

**The National Nurturing Schools Programme
Assessment Report**



Establishment name and address	Whitstable Junior School. Oxford Street Whitstable Kent CT5 1DB
Headteacher/Principal	Sarah Kent
NNSP trained staff	Kirsten Collin – Assistant Headteacher/SENCo Nicola Checksfield – Well Being Assistant
Assessment date	Tuesday 23rd September
Assessor	Sarah Norwood
Trainer	Jenni Moore
Review date	September 2028

STANDARDS

1. Stakeholders		1a. Pupils		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
1a.1	The social and emotional needs of pupils are assessed and tracked.			✓
1a.2	Nurture principles are defined and explained to pupils.			✓
1a.3	Pupils are encouraged to develop responsibility for themselves and learn self-efficacy			✓

1. Stakeholders		1b. Parents and Carers		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
1b.1	Parents and carers feel valued and welcomed in the establishment.			✓
1b.2	Nurture principles are defined and explained to parents and carers.			✓
1b.3	Reports to parents and carers reflect pupils' strengths and areas of need.			✓

1. Stakeholders		1c. Staff		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
1c.1	There are systems and procedures to welcome, support and induct new staff and visitors.			✓
1c.2	Nurture principles are defined and explained to all staff.			✓
1c.3	Staff are given opportunities to discuss, develop, and review shared values.			✓
1c.4	There are clear expectations of how all adults in school relate to children when in or out of class.			✓
1c.5	Staff are actively involved in The National Nurturing Schools Programme.			✓

1. Stakeholders		1d. The Community		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
1d. 1	The establishment works with stakeholders within the community.			✓
1d. 2	Nurture principles are defined and explained to stakeholders.			✓
1d. 3	The establishment is used as a resource within the community.			✓
1d. 4	The community is included in development plans.			✓

1. Delivery		2a. Meeting Pupils Needs		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
2a. 1	Nurture principles are incorporated in curriculum planning and delivery.		✓	
2a. 2	The social and emotional needs of pupils are addressed.			✓
2a. 3	Behaviour is dealt with consistently by all staff.			✓
2a. 4	Pupils are involved in developing and evaluating their learning.			✓

2. Delivery		2b. Wellbeing: Pupils		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
2b. 1	Provision and strategies promote pupil welfare and wellbeing			✓
2b. 2	Pupils feel safe and secure.			✓
2b. 3	Pupils feel valued, respected, included and listened to.			✓
2b. 4	Pupils are prepared for transitions in life.			✓

2 Delivery		2b. Wellbeing: Staff		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
2b.5	Provision and strategies promote staff welfare and wellbeing			✓
2b.6	Staff feel valued, respected, included and listened to.			✓
2b.7	Staff access relevant professional development.			✓
2b.8	There are opportunities for reflective collaborative problem solving for staff			✓

2 Delivery		2c. Environment		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
2c.1	Nurture principles are reflected in the development of the environment.			✓
2c.2	The environment is safe and welcoming for all stakeholders.			✓

3. Leadership and Management		3a. Policy		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
3a.1	Organisational and curriculum policies reflect and support nurture principles.			✓
3a.2	Stakeholders are involved in the development and review of policies.		✓	

3. Leadership and Management		3b. Partnership		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
3b.1	Partnership working reflects a nurturing rationale.			✓

3. Leadership and Management		3c. Resources		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
3c.1	There are clear development priorities regarding nurture principles and practice.			✓
3c.2	Resources are deployed to develop nurturing principles and practice across the setting.			✓

3 Leadership and Management		3d. Monitoring and evaluation		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
3d. 1	Monitoring and evaluation protocols include evidence of planning, reviewing and evaluating processes for the National Nurturing Schools Programme (please include attendance and exclusion data from the first self-assessment and in all subsequent self-assessments).			✓

Assessors Summary	
<p>This report cannot reflect the hard work that goes on at school every day. A comprehensive evidence file and related documents have been provided as part of the assessment process by the school. This includes attendance and exclusion data and Case Studies for Partnership, Community and The Boxall Profile along with a clear understanding of The Six Principles of Nurture, evidenced in the application and Principles into Practice report.</p> <p>Introduction</p> <p>It became increasingly clear throughout my morning that nurture has always been at the heart of Whitstable Junior School. This is a school where children, staff, and families talk about kindness, belonging, and safety as daily lived experiences. The National Nurturing Schools Programme (NNSP) has provided a framework through which those deeply held values have been explored further, given structure, and developed into a consistent whole-school approach.</p> <p>Everyone I spoke to during the assessment described how nurture has long underpinned the ethos of the school, but that the programme has enabled leaders and staff to refine their practice and achieve greater consistency. As the Headteacher reflected, “Nurture as the base for all children has had a positive impact on both education and regulation,” and “the NNSP has supported constant curiosity in our school.”</p>	

The morning I spent with Whitstable Junior School brought those words to life. It was a privilege to hear from pupils, parents, staff, governors, and leaders, and to see nurture woven into the fabric of relationships, learning, and community.

The Six Principles of Nurture

Children’s learning is understood developmentally

Whitstable Junior School has embraced the principle that learning is developmental rather than tied to age. Their child-friendly statement — “My learning journey may look different to yours, but we grow together” — is reflected in both curriculum and relationships.

The Boxall Profile® is used to assess social and emotional development and to identify areas where children may need additional support. Interventions such as soft starts, sensory pathways, and small group nurture activities are tailored to the developmental stage of the child. The impact is evident: in one case study, 75% of targeted pupils showed measurable improvement in Boxall scores, with clear progress in self-regulation and engagement.

Teachers describe this developmental focus in their own words: “Our job is to be curious and change, not expect the children to change,” and “things look different for different children.” Pupils echoed this sense of individual support, with one proudly saying, “I am creative, and they are supportive of everything that I do – I am taking part in the 500-word competition.”

The classroom offers a safe base

The statement “School is a safe place where everyone belongs” resonates strongly across classrooms. Nurture nooks, regulation tools, and predictable routines create environments where children know they will be listened to and supported. Teachers explained, “relationships provide safety for children to take risks – and it works for everyone.”

Children spoke with confidence about this safety: “If I am upset, they will take me out of class and tell me that everything will be ok.” During the circle time observed on the assessment day, children’s enthusiasm and joy filled the room. Every voice was valued, every idea respected, and the session became a personification of what safety and belonging mean in practice.

The importance of nurture for wellbeing

Kindness is at the centre of Whitstable Junior School’s wellbeing philosophy. Pupils describe it simply: “We show kindness to ourselves and others.” Staff model this daily, and families recognise the impact. One parent explained, “They have changed the course of his life – so kind and so willing to help.” Another reflected, “They never, ever gave up – they kept coming up with new ideas and made sure he experienced success.”

The school has invested in wellbeing provision that includes soft start sessions, hot chocolate clubs, and access to The Nest and The Oyster Room for children who need space to regulate. These initiatives have supported children experiencing emotionally based school avoidance and given them successful pathways back into learning. Parents notice the difference at home, describing happier, calmer children who are more confident in their own abilities.

Language as a vital means of communication

Communication is central to life at Whitstable Junior School. Their child statement — “We listen and support each other” — is seen in how staff and children talk, reflect, and problem-solve together. The Zones of Regulation are used throughout the school, providing a common language for describing and managing feelings. Teachers spoke about the impact of this: “The Six Principles give us a common language.” Pupils also recognise the value: “When I feel cross, I can say what zone I’m in, and then people understand me better.” Circle times, restorative conversations, and peer discussions create opportunities for children to practise listening and speaking with empathy.

All behaviour is communication

The principle that behaviour communicates need is firmly embedded. Teachers reflected, “Behaviour tells a story,” and, “every individual is loved and valued for the person that they are.” The behaviour policy, ladder of support, and consistent staff training ensure that children’s needs are understood, not judged.

As staff described, the question is never “what’s wrong with this child?” but rather “what is this child telling us?” This culture has been supported by Boxall Profile assessments and restorative approaches, leading to calmer classrooms, stronger relationships, and reduced incidents of distressed behaviours.

The importance of transition in children’s lives

Transitions are thoughtfully supported, whether small daily changes or major moves between schools. The child principle — “Changes can be planned; changes can be surprises but we can cope” — captures the confidence children are developing. SEND transition packages, one-page profiles, and parent surveys ensure that children feel prepared and supported. The school attends the Canterbury District Transition Event to share needs with secondary colleagues and uses Boxall Profiles to inform transition meetings.

Pupil Engagement and Wellbeing

Pupil voice is strong and central at Whitstable Junior School. Children speak with honesty and pride about their experiences, and it is clear that they feel safe, valued, and supported by the adults around them. They describe their teachers as “kind and supportive”, and several explained how adults help them to manage their feelings: “If I am upset, they will take me out of class and tell me that everything will be ok,” and “The

teachers will always try to help you if you have hurt feelings.” Another child reflected with pride, “I am creative, and they are supportive of everything that I do – I am taking part in the 500-word competition.” During the assessment, one child summed up the collective feeling when they declared, “This is the best school in the world,” and the other children around them nodded in agreement. Their words were heartfelt, and the response spoke volumes about the sense of belonging and unity that characterises this school.

The circle time I observed was a personification of joy. Pupils spoke openly, listened attentively, and celebrated each other’s contributions with genuine enthusiasm. The pride they felt in being part of Whitstable Junior School was evident in every word, gesture, and expression. It was a striking reminder that when children feel safe and heard, they flourish not only academically but also socially and emotionally. The skill of the adults in these moments cannot be overlooked. Kirsten Collin, leading the circle, demonstrated an exceptional ability to value every single thought shared, ensuring that each child felt listened to and respected. The session was a testament to the school’s commitment to open and authentic communication, and to the nurturing relationships that underpin all aspects of school life.

Pupil wellbeing sits firmly at the core of provision at Whitstable Junior School. Daily Zones of Regulation check-ins, calm boxes, and nurture spaces such as The Oyster Room and The Nest provide children with the tools they need to recognise their feelings, regulate effectively, and re-engage with learning. The presence of the school dog has become another much-loved part of this offer, providing children with a source of comfort and calm, and reinforcing the sense of joy and belonging that runs throughout the school. Staff spoke about how these structures create predictability and safety, while children described them as places where they can “reset” and return ready to learn.

The impact of this approach is evident both in the data and in children’s lived experiences. Boxall Profiles show measurable improvements, with 75% of children in one targeted cohort making expected or accelerated progress not only in social and emotional development but also in reading, writing, and maths. Teachers note that classrooms are calmer and more settled, while parents spoke about children who are happier, more confident, and better able to cope with challenges.

Children themselves captured the difference in their own words. One explained, “I used to get into trouble for being upset in a different school. Now people help me to talk about it.” Beyond regulation and learning, pupils also spoke about the opportunities they have to contribute to school life as ambassadors, peer mentors, and sports leaders. These roles give them responsibility, purpose, and a sense of belonging. Children described feeling proud to represent their school in competitions and events, reflecting a culture where achievement is celebrated in many forms,

Taken together, these accounts highlight a community where children feel supported, understood, and valued as individuals. They are not only developing academic skills but also the confidence, resilience, and emotional literacy that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Parents and Carers

Parents spoke with warmth, pride, and deep gratitude about their experiences of Whitstable Junior School. They consistently described the staff as adaptable, kind, and understanding, emphasising how the school had supported their children not just academically but emotionally and socially. One parent explained, “They have changed the course of his life – so kind and so willing to help,” while another noted, “They never, ever gave up – they kept coming up with new ideas.” These reflections capture a culture where staff persistence and creativity ensure that every child is given the opportunity to succeed. Parents highlighted the way the school makes children feel successful and confident: “They made sure that he experienced success, made him feel like he can be successful.” Another parent summed up the impact simply but powerfully: “He’s a happy kid because of this school.”

Families also described choosing Whitstable Junior School because of its nurturing ethos and emphasis on wellbeing, explaining that they felt welcomed, listened to, and included in the life of the school. Engagement events such as parent–pupil lunches, reading days, and workshops on Zones of Regulation have been well received, while the presence of senior leaders and the Wellbeing Team at the school gate each morning provides daily opportunities for open, informal communication.

The overall impression from parents was one of pride and trust. They see the school as a place where children are treated as individuals, where staff go above and beyond, and where kindness is not just spoken of but consistently enacted. This strong partnership with families reinforces the school’s commitment to building a community in which children feel safe, valued, and able to thrive.

Use of the Boxall Profile® Assessment Tool

The Boxall Profile® is now embedded across Whitstable Junior School as a tool for identifying, understanding, and responding to children’s SEMH needs. Staff are trained and confident in its use, and Boxall data informs Individual Provision Plans, class provision maps, and targeted interventions.

The impact is clear. In one cohort, 75% of targeted pupils showed measurable improvement in Boxall scores, particularly in self-regulation and engagement. Teachers also reported calmer classrooms, fewer behaviour incidents, and greater confidence in meeting children’s needs. As one teacher explained, “The Boxall gives us a way to really see what the child is telling us – it helps us know how to support them, not just react to behaviour.”

The tool has also strengthened transition. Profiles are shared with new class teachers and with secondary schools, ensuring continuity of support. For incoming Year 3 pupils, early Boxall assessments provide a strong foundation for tailored support as they join the junior school. By embedding Boxall into practice, Whitstable Junior School has created a consistent developmental lens, ensuring that every child is understood, valued, and supported.

Staff Wellbeing

Staff wellbeing has been nurtured with the same care and intentionality as pupil wellbeing. Leaders at Whitstable Junior School have long recognised that adults must feel valued, supported, and cared for if they are to deliver a nurturing ethos for children. Over time, this commitment has been translated into a range of initiatives, routines, and cultural shifts that now form part of the fabric of the school.

Practical gestures such as Friday Finish and Friday Buns provide weekly recognition and appreciation, while Positive Noticing ensures that achievements and contributions are celebrated regularly. More recently, the introduction of supervision sessions, gratitude cards that gift staff protected time, and celebration emails from the Headteacher have reinforced a culture where staff feel seen and valued. Staff described these touches not as “extras” but as meaningful reminders that their wellbeing is a genuine priority. Formal systems support this culture.

Staff forums and surveys provide regular opportunities for colleagues to share concerns, shape decisions, and contribute to problem-solving. Teacher and LSA forums are particularly valued, with outcomes displayed openly on the staff noticeboard, reflecting a culture of transparency and shared ownership. Staff appraisals and progress meetings are described as collaborative and solution-focused, encouraging reflection rather than judgement. Exit interviews with governors are also used to ensure that even those leaving the school contribute to ongoing improvement.

The impact of these efforts is tangible. Staff described their team as close and supportive: “We are so close as a team – I can go to anyone for help.” Another reflected, “If you care for staff, they can care for the children... and everyone here cares for the staff.” Wellbeing surveys confirm that staff feel respected and listened to, and this was echoed repeatedly in conversations during the assessment. Staff wellbeing is not an afterthought here; it is deliberately cultivated so that adults feel secure, motivated, and able to model the same nurturing values that are expected of children.

This investment in staff wellbeing has created a culture of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect. Staff describe feeling confident to take risks in their practice, knowing that they will be supported. They value the balance leaders have sought to strike between professional challenge and personal care.

Leadership and Management

Leadership at Whitstable Junior School is intentional, reflective, and relational. Leaders have ensured that the Six Principles of Nurture are embedded into the School Improvement Plan, behaviour policy, and wider strategies. Governors monitor progress closely, with one noting, “Wellbeing and nurture are paramount, it really matters and it is now structured, consistent, and visible in everything that happens.”

Partnerships with Canterbury Food Bank, Inclusive Sport, and play therapy have strengthened provision for families. Engagement in the Canterbury District Nurture Network and Kent Inclusion Leadership Programme demonstrates a commitment to both learning from and contributing to wider networks.

Resources have been invested in physical spaces such as The Oyster Room and The Nest, nurture nooks in classrooms, and professional development in Boxall and attachment awareness. Monitoring through Boxall and CPOMS provides evidence of positive impact on both behaviour and wellbeing. As the Headteacher described, “The NNSP has supported constant curiosity in our school.” This curiosity, coupled with relational leadership, ensures that the culture of nurture is not static but dynamic, growing stronger with every year.

Conclusion

Whitstable Junior School demonstrates a steadfast and inspiring commitment to nurture, with the Six Principles of Nurture embedded not just in policy, but in practice, culture, relationships, and community. From curriculum design to carefully considered transitions, from wellbeing initiatives to emotionally attuned leadership, the principles are lived in ways that are authentic, consistent, and deeply impactful.

The outcomes of this nurturing ethos are clear to see. Pupils are confident, creative, and articulate—secure in the knowledge that they are heard, supported, and valued. As one child expressed, “This is the best school in the world,” a sentiment echoed by the other children with pride and agreement. Circle time, observed during the assessment, was a personification of joy: children’s voices were celebrated, their ideas respected, and their enthusiasm for learning shone through. Staff work with curiosity, compassion, and clarity of purpose, supported by a culture where wellbeing is prioritised and teamwork is strong. Parents, too, speak with gratitude and warmth: “He’s a happy kid because of this school.”

During the assessment visit, it was evident that nurture runs through every conversation, every classroom, and every relationship. The Boxall Profile® has provided a structure for identifying and responding to need, enabling interventions that have transformed regulation and engagement. The language of the six principles now permeates daily practice, giving staff, pupils, and parents a shared way of understanding and responding to children’s experiences.

What stood out so clearly throughout the time spent with the community was the pride and unity that runs through Whitstable Junior School. The words belong and kind came up repeatedly from staff, pupils, and parents, and they are indeed the qualities that characterise the school. This is a place where children know that they belong, where kindness is not just encouraged but expected, and where relationships provide the safety to take risks, build self-confidence, and develop a lifelong love of learning.

Whitstable Junior School's unwavering commitment to nurturing its whole community provides the foundation for children to flourish—not only in their academic achievements, but in their wellbeing, empathy, and resilience. The journey with the NNSP has not been about creating something new, but about providing the structure, reflection, and consistency to deepen and strengthen what was already there.

Your journey towards becoming a fully recognised nurturing school is not only commendable—it is transformational. Thank you for allowing me to be part of it, and for sharing the story of your school with such generosity and authenticity.

Quotes from the Assessment Day

- “Teachers are kind and supportive.”
- “If I am upset, they will take me out of class and tell me that everything will be ok.”
- “The teachers will always try to help you if you have hurt feelings.”
- “I am creative, and they are supportive of everything that I do – I am taking part in the 500-word competition.”
- “This is the best school in the world.”
- “We are all in it together – all there for one another.”
- “I used to get into trouble for being upset in a different school. Now people help me to talk about it.”
- “I know I belong here – it feels like everyone belongs.”
- “Belonging is what makes us feel safe.”
- “I am an ambassador; it doesn't mean that I am overvalued – I am the same as everyone else.”
- “We are so close as a team – I can go to anyone for help.”
- “If you care for staff, they can care for the children... and everyone here cares for the staff.”
- “They have changed the course of his life – so kind and so willing to help.”
- “They never, ever gave up – they kept coming up with new ideas.”
- “They made sure that he experienced success, made him feel like he can be successful.”
- “He's a happy kid because of this school.”
- “Nurture as the base for all children has had a positive impact on both education and regulation.”
- “The NNSP has supported constant curiosity in our school.”

- “Nurture has always been part of Whitstable Junior School – now it is structured, consistent, and visible in everything we do.”

Recommendation

We recommend Whitstable Junior School for the National Nurturing Schools Award

Areas for development	Timescale
Boxall Profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to embed the Boxall Profile® as a successful whole-school assessment tool, using its outcomes to inform planning, tailor provision, and monitor the social and emotional development of all pupils. 	Ongoing
Nurture Principles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote and embed nurture group principles throughout the provision for pupils, staff, and parents. • Strengthen parental understanding of the Six Principles of Nurture through workshops, resources, and communication, to build a shared language between home and school. 	Ongoing
Continue to monitor and evaluate the provision within your setting completing the National Nurturing Schools self-assessment on an annual basis.	Ongoing
Engage with the re-accreditation process for the National Nurturing Schools Programme.	2028