Learning is understood developmentally

What is this nurture principle about?

This principle is about responding to children and young people in terms of their developmental stage not chronological age with a non-judgemental and accepting attitude. Thinking about what the child or young person needs to learn, giving consideration to what might have happened to them during their development. This should underpin thinking about all of the other nurture principles. It takes a holistic view of children and young peoples' learning and includes all aspects of their development including language, social and emotional development as well as cognitive development.

Why is this important for COVID-19 recovery planning?

While establishments have been closed pupils have lost not only opportunities to progress academically, but also to develop their social and emotional skills and deepen relationships with peers and adults. For teenagers whose self-image, identity and confidence are affected so much by their peer interactions, the loss of opportunities to socialise with peers is likely to have had a huge impact.

What I can do:

- **Think about levels of development**
    - Be aware of children and young peoples' level of development in all areas, including social and emotional development, and of the possible impact of their experiences of COVID-19 on these.
    - Provide modelling and opportunities for learning and catch up activities related to social and emotional, as well as academic development.
    - Provide information at an appropriate level when talking to children and young people about COVID 19 (see REPS blog for resources).
    - Be aware that children and young people might have a lower emotional than chronological age and could regress to earlier levels of development because of the stressful times we have been living in. They may need information and support appropriate to a younger age group.
- **Support emotional development**
    - Staff, children and young people can signal distress in different ways. It may helpful to identify a key adult who can support and lead in the planning going forward.
    - Support children and young people to understand and regulate their emotions (see also: Language and Wellbeing principles).
    - Model positive ways of coping with difficult situations/emotions (see also: Language and Wellbeing principles).
    - Identify children and young people who are finding things difficult and need individualised support, e.g. using the wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI), the GIRFEC resilience matrix, emotional check-ins/scaling/worry boxes. Remember some children and young people will internalise their distress.

- Children can think that they are responsible for things that happen, and might be feeling guilty, for example, thinking they had not washed their hands properly. Provide reassurance and relay that it is okay for them to play, have fun and enjoy the things that they find positive and fulfilling.
- **Scaffold learning**
  - Provide additional scaffolding of learning to help reinforce previous learning and skills that may have been lost due to the trauma experienced. This will help to ease anxiety and build confidence before tackling new learning.
- **Support staff emotionally**
  - Staff members will have been affected by and will be coping in differing ways to COVID-19. Notice signs of stress/distress in colleagues and have an agreement about how they would like to be supported. Consider using the Wellness Action Plan to do this (Mind UK, 2020) (see also: Wellbeing principle).

Find out more:
- Resources for different age ranges explaining COVID-19: https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshireedpsych/signposting-online-resources/
- Caring and compassionate curriculum https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/compassionate-and-connected-classroom
- British Psychological Society paper 'Teacher resilience during the coronavirus crisis': https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Member%20Networks/Divisions/DECP/Teacher%20resilience%20during%20coronavirus%20school%20closures.pdf
- Mind UK, Wellness Action Plan: https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/employer-resources/wellness-action-plan-download/

Contact your Educational Psychologist for further information about:
- Self-regulation
- Calm Boxes