



# Whitstable Junior School

# Nurture Policy

Governors' Committee Responsible: Strategy Committee

Policy Originator: SENCO

Status: Non- statutory

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Governors

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher

## **1. Introduction**

“Sometimes children need just a little extra support to help them on their way to learning, making friends and growing into confident and successful young people. Nurture groups can help provide that support for children to give them the skills they need to do well at school, make friends and deal more confidently and calmly with the trials and tribulations of life, for life”.

Nurture interventions were started in 1969 by Marjorie Boxall, an Educational Psychologist. Nurture interventions are for those children who are unable to access learning successfully in their classroom. This may be due to fragmented or deprived early childhood experiences, learning difficulties or disorders on the autism spectrum. At the heart of nurture is a focus on wellbeing and relationships and a drive to support the growth and development of children and young people. The Nurture Group - named Amigos - at Whitstable Junior School was initially set up in 2023 as it was identified that there were children who needed some extra support in emotional wellbeing and behaviour management. We aim to embed nurture throughout the school within every class to ensure there is a clear emphasis on a nurturing approach as a universal pedagogy to support children and young people’s wellbeing, whilst recognising the need to develop targeted approaches where appropriate.

### **Aims:**

- To provide a flexible, preventative resource and intervention, which is responsive to the particular needs of the children attending Whitstable Junior School.
- To provide on-going assessment and support all children showing signs of emotional stress and behavioural difficulties with the aim of enabling the child to access the curriculum and participate fully in school life.
- To provide a secure and reliable setting where children can learn by experiencing nurturing care from caring adults who actively work towards enabling the development of relationships between adults and children, building trust, confidence and reliability.
- To help the children learn to behave appropriately, use their curiosity constructively, improve their self-esteem and develop confidence, through close and trusting relationships with adults.
- To work in partnership holistically between parents and School staff to achieve consistency of approach at home and school.
- To provide a more intensive nurturing intervention outside of the classroom for children identified as most vulnerable.
- To have a predictable, calm and purposeful environment including safe spaces that develops the skills to self-regulate.

- To develop responsibility for self and others.
- To help children learn to make decisions and wise choices through understanding consequences of certain ways of behaving.
- To provide on – going assessment using the Boxall profile.
- To provide an environment that supports and listens to children, parents and staff.

### **The Principles of Nurture**

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

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally – the foundations of learning begin at birth and develops via a close relationship with an adult. Independence develops through dependence. Social empathy as well as learning develops from being thought about, valued and encouraged. Staff in the nurture group respond to each child at whatever emotional or social age s/he appears to be with the appropriate degree of control and nurture. The quality of this response enables the child to move on. Children's developmental progress is assessed through the Boxall Profile handbook.

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

3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing – nurture is listening, being responsive, remembering and engaging in reciprocal, shared activities such as play, having snack, reading, learning, talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and being thought of as individuals. This involves calling the children by their name, noticing and offering labelled praise for small achievements; nothing is hurried in nurture groups.

4. Language is a vital means of communication – Language is more than a skill to be learnt, it is the way of putting feelings into words. Nurture group children often 'act out' their feelings as they lack the vocabulary to 'name' how they feel. In nurture groups the informal opportunities for talking and sharing, e.g welcoming the children into the group or having a

shared snack together are as important as the more formal lessons teaching language skills. Words are used instead of actions to express feelings and opportunities are created for extended conversations or encouraging imaginative play to understand the feelings of others. In the nurture group we use Zones of Regulation a tool to build a safe and supportive environment.

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

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

### **Amigos**

Our Nurture group is named Amigos. This name was chosen by the first children to attend the group. It is located in the BCR and children currently attend every afternoon.

### **The Nurture Group will:**

- Strive to have a positive effect on children’s attitude toward the school community, giving them strategies to cope with conflict and challenges.
- Help children to focus concentration levels, which will in turn impact on standards of attainment across the school.
- Support children who have emotional difficulties which prevent them from learning and making relationships.
- Help to improve the focus and quality of teaching and learning.
- Help children learn to regulate their emotions so they can make relationships and access learning opportunities.

### **Staffing**

The Nurture Group - Amigos is run by three members of staff. The Nurture Group lead and SENCo are currently undergoing the Nurture UK Training

The SENCo oversees the strategic direction of the Nurture Group. The SENCo is responsible for the Long Term planning and works closely with the Nurture Group staff to identify children in need of Nurture support and assess children' progress.

**Nurture Group Lead:**

- To run the nurture group working under the guidance of the SENCo and other senior staff to provide support for social, emotional and mental health needs of individuals/groups, through a nurture group approach;
- Undertake Nurture UK training
- Be involved in formal reviews as required, support curriculum development.
- Be involved with the selection, assessment, and reintegration of children – supporting other staff with Boxall profiles
- Maintain the nurture group
- Organise and plan weekly activities with the nurture assistants, bearing in mind the needs of the children relating to Boxall profile targets.
- Support the work of the nurture group assistant.
- Engage in regular communication between nurture staff, teachers, teaching assistants and parents.
- Participate in the review and maintenance of nurture learning environments to ensure they meet the nurture principles.
- Contributes report development to SLT and governors, as appropriate.
- Carry out all nurture work in line with school policies and procedures.
- Liaise with other professionals when appropriate including visits.
- Attend appropriate CPD to develop and fulfil the role;
- Be aware of school policies as set by the Governing Body;
- Follow school procedures for safeguarding;

**The Nurture Group Assistant**

- Work under the guidance of the SENCo and other senior staff to provide support for social, emotional and mental health needs of individuals/groups, through a nurture group approach;
- Promote the inclusion of all Children within the school so that they are able to participate in all aspects of school life;
- Follow the 6 principles of nurture;

- Use a nurturing approach to promote and reinforce pupil self-esteem through praise and encouragement;
- Support Children' social and emotional development and promote independence in a safe, secure, challenging environment employing strategies to recognise and celebrate achievement;
- Act as a role model, setting high expectations through positive modelling and conversations with staff and children;
- Be sensitive to the welfare and care of the Children both physically and emotionally;
- Develop Children' self-management and regulation strategies using the Zones of Regulation programme;
- Develop children's communication and social skills;
- Set up and maintain a positive learning environment in the Nurture Group Room;
- Work alongside class teachers, nurture lead and the SENCO to plan units of learning for children within the Nurture Group and review their progress;
- Provide creative, enriching activities and opportunities for children;
- Prepare materials and activities to support the teaching and learning within the group.
- Be prepared to liaise with the SENCO and parents;
- Attend appropriate CPD to develop and fulfil the role;
- Be aware of school policies as set by the Governing Body;
- Follow school procedures for safeguarding;

### **Teaching and Learning**

The Nurture Group - Amigos has a themed curriculum which has a large emphasis on Personal, Social, Emotional and Mental Health. Weekly planning incorporates developmental and age appropriate skills informed by the Children individual Boxall Profiles.

The Nurture Group runs every afternoon and always begins with shared conversation time, allowing the children to share news, talk about their feelings and develop speaking and listening skills. This is usually followed by a themes task or activity, individual target work and a shared snack time, providing the opportunity to socialise with peers and adults as well as take responsibility for preparing food and clearing away.

### **Identification and Referral**

Children may enter the Nurture Group - Amigos for a number of reasons.

The following Children would be considered for a place in the nurture group:

- Friendship difficulties – keeping/making friends

- Quiet, shy, withdrawn
- Find it hard to listen to others or join in
- Disruptive towards others
- Find it hard to accept losing a game
- Find it hard to share and take turns
- Find it difficult to settle into class
- Bullying
- Low self esteem
- Poor relationships with adults in school
- Bereavement
- Family illness or break-up

The Nurture Group - Amigos currently supports a range of children across the whole of the school.

The identification and review process takes place on an ongoing basis.

**Raising concerns** – staff liaise with the SENCo and / or Nurture Staff to raise awareness of current pupil's issues – this may be discussed in Well being team meetings, Pupil Progress Meetings or highlighted through CPOMS incidents.

**Boxall Profiles** – All children are screened using the Boxall Profile. This is a series of questions covering various aspects of a child's social and emotional development. It provides a clear and personalised picture of a child's areas of need. The SENCo and nurture group staff discuss the results. From the Boxall profiles, a report will be created where children are selected for the group according to need. Children will leave and join the group as progress is made. Children usually remain in Nurture Group - Amigos for between 1 and 4 terms.

During their time in Nurture Group the children will agree on Personal Targets (linked to the areas of need identified in the Boxall Profile).

The SENCo will meet half termly with the Nurture Staff to discuss the progress of each pupil. When it is felt that a pupil may be ready to exit Nurture Group a further Boxall Profile will be completed and analysed. The transition back into class will be discussed with the pupil and their parents and undertaken gradually.

### **Involving Parents / Carers**

Parental/carer support is vital to the child's progress and parents/carers are fully involved and consulted about the selection process. Children's individual targets are shared with parents/carers termly. All parent/carers are given a nurture group leaflet when their child is selected for the group.

Parents are invited to Nurture Group - Amigos events.

### **Involving WJS staff**

- Class teachers are responsible for the registration of Nurture Group - Amigos Children both in the morning and afternoon.
- Class teachers will be asked to contribute to discussions, review meetings, liaise with nurture staff to share information and complete assessment questionnaires in relation to Children in their class.
- Teachers will continue with strategies and use of resources as agreed in his/her IPP
- Staff will be invited to attend nurture sessions/parent workshops as appropriate.

### **Reintegration**

Reintegration into the classroom full time should be based on the following elements:

- The results of the Boxall profile
- Nurture staff observations and assessments
- Class teacher's observations

When it is thought a child is ready to return full time to their classroom there is a great need for flexibility between everyone involved. The Nurture staff, SENCo and class teacher will meet to plan the reintegration programme for the particular child. The length of time will depend on the individual child and the amount of time they have been in the group, but would be expected to be between 2 and 6 weeks.

When a programme is being planned it is vital that rewards, expectations and strategies are put in place to ensure continuity and successful reintegration. It can be an unsettling time for children as they will have formed close relationships between themselves and with staff. Therefore, Nurture staff will find time in the week to catch up with the children to make sure everything is going ok for them. Class teachers will discuss reintegration with parents as they too may be feeling a little unsettled and concerned themselves about the end of this provision for their child.