



Framework
for the
Principles
and
Practice of Nurture Rooms
in the Western Isles

Guidance document from
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Educational Psychology
Service

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Contents

	Page No
Introduction	1-2
The Nurturing School	3-4
The Nurturing school Self Evaluation Sheet	5-6
Policy	8-9
Operational Guidelines	10-11
Resources to Help With Setting Up a Nurture Room	12-13

Introduction

Given the very small numbers of children with significant attachment or trauma-related difficulties across the Western Isles, it has not been possible to establish Nurture Groups. Instead, an approach suitable for the local context based on the Six principles of Nurture has been developed, wherein one or two children are educated within a Nurture Room within their school.

Nurture Rooms in mainstream primary schools have been acknowledged as an early intervention for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Nurture Rooms effectively bridge the gap between child mental health, early childhood trauma and education. In addition, Nurture Rooms can also lead to significantly reducing the academic gap for these children, through effective usage of early intervention.

Nurture Rooms are the subject of considerable interest currently because they offer schools support with growing problems of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the early years, which inhibit effective learning.

These problems are also associated with the increasing incidence of social, emotional and behavioural growth in the number of pupils being temporarily and permanently excluded from mainstream school provision for behavioural reasons.

Nurture Rooms are also instrumental in the moves towards greater inclusion in mainstream schools for children with additional support needs.

Whilst many schools in the Western Isles will never require a Nurture Room, all schools can benefit from adopting the philosophy, which underpins effective Nurture Rooms. The task is to develop a nurturing ethos throughout the school. This is done through a clear understanding of attachment theory, the concept of the secure base and knowledge about children's social and emotional development. Much exciting work has recently informed our understanding of infant development and the Comhairle will make training available to help teachers gain the

relevant knowledge and skills. Should any school decide that they require training in the areas of a) behavioural, social and emotional awareness; b) Nurturing School development; or c) Attachment Awareness and Best Practice, then they should contact the Educational Psychology service for further information.

Local Authorities are increasingly promoting whole school Nurturing Approaches as a means of supporting both Health and Wellbeing and attainment. A whole school Nurturing Approach is a helpful framework for schools to enhance their knowledge and understanding of how all children and young people develop and learn whilst focusing on those who need specific targeted support.

These principles are not specific to the primary phase. Learning Support Units in Secondary Schools benefit from the use of Nurture Room principles. However, great care must be taken to ensure that age appropriate strategies are used.

This framework document is intended to:

- introduce the model of 'the nurturing school' based on sound Nurture Group Principles.
- support schools with a Nurture Room and support schools considering establishing one.

Education Scotland have developed professional learning materials to support this approach in both the primary and secondary sector. These resources are designed to support schools overall understanding of a Nurturing Approach and Nurture Principles whilst exploring the implementation of such an approach. The materials also support schools who have already embarked on a Nurturing Approach to use self-evaluation to determine the impact of such an approach. If you are interesting in developing whole school nurturing approaches, please go to: <https://education.gov.scot/.../Pages/sacfi2b-Whole-School-Nurturing-Approaches.aspx>

Potential Improvement questions

- What does school data and stakeholder consultation tell you about the needs within your context and would a Nurturing Approach be suited to supporting these needs?
- Does your school or Local Authority have the capacity to deliver training/coaching or support for self-evaluation around Nurturing Approaches?
- To what extent is your school or Local Authority ready to fully embrace and implement a whole school Nurturing Approach/Preliminary findings from national research studies into effective Nurture Groups suggest that schools using Nurture Group principles report changes in the ways teachers think and talk about pupils and increased abilities to deal effectively with the troubling/troublesome behaviour.

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The Nurturing School

Using Nurture Group Principles to build a nurturing, inclusive community

Background

Nurture groups were initiated by Marjorie Boxall, an Education Psychologist in the Inner London Education Authority, in response to the needs of a small but significant group of children struggling in mainstream classrooms.

Children entering school may have a history of disrupted parenthood and arrive with under-developed social and linguistic skills. These children require structure and a predictable environment with reliable and consistent relationships, in order to begin to trust and learn. Such children often exhibit behaviours that developmentally are appropriate to children of a younger chronological age.

When the theory that underpins Nurture Groups is applied to the whole school, teaching and learning becomes more effective for all concerned.

A school with a nurturing ethos works to the following principles:

- **Emotional growth and learning**

Schools work on building quality relationships based on trust and respect, with children, parents/carers and staff. Social and emotional competence is promoted in all aspects of school life. Staff are trained in social, and emotional development.

Opportunities are found to enhance the creative and expressive aspects of the curriculum.

The school has a positive behaviour policy. The anti-bullying policy is translated into practical approaches to support peer relationships, such as rights respecting schools.

Children are valued and thought about as individuals. This is demonstrated by staff noticing and praising every small success and helping them manage failure.

- **The classroom as a secure base**

There is understanding that children learn most effectively when they are securely attached to a responsive and related adult – someone who is in tune with their feelings and interested in their achievement. Care and consideration is given by adults to beginnings and endings, transitions of all sorts, and the feelings generated by different situations and experiences are understood.

The introduction of new children or adults is taken very seriously and when children or adults leave, there is usually a small 'goodbye' event to mark the transition. Children are well prepared for changes to the usual routine and supply teachers are well briefed on the class. In some schools each class makes a handbook explaining about themselves and 'how they do things in Class 4' for any supply teachers. Opportunities for working cooperatively are constantly explored.

Classrooms and unstructured times of day have clear routines. There are good structures that positively reinforce appropriate behaviour at all times.

All children are encouraged to experience themselves as valued members of the school and helped to develop negotiation, collaborative and problem solving skills. Circle time is an integral part of the Health and Well Being curriculum in the school.

- **Communication and language development**

There is a focus on putting feelings into words and in helping children make sense of the world and make links. Children are taught to use words to describe feelings and opportunities are found to teach the links between feeling and doing. Words begin to replace impulsive actions for some children. Opportunities are found for children who need it to have extended conversations with adults on a 1-1 basis.

Children are much less likely to develop behaviour/mental health problems if they have good communication skills. Social skills/problem solving/peer support group work is organised for children experiencing difficulties. All teaching and support staff understand the significance of language and of non-verbal communication.

- **Behaviour as communication**

Staff are encouraged and trained to look behind the difficult behaviour and to demonstrate that feelings can be thought about, understood and managed.

Troubling/troublesome behaviour is seen as a “symptom” of underlying difficulties. Staff are encouraged/given time to reflect on what the behaviour means for the child and what purpose it is serving.

Staff understand the need to communicate clear boundaries and limits to children in a way that demonstrates respect for the individual whilst maintaining expectations.

Through continuing professional development, staff are supported to understand the part that emotional and social factors play in all learning including their own.

Why are Nurture Group Principles good for all schools?

Because they encourage:

- inclusive practice
- the raising of achievement and attainment
- a calmer, purposeful environment
- higher staff and pupil self esteem
- better relationships with parents and reduction in conflict
- teachers and support staff to have understanding of the links between motivation and learning
- teachers and support staff to have increased awareness of the relationship between social/emotional factors and learning
- positive changes in the way staff think and talk about children
- increased staff confidence and competence in dealing with ‘difficult’ students

Nurture Group Principles are relevant to Nurseries, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools.

The Nurturing School Self Evaluation Sheet

Give your ratings on each of the scales below, where 1 = very low and 5 = very high, for how your organisation scores.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. The Head, staff and Parent Council actively promote personal, social and emotional well-being for all children and adults involved in the school	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. There is a positive behaviour policy with the emphasis on 'do's' not 'don't ' and on making choices and understanding the consequences.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. There is an understanding that children need to develop the social and emotional competence that will help them understand the rules that govern relationships between people. The school actively introduces experiences and activities to help children cope with the difficulties and form positive relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. The school has positive home-school partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Everyone is made to feel welcome.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. The school seeks to involve all its members in decision making.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7. Children and adults frequently receive and give praise, encouragement and recognition.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. The school helps all children recognise and understand their feelings and become more adept to handling and expressing them appropriately.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. Training for staff includes: social/emotional development and links between early experiences and brain development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation • Understanding and managing behaviour • Conflict resolution 	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. Opportunities are found to enhance the creative and expressive aspects of the curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11. There is a spectrum of provision designed to meet the needs of all pupils and where possible avoid exclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

12. The provision involved a varied and flexible range of support and interventions for social/emotional/behavioural development e.g. specific focus programmes in anger management/ social/emotional competence.

13. Parents are informed and involved in what conflict resolution approaches / emotional literacy skills children are learning at school.

Areas for improvement:

Actions:

The Nurturing School

Environment

safe and supportive
child ownership of the environment
emotional literacy 'feeling-thinking-action'
relationship based on respect
classroom learning environment checklist used
how we feel affects how we learn is central to school ethos
broader definition of educational success than academic attainment
staff training

Emotional and social development

developments in brain research and early learning
Maslow's hierarchy of need
attachment theory
secure and respectful relationships
clear structure ⇒ routines
⇒ learning
social skills
staff training

GIRFEC National Improvement Framework

Quality assessment and interventions for children with EBD
Whole school: eg circle time, peer mentoring schemes, conflict resolution, QCA guidance "Supporting School Improvement – Emotional and Behavioural development"
Class groups: eg circle of friends, nurture groups, social skills/anger management groups, therapeutic story writing/artwork groups
Individual: eg, buddies, learning mentors/key adults, teaching assistant, counsellor/art therapist

'... the task is to achieve a nurturing ethos throughout the school as a solid basis for all education'.
(Bennathon and Boxall 1996)

Whole school ethos

fostering staff resilience
choices and consequences are clear
the emphasis on 'do's' not dont's'
partnership with parents
proactive work with parents
quality relationships
whole school emphasis on well-being
positive behaviour policy/bullying policy and strategies
school promotes personal, social and emotional well-being for all children and adults including parents/carers
an inclusive school
staff training
staff support network

assessment
communication
listening to the child
listening to the parents/carers
observations
strengths and difficulties questionnaire
Boxall Profile
ABC Charts
staff training
frequent core group meetings

Policy

What is a Nurture Room?

Nurture Rooms are a preventative resource based on well documented psychological theory and research. Nurture Rooms are rooted in a very particular conception of children's psychological development: this is the benchmark against which variations on the classic model must be judged.

The Nurture Room offers a commitment to provide children with an intensive experience of a relationship of a kind that is conducive to healthy emotional and cognitive developments.

The rationale of groups is that satisfactory emotional, social and cognitive development in the earliest years is the product of adequate and attentive early nurturing care. Children who miss this care or who experience significant trauma are often unable to engage with normal age appropriate school demands. The provision gives the child a chance to experience this early care by teaching in ways that suit the child's developmental levels.

All children attending a Nurture Room must have access to a broad and balanced curriculum where the emphasis is on developing early learning skills.

Teachers will need to be clear about the requirements of Curriculum for Excellence and use the guidance from the broad general education alongside a sound knowledge of child development, in order to plan an appropriate and meaningful curriculum.

The Purpose / Aim of a Nurture Room is to:

- provide a flexible and preventative resource which is responsive to the particular needs of the children attending the host schools, eg high mobility and children in need;
- provide ongoing assessment and support for preschool, primary and secondary aged 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;

- provide a secure and reliable small class or individual setting where children can learn by re-experiencing pre-school and primary level nurture from caring adults, who actively work towards enabling their successful reintegration into their mainstream class;
- 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;
- work in partnership with class teachers and parents to enable consistency of approach both at home and across the whole school.

What does a quality Nurture Room look like?

- ensure that children attending the nurture room remain members of a mainstream class where they register daily and attend selected activities
- have a pattern of attendance whereby children spend a large part of each day in the nurture room or attend for substantial regular sessions
- ensure that the Curriculum for Excellence is taught
- offer short or medium term placements, usually for between two and four terms, depending on the child's specific needs, which have been determined on the basis of systematic assessment in which appropriate diagnostic and evaluative instruments have been used, with the aim always being to return the child to full-time mainstream provision
- supply a setting and relationships for children in which missing or insufficiently internalised essential early learning experiences are provided
- be staffed by one to two adults working separately and together modelling good adult relationships in a structured and predictable environment, where children can begin to trust adults and to learn

- offer support for children's positive emotional and social growth and cognitive development at whatever level of need the children show by responding to them in a developmentally appropriate way
- place an emphasis on communication and language development through intensive interaction with an adult and with other children
- provide opportunities for social learning through co-operation and play with others in a group with an appropriate mix of children, both in the Nurture room, and in the classroom or on the playground
- using appropriate diagnostic and assessment instruments, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the nurture group provision in promoting the positive social, emotional and educational development of each child
- promote the active involvement of mainstream staff in the life of the nurture group
- be staffed by adults who have and promote a positive attitude towards parents/carers of all children and encourage their involvement in activities supportive of the nurture group programme
- establish links with outside agencies when required
- plan and prepare carefully for points of transition based on the child's needs and the positive moving-on of relationships

Operational Guidelines

Assessment

Nurture Room decisions and identification should be informed by the use of appropriate diagnostic tools, eg The Boxall Profile which is produced by the AWCEBD and/or the Goodman Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman 1999; 1997).

The Boxall Profile is a key tool for schools. It is used to measure child's level of emotional and behavioural function, highlighting areas for intervention. It is in two parts. The Developmental Strand looks at the child's development and responses in class and how that influences the ability to learn. The Diagnostic Profile identifies behaviours that inhibit or interfere with satisfactory involvement in school.

A completed profile shows the child's areas of strengths and weaknesses and helps in the development of effective IEPs. It also develops teachers' skills in managing behaviour that they may previously have found challenging to their professional competence.

A teacher comment on the Profile was "confronted with a child whose anxiety provoking behaviour seems to make no sense, the profile is where you start. It gives you insights and points of entry into the child's world".

Either the Principal Teacher for Learning Support or school staff will score the Profile (on-line scoring and free user guide available at: <https://nurturegroups.org/introducing-nurture/boxall-profile-online>).

Arrangements for Review of Pupils

If not already referred, children should be referred to an Educational Psychologist.

Each child should be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis and consultations with the Educational Psychologist and other involved professionals will be arranged as appropriate.

Formal reviews with parents will take place on a termly basis.

In-house reviews (Team Around the Child, Core Group)

Reintegration Criteria

Reintegration should be planned by the Nurture Room Staff in consultation with the Headteacher and parents, class teacher and Education Psychologist.

Reintegration will be informed by the use of appropriate diagnosis and evaluation tools.

Parental Links

The Nurture Room is an educational intervention. Whilst the school will be expected to work in partnership with parents of pupils in the Nurture Room, it is important that the Headteacher/PTLS is able to refer parents to appropriate agencies outside education for advice/support.

The Headteacher of the school will be responsible for dealing with any complaints from parents concerning the Nurture Room. Complaints which remain unresolved will be referred through the school's normal procedures and in line with the Comhairle complaints procedure.

The Headteacher is responsible for fostering continuing positive relationships with all parents whose children may have relationships with children in the Nurture Room, or have been effected by the children within this provision, and with all staff within the school.

Resources

The Nurture Room is based in a classroom with a home like area and space set aside for formal learning. The home area can be furnished with a sofa, bean bags, cushions or armchairs and a carpet. Ideally, there will be access to a kitchen facility, a cooker and simple kitchen equipment. Play materials at pre-school level as well as educational equipment for more formal work will be available. There should be easy access to a washroom and toilet facilities.

The child/children in the provision remain on the register of their mainstream class and join their class for appropriate activities such as PE, music, selected classroom lessons or activities and outings. Lunchtime and playtimes are spent with other children in the school. Some children may need other support at these times.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the functioning of the Nurture Room with the school. S/he is responsible for:

- The operational management of the Nurture Room including the arrangements in case of absence of the Nurture Room staff.

- Fostering positive views about the Nurture Room with other parents and teachers within the school.
- Management of the Nurture Room teacher as a member of the school staff.
- Management of the auxiliaries working within the Nurture Room as members of school staff.
- Oversight of the curriculum planning and monitoring work within the Nurture Room.
- Ensuring the Health and Safety procedures are followed in accordance with the school's policy, as well as the Comhairle's.
- Ensuring that the Nurture Room operates within the guidelines of Comhairle policies.
- Headteacher is the Named Person, and the Lead Professional is to be chosen by the Team around the Child.

Role of the Principal Teacher of Learning Support (PTLS)

- To liaise with the auxiliaries working within the Nurture Room and class teacher – this will include the development and implementation of Child Assessment Plan (CAP).
- To be involved in formal reviews as outlined in the Education Additional Support for Learning Act (2016)
- To support curriculum planning.
- To ensure appropriate liaison with other agencies, eg Allied Health Professionals; Social Services; CAMHS.

Role of Class teacher

The class teacher is responsible for the day-to-day management of the class. The teacher has the following duties:

- To carry out school policies and procedures, including child protection procedures where appropriate.
- To organise and plan the activities and curriculum of the classroom, bearing in mind the individual needs of each child.
- To keep daily individual records of the children's progress and intended programmes of work.

- To co-ordinate the work of the Nurture Room auxiliaries.
- To discuss the children regularly with the professional involved, e.g. EP, CAMHS, SW etc.
- To work actively in partnership with parents, carers and other professionals involved with the children's care arrangement.
- To liaise with the Headteacher and PTLS and to attend regular reviews.
- To observe children in classroom, playground and at lunch times in terms of managing less structured sessions, helping children manage successfully.
- To participate in INSET and joint planning with the class teacher and the PTLS re IEPs, Child's Plan, and potentially a CSP.
- Foster positive views about the nurture room with the other children.

Role of the Nurture Room Auxiliary

The auxiliaries working within the Nurture Room works under direction and in partnership with the teacher. Her/his role is to assist the teacher in whatever tasks are necessary including planning and to participate in appropriate INSET.

Role of the Educational Psychologist

- To help with assessment of the children involved.
- to work closely with the school and the team around the child (TATC) to review the functioning and development of the Nurture Room.
- To provide training for staff and for parents.
- To support school self-evaluation processes to determine if the Nurture Room is work effectively.

Monitoring and Review of Provision

- Nurture Rooms will be visited regularly by the PTLS, Senior Education Officer and link EP.
- The Headteacher will collect data from annual self-evaluations to identify success and inform future improvement.

Resources to Help With Setting Up a Nurture Room

Handbook for schools on Nurture Groups

<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/121128nurtureen.pdf>

Book that explains Nurture Groups

Nurture Groups in Schools by Majorie Boxall and Sylvia Lucas

One School's explanation of Nurture Groups to parents

<http://www.haylands.iow.sch.uk/nurture-group-treasure-chest/>

SEN Magazine's description of Nurture Groups

<https://senmagazine.co.uk/articles/articles/senarticles/nurturing-support>

Sample Planning Format for Nurture Groups

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/intervention-nurture-group-planning-sheet-6411754>

Ideas for activities in Nurture Groups

Circle Time

Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom by Jenny Moseley and Pat Murray

There are also other books with ideas for circle time activities

Games

Co-operative and competitive games can help teach children about turn taking, winning, losing, sharing, helping others and working together.

There are a number of books of co-operative games available, for example: *Everyone's a winner: Over 200 Co-operative Games for 7-13 year olds* by Ruth Wills

Games for Thinking by Robert Fisher

Great Big Book of Children's Games: Over 450 indoor and outdoor games for kids by Debra Wise

I'm not necessarily recommending all the ideas in the links below but they do have some ideas of games that can incorporate aspects of the curriculum, try to avoid the adverts in the second one.

<http://www.teachhub.com/engaging-classroom-games-all-grades>

Social Skills

<http://www.icebreakers.ws/small-group/collaborative-drawing.html>

Self Esteem

<http://www.elsa-support.co.uk/self-esteem-activities/>

Emotions

<https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200611/BTJFoxSupplementalActivities.pdf>

Right and wrong

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/DoingRight.html>

Arts crafts and creativity

[Art and craft activities, practical activities such as cooking, building things, drama and organising an activity or event are also worthwhile activities to do in nurture groups. Through these activities opportunities arise for dealing with different emotions, such as pride, disappointment, frustration, patience and perseverance can be developed and opportunities for self reflection and self evaluation arise.](#)

Collaborative problem Solving

<http://learning-for-life.org/exploring/resources/99-720/x09.pdf>

Literature

[Listening to a story being told or read can be calming and if the right stories are chosen can also promote understanding of different people's experiences and their reactions.](#)

[Discussing a news story, such as from the children's newspaper *First News*](#)

Images with some other ideas

<https://uk.pinterest.com/ali4tuna/nurture-group-activities/>