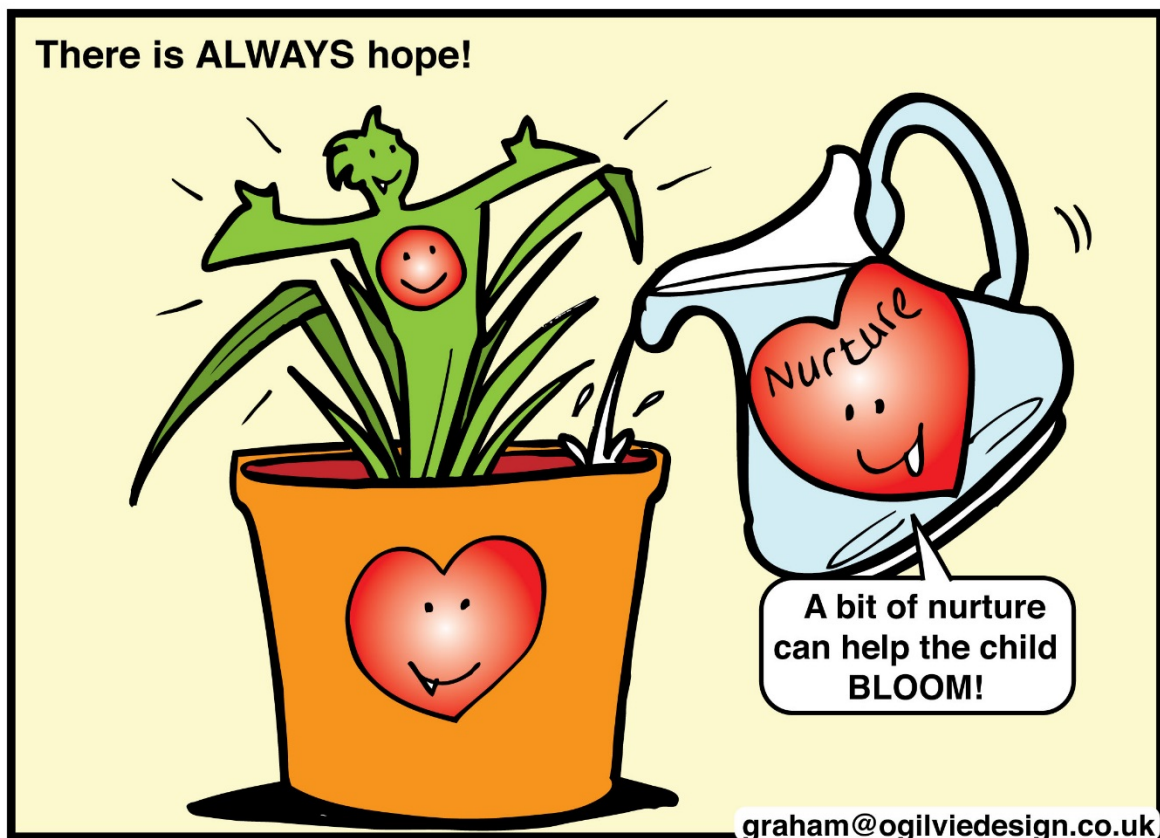
What environmental features should Nurturing Schools Have?

Nooks

'Nooks' for the children to retreat to, containing attractive seating, books, pictures, soft toys and cushions. These areas could be screened with fabric hung from the ceiling to create a tented effect to enclose the children for emotional security. Translucent fabric can be used which will allow the children to continue to observe the activities in the classroom from a safe distance. Children should be given the choice of when to use a Nook and be left alone when they need emotional sanctity. In Doyle's (2003) study initially mainstream colleagues viewed the establishing of nooks within the mainstream classrooms with doubt. However, although staff had had reservations that a child would spend a very long time in the nook and not actively participate in the curriculum, these concerns proved to be unfounded. Children should be given the opportunity to use the nook for various reasons depending on their individual need.   Some children may need to use the nook if they are angry, some may be upset or some may become overwhelmed by their day and need sanctuary[33]. The nooks give children who are not accessing the class curriculum, owing to their social, emotional and behavioural barriers to learning, the opportunity to sit back and come to terms with some aspects of classroom life. Having 'small spaces' (like alcoves) which children can use in a school also allows physical proximity to adults in a safe, non-threatening, non-hierarchical way. It allows for safe observation of peers and adults by children and of the social rules and

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[33] Doyle, 2003

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expectations of the classroom so that children may be observing and learning even when it appears they are not.

Areas and resources for play

As part of a Nurturing Approach all mainstream classroom should have areas for play/relaxation. In infant classes these could include sand and water trays; puppetry and role-play areas and in the upper school classrooms these could include facilities like a board game corner, resources for drawing or modelling; role-play costumes and comfy seated areas for reading and chatting. Puppets have long been an important part of the nurture approach in other where they have been used to role play situations and what should be done in certain situations so that appropriate behaviour can be modelled to children in a fun and non-threatening way. The use of a character can also help externalise the problem from being one of the child to being one of the puppet. Puppets which have life like features and different expressions will be best for these kind of uses but a variety of resources can be used for role-playing; and these resources could also be used in small groups or during circle time.

Children with emotional support needs may also benefit from having something soft to touch and being able to have a soft toy or transitional item near them or in their pocket. Allowing this in circumstances where it is reassuring for the child and is not interfering with learning can be beneficial.

As children progress up the school this need for transitional toys and play materials may be replaced by a need for pencil cases and things on the desk to make a safe space for the child and to provide a sense of ownership of that space. It is important to provide a secure base for children with SEBN which they know will be consistent and accessible every day as part of their routine. Children with SEBN needs may feel especially insecure when their tables or groups change or their partners move and it is imperative that school staff are cognisant of this, and put in support to help the children and young people with these transitions.

A comfy place

All teachers can use emotional literacy approaches and circle time as a constructive aid to building relationships where everyone feels valued and respected. Having a comfy space to sit and talk and where discussion is encouraged supports children to identify the value of opening up and discussing feelings. Literature about feelings can be displayed on the wall in schools to help children become more emotionally literate. Having a space outside the classroom where children and young people can go when they are feeling vulnerable or have had a disagreement in the which is a nurturing space may make some children feel more secure.

The use of music

Music can be an important resource in helping to identify and name feelings but also in signifying changes to routine in the classroom in a positive way such as tidy up and going home time. Through playing a key song which all the members of the class know or asking a child to be DJ children can be rewarded in and come to enjoy the time music is played and it can also foster a sense of community in the classroom. A soft start for some younger children may be to come in and sing a morning song before starting any work. Some children who may be unresponsive or unwilling to contribute in the classroom may be

reached by music. Music can also have a role in taking us back to certain situations and creating new memories and can be a helpful tool for discussing feelings.

The role of food

The preparation and sharing of food should be of key importance in a nurturing approach. The rationale is that communal cooking and eating promotes language development, communication skills and emotional literacy and eating and preparing food as a group is something some children miss out on in their home environments. Eating together provides a structure to the day, models and encourages what is considered acceptable behaviour, and provides an opportunity for children and staff to engage in conversation, developing the children's speaking and listening skills[34]. Children may have missed opportunities for communal models of appropriate eating habits which means that they may find it difficult to behave at an age appropriate way in the dining room at school. Food is also a form of celebration in many communities and can be used to promote social skills and turn taking.

In some nurturing schools there has been the inclusion of cooking and eating provision in nurture spaces which has provided appropriate opportunities to learn about and model the experience of social eating in a small unthreatening environment before the child has been encouraged to transfer these skills to the larger whole school lunch setting. In other examples of good practice nurturing schools have arranged a special nurture tea morning or lunch one a month to allow an opportunity for children to celebrate achievements and to share skills. Modelling and talking about the importance of dining and the dining procedure is important to children and some children may need visual modelling to learn the skills required in the school dinner hall.

Breakfast clubs

Some children can respond really well to breakfast clubs or opportunities for breakfast at school to start their day which may provide the opportunity of a soft start for them before they are expected to comply with the rules of the classroom. Breakfast clubs can be seen as a time of opportunity for the development of social relationships as well as an important way of meeting the basic needs of children who may come to school without breakfast. Breakfast clubs may allow some anxious children to ease into their day by provide welcoming faces and "claiming" from interested adults at the beginning of their day.

Picnic basket

In some schools children can have events in their lives meaning that they come to school hungry or without their dinner money. When a child is hungry they may be angry and not ready to learn. In certain schools children may also not have access to any money or school staff may be unable to cover their lunch for them. Having a picnic basket with food stuff donated by staff, parents or members of the community can be important in making sure that a child never goes without food and means that it will not be difficult or uncomfortable to find food at a moment of need. Having a brightly decorated picnic basket or box might also be reassuring for a child who is likely to feel a great deal of shame and discomfort about coming to school without what they need. If a range of donations are asked for some items could be given to a local food bank whilst the items that would be useful for children's lunches and snacks could be kept within the school.

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[34] Newman et al 2003

Lunchtime

Various approaches to supporting children at lunchtime have been implemented by Nurturing Schools. In some schools this has meant the development of a lunchtime club for pupils who felt overwhelmed and intimidated by the large, unstructured environment of the dinner hall or playground[35] and who would benefit from a smaller, more nurturing environment to play and eat in, supported by a familiar adult. In other schools a Nurture lunch may mean an adult supporting children at a table in the lunch hall to model good lunch behaviours and having a pupil lunch monitor who helps anyone who needs support in the dinner hall. In addition a Nurturing lunch time could be facilitated thought projects such as in the example above of the schools star dinner project which looks for and rewards positive behaviour in the lunch hall. Other examples include children sitting in mixed class groups at lunchtime with the older children who take it in turns to set the table with cutlery and to pour the water with the group waiting until everyone is served to start eating like in a home situation. Different schools depending on their size; layout and routines will have different constrictions to what can be done at lunchtime but food is key to the Nurturing Approach and the sense of community that comes with eating together should be fostered and celebrated.

Playtime routines

The playground is an important place for learning as part of the nurture approach. Through unstructured time with peers children have many opportunities to assert themselves and develop their negotiation skills. Many of the old playground routines and games may have been lost and replaced by different interests in electronic games, mobile phones and computers however introducing new playground games or inviting charities such as a Street Games representative to you school could help with the reintroduction of active games in the playground that allow children to develop their negotiation skills along with improving their health and fitness. Children who have been taught or have a good understanding of the games could then be used to facilitate the teaching to younger peers.

As part of a Nurturing approach you may decide that a focus for your school is providing play equipment to children and appointing a play monitor or having older play leaders within the playground who organise group games.

A buddy stop can also be an important playground feature. If a child is on their own they stand at the buddy stop, which is placed at a prominent spot in the playground. This is a signal to other children, who collect the waiting child and involve them in their game.

Opportunities for celebration

Some examples of opportunities for celebration could include

- A celebration assembly for recognising positive behaviour
- Writing children's names in a golden book to celebrate achievements
- Having a television or display system where achievements are broadcast to those visiting the school.

Your school is already likely to have certain ways it promotes and celebrates people's achievements. Recognising all achievements and allowing for a space and time to

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[35] Doyle, 2003

individually talk to a child and celebrate with them can go a long way to promoting a culture of positive behaviour in schools.

Transition areas

Past research on the nurture approach has told us that transition times and areas are sometimes areas where children can feel uncomfortable and insecure. Transition areas can be made inviting using soft seating and plants and in some schools through the use of features such as a goldfish tank, bright posters or a library. Children should feel relaxed and confident about transitioning between different areas of the school and ideally there should be no dark corners or spaces where children 'hang out' or bad behaviour occurs.

Toilets

Children who are anxious and some children with attachment difficulties may have difficulty with toileting. In some schools toilets can seem a threatening and unwelcoming place, much different to the kinds of toilet and bathrooms used at home. Children can feel unsure of themselves when going to the toilet alone and may resist going to the toilet if they do not feel comfortable in using the facilities. Making toilets a welcoming; nurturing place for children can support them to feel more comfortable about coming to schools. Decorating toilets using stickers and bright colours was one example of good practice in a Nurturing School. Having peer toilet monitors who check the toilets may also facilitate the development of child friendly toilets. Toilets can be made to be a welcoming space where loitering can be discouraged but where children feel that they can be secure. Having somebody on hand who can go to the toilets if a child is feeling unwell can also be important.

A quiet place for deep listening

Research has suggested the availability of a quiet space where children and adults can talk in privacy as being important. Classrooms can be busy and noisy spaces and sometimes a child may want to talk about something without all the peers in their classroom hearing or may just seek some solitude within a busy school building. Identifying a place within school that can be used for important or quiet conversations could be useful as part of the nurturing approach.

Growing things; taking care of things; Nurture breeds Nurture

Plants and Pets can be important in the Nurturing approach. Having an area where children can grow plants or take care of things can be seen as an essential part of children's education as they can see directly how their actions impact on the development of the plant, making them aware that their actions have consequences for the welfare of living things. Having a school pet or adopting or sponsoring a school animal may also help children develop their interest in taking care of others and foster their natural empathy.

Importance of photographs and introductions

Some schools are huge places with a whole catalogue of visiting staff. Having a welcome board at the front of the school with staff names and titles can be supportive and welcoming to both children and adults. Likewise having pictures of visiting staff if possible can be important for some pupils who may feel insecure when there is someone new in their environment.

Greetings

Greetings and "claiming" can be very important to children who sometimes feel overwhelmed by school. Being made to feel part of the school and welcomed into the school every morning by smiling faces is likely to decrease children's anxiety.

Having a face at the front of the school to welcome and signpost children can be important as can the presence of a shared routine of greetings when welcoming children into the classroom. Talking about positive things or sharing something special with your students at greeting time is important as is the presence of allocated time to let them to share things about their lives. A child may need a consistent person to act as their key person to check in with every morning in order that they can share what has happened in their life overnight before they are ready to learn.

Other ideas for Nurturing Schools:

Learning zones

Fun Fridays where children choose activities and join a group for an activity of their choice in the school

Academic opportunities for older children to lead and support younger children

Homework buddies – older children buddying younger children

We are sure that you will have many more of your own!

Summary of key points

Food is key to the nurture approach. Opportunities should be sought in nurturing schools for sharing food and celebration.

Nooks and private spaces for talking and discussing things and for helping children to regulate their emotions are essential in a nurturing establishment. Privacy for deep listening away from others is important in establishing trusting relationships. Children with attachment related needs may find a too stimulating environment quickly contributes to their behaviour escalating so they need quiet spaces away from other to support self-regulation.

Toilets are important in a nurturing establishment. Many vulnerable young people have toileting difficulties and it is important that they feel comfortable accessing and using the toilet facilities in the school environment or this may become another barrier to their learning.

Creating a Nurturing Classroom

We don't know what goes on in the life of a child

It's OK . . I will NOT give up on you

We should try to be 'the anchor' for them all

Teacher

graham@ogilviedesign.co.uk

As children at an early developmental level often lack personal resources (i.e. purposeful attention, engaging cognitively with peers, accepting constraints) and the organisation required to participate in a socially complex environment, it is important that the nurturing classroom environment is orderly and organised with clear rules and frequent reminders of these rules. The consistency of everyday experiences within a broad structure supports children to function in an organised and purposeful way. When the classroom routine is familiar and manageable this can contribute to a sense of trust. When a child is upset or anxious this routine can provide comfort and reassurance as can the boundaries and rules that staff within that environment provide in order to nurture them.

Use of social and emotional development targets

In a Nurturing classroom specific social development targets or goals may be important for some children and their needs may be best met by creating a social development curriculum or targets as part of their child's plan.

A planned and predictable routine facilitated by a visual timetable

A nurturing classroom has a planned routine to provide a predictable, reliable structure in which the children feel safe and cared for, so that they begin to trust the adults, to explore and to learn. A nurturing classroom structure should include a caring approach with the opportunities for children to participate in the group by taking turns, waiting, making choices, completing tasks and tidying up. The children then begin to 'make sense of their experiences, to be able to ask questions, to discuss, to feel some control over their environment and to internalise some control over their behaviour' (Bennathan and Boxall, 2000). Having a visual timetable and reminder of how their day will go everyday can also be

supportive to children and will help them feel secure and understand the importance of routine and what is going to be required of them on any given day and at any given part of the day.

Carefully selected and rotated roles and responsibilities

These can be allocated to allow children to experience success and to develop skills in certain areas. Children with attachment difficulties can sometimes find that a repetitive activity such as cleaning, or sharpening pencils can help them relax and feel more secure in the classroom. The class teacher is best placed to notice such behaviours and what they can mean for a child. Some activities and roles that one child may see as a punishment another may take great pleasure in so it is important that roles are rotated and personalised if possible. Giving children roles or responsibilities can also increase the level of control they feel of their environment and in some cases consequently their level of security.

The role of movement and language

Previous research by Colwell and O'Connor (2003) has found that language and movement of the staff within any classroom can have a positive or negative impact on children. Our brain picks up the nuances of other people's behaviour and then interprets this in our own way and this may sometimes lead children to be fearful. In a study of nurture groups verbal and non-verbal communications were much more positive in these environments and the use of positive language was more likely to enhance the self-esteem of the pupils. Using constructive praise[36] targeted to form a growth mind-set in children can help them to deal with challenges and respond to the curriculum appropriately at their level.

Summary of key points

Creating a nurturing classroom environment is important in nurture establishments

A designated classroom for nurture can be identified and used as a place to support young people

Traditional classroom environments may be threatening to young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs and they may require adults to carefully consider aspects such as seating arrangements and sensory stimulation for them

There is clear structure and routine in a nurturing classroom that helps young people with attachment related difficulties to feel safe.

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[36] Dweck, 2003

Falkirk Educational Psychology Service

Appendix 1 - Attachment & Nurturing Approaches Suggested Reading

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