

Nurture Group Policy

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Elliot Foundation Academies Trust Values

1. Put children first

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

2. Be safe

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

3. Be kind & respect all

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

4. Be open

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

5. Forgive

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

6. Make a difference

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others

1. Related Policies & Documents

[Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, January 2015](#)

[Ofsted: Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviour through a Nurture Group Approach, 2011](#)

[Department of Education: Nurture Group Provision- Guidance for Schools, 2023](#)

[Department of Education: Nurture Provision in Primary Schools, 2016](#)

Boxall, M., 2002: Nurture Groups in School: Principles and Practice

Bennathan, M. and Boxall, M., 1996: Effective intervention in Primary Schools: Nurture Groups

NurtureUK: <https://www.nurtureuk.org>

2. Definitions

- Where the word 'Trust' is used in this document it refers to The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- Where the word 'Principal' is used it refers to the school leader of an individual academy and/or federated academy within the Trust.
- Where the word 'Parent' is used in this document it refers to all those with parental responsibility, including guardians and carers.
- Where 'Nurture Group' is used it refers to a 'true' or 'classic' or 'Boxall nurture group'.

3. Policy statement and objectives

- 3.1. As a Trust we recognise that our schools are having to be ever more creative when considering provision that will meet children's increasingly complex social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH).
- 3.2. Decisions around provision have to be considered within the broader context of other school priorities such as finances, staffing, the overall quality of teaching and learning, the availability of additional learning spaces within the school building and on its site, and the capacity of the Local Authority (LA) to provide a range of specialist provision.
- 3.3. Nurture Groups and different types of *nurturing* provision have enabled many educational settings to effectively meet children's complex SEMH needs. However, because settings work within, and respond to, the constraints of their own unique context, these terms have started to be used interchangeably by schools to describe their own, sometimes unique, provision; as a consequence there is not always a shared understanding of what each school means when it describes its provision as 'nurturing' or as a 'Nurture Group'.

Objectives

To support schools when considering how best to meet children's SEMH needs, this document aims to:

- Provide a Trust definition for the term 'Nurture Group'.
- Provide a clear rationale for Nurture Group provision.
- Provide clarity around the types of provision that the Trust considers to be *nurturing* provision as distinct from Nurture Group provision.
- Provide a shared understanding of the principles of Nurture Group provision.
- Provide a shared language associated with Nurture Group provision that will be understood and used by all Trust and school staff
- Be a point of reference for school leaders when considering different ways of meeting children's SEMH needs.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. The Trust will:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the provision with the Principal and SLT, holding them to account, on nurture group matters such as viability, sustainability, effectiveness and impact.

4.2. The Principal will:

- Lead a nurturing whole school ethos that is embraced throughout the school
- Fully support the nurture group staff in their role to deliver high quality nurture group provision aligned to the Trust values
- Ensure nurture group provision is reflected in the Academy Improvement Plan
- Lead on a responsibility shared with all staff to foster the social and emotional development of all children in school, acknowledging and facilitating contributions made by all relevant professionals including nurture staff
- Communicate with the Trust over nurture group matters such as viability, sustainability, effectiveness and impact
- Ensure all staff within the nurture group are appropriately trained and that the quality of provision is consistently high'.

4.3. The Nurture Group Teacher will:

- Be responsible for the day-to-day management of the nurture class, ensuring that the nurture principles are maintained through consistent practice and approaches
- Act as the line manager to the nurture group teaching assistant/additional adult

4.4. The Nurture Group Teaching Assistant will:

- Work closely with, and under the direction of, the nurture group teacher with modelling good adult relationships and interactions

- Work closely with, and under the direction of, the nurture group teacher to ensure provision is effective and has impact.

4.5. The SENDCo will:

- Be involved with the class teacher and nurture group teacher in the identification and assessment of children for the nurture group
- Liaise with the nurture group teacher and class teacher
- Be involved in reviews in line with the SEN Code of Practice

5. TEFAT Understanding of a Nurture Group

5.1. What a TEFAT Nurture Group is:

- It must meet **NurtureUK's 6 principles of nurture provision** (pt 5.4 below)
- It is based on the research and practice of Marjorie Boxall (Appendix 1)
- It is a **mainstream provision**.
- It offers a **short term, focused, early intervention strategy**.
- Attachment theory is central to the theory of nurture and the need for children to form secure and happy relationships with others in the formative years of their lives.
- The focus is on emotional and social development as well as academic progress.
- A **small supportive group of pupils (maximum of 12)** carefully chosen using the Boxall Profile.
- Staffed by 2 adults- **a qualified teacher and an additional adult** eg. HLTA or Teaching Assistant- both of whom have **undertaken the 4 day NurtureUK training: 'Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups'**.
- Pupils attend regularly for a substantial part of the day, every day but remain on their mainstream class register and link with their own class for appropriate activities.
- Pupils **attend for 2-4 terms** and then return to their mainstream class full time.
- The Boxall Profile is used for assessment and planning
- A form of provision that can be sustained over a number of years- financially, suitability of space and appropriately qualified staff.

Appendix 2: the place of nurture groups within a graduated response to meeting children's needs

5.2. The Purpose

This is clearly set out in 'Nurture Group Provision- Guidance for Schools' (Department of Education January 2023):]

- To provide a flexible and preventative resource that is responsive to the particular needs of each child.
- To provide ongoing assessment and support for children showing signs of emotional stress and behavioural difficulties with **the aim of enabling the child to access the curriculum and return to full participation in their**

mainstream class.

- To provide a secure and predictable small class 'setting' where children can learn by re-experiencing pre-school nurture from two caring adults who actively **work towards enabling their successful integration into their mainstream class.**
- To help the children to use their curiosity constructively, improve their self-esteem and develop their confidence, and learn appropriate responses through forming close and trusting relationships with adults.
- To work in partnership with class teacher(s), parents, school staff and other LA services to enable consistency of approach both at home and at school.

5.3. What a Nurture Group is NOT:

It is **not**:

- A provision for children with EHCPs or who are likely to have an EHCP.
- An assessment 'unit'; so it is not a place where the sole purpose is to assess a child's needs within a smaller setting, for example, to gain evidence for an EHC needs assessment.
- An integration or 'get to know you' space or environment; so for example:
 - it is not a place for children who have moved into the school's catchment area from another school and about whom little is known
 - nor is it a place for children who have just started at the school and who speak little English
 - nor is it a place for children who have just arrived in the country and have no English and/or have not attended school in their home country because the statutory school age is older than in Britain
 - and nor is it a place for children who may have/have had poor or disrupted school attendance eg Travellers.
- A space for children on a phased return to school, for whatever reason eg following a suspension, significant illness, or time travelling.
- For children on a temporarily reduced timetable, for whatever reason.
- A 'holding' space; for example:
 - the child has attended the Nurture Group for the full 4 terms but is/continues to be at real risk of permanent exclusion
 - the child has an EHCP and the school feels their needs cannot be met in the mainstream classroom
 - the child has an EHCP and is awaiting a place in specialist provision
 - for children who have experienced/are experiencing significant trauma and, as a consequence, require long term specialist therapeutic intervention which they may be on a waiting list for, or are actually receiving.

See Appendix 3: children with EHCPs and nurture groups.

5.4. Nurture Group Principles

These underpin Nurture Group provision:

- Children's learning is understood developmentally
- The classroom offers a safe base
- The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
- Language is a vital means of communication
- All behaviour is communication
- The importance of transition in children's lives.

5.5. Selecting children for a Nurture Group

Nurture Group support is appropriate for children who are experiencing significant social, emotional and behavioural needs in school arising from attachment difficulties in early childhood.

Indicators of such difficulties may include:

- Children who are very restless, have concentration difficulties, behave impulsively or aggressively;
- Children who are withdrawn, unresponsive and who have difficulty forming friendships or relating to others; and
- Children whose known early or recent history suggests that they may be at risk.

Additional criteria for selection:

- Appropriate Wave 2 interventions have not had the impact that would be expected
- Scores achieved within the assessment tool The Boxall Profile
- Initial observations and/or assessments undertaken by the class teacher, SENDCo and/ or trained nurture group teacher.
- Parental agreement
- When deciding which children will benefit most for a Nurture Group, placement consideration should also be given to:
 - The balance of the needs within the group
 - The number of boys and girls
 - The age range of the the children
 - The mix of pupils who are "acting out" and those who are withdrawn
 - the ideal total number of children- usually 10-12 but this depends on the mix of children

5.6. What a Nurture Group 'looks like'

- Up to 12 children
- Every day
- For 2- 4 terms
- Led by a qualified teacher and an additional adult, both of whom have completed the 4 day NurtureUK training

It is important that children attending the Nurture Group also have contact with their class peers and feel that they 'belong' in their classroom. Therefore, realistically, children will attend:

- For half a day - either in the morning or in the afternoon

- If the Nurture Group runs in the morning, then the children should register with their class and then be collected by Nurture Group staff soon afterwards
- Consideration needs to be given to lunch times- often a 'flashpoint' for the children
 - Eating lunch together as a group could form the end of a morning Nurture Group with the children returning to their classrooms for afternoon registration;
 - Or it could form the start of an afternoon Nurture group, with the children being collected by Nurture Group staff just before the children start their lunch break.

Nurture Groups can run all day, but this often places strain on the school's resources and it is more difficult for the children to feel connected to their mainstream class.

Appendix 4: Factors to consider regarding mornings or afternoons

Appendix 5: Factors to consider regarding the ages of the children

The ethos within the group

It is:

- Safe and secure
- Promotes well being
- Respects the difference between learners
- Conducive to positive relationships
- Fosters achievement and celebrates success
- Emotionally positive spo feelings are recognised, understood and dealt with
- Empowering, supporting decision making and making choices and
- Free from negative stressors such as hunger and thirst

The space

The nurture group needs to include:

- Soft furnishings that include a comfy sofa, rug, blankets and cushions
- A dining area that may need to double as a work area
- A kitchen area that may include a toaster, kettle, microwave and oven; with appropriate risk assessments in place
- A work area that may include computers
- The use of a sink for hand washing and washing up
- A mirror
- 'Withdrawal area and
- A selection of books for individual reading or to be shared with an adult

Ideally, the indoor nurture group space should have:

- immediate access to a safe and appropriately resourced outdoor space that can be used all year
- ease of access to toilets

The curriculum

This must satisfy the key aim of early nurture groups set up by Marjorie Boxall which was to address missed or distorted early learning experiences.

It is **different to the mainstream curriculum** as some vulnerable children who struggle at school may need a modified curriculum that:

- Emphasis the development of personal, social and emotional skills
- Based on developmental age rather than chronological age.

Effective planning for the nurture group curriculum needs to take account of:

- Statutory requirements and mainstream provision
- Identified Boxall Profile targets
- The 6 principles of nurture groups
- Pupils' prior knowledge, experience and interests
- Adult support through scaffolding and modelling
- Play-based learning
- Snack time and breakfast and
- Thematic planning

Appendix 6: example of a simple curriculum plan

Record Keeping: Monitoring and Reviewing Pupil Progress

Record keeping is an essential part of planning and implementations and should:

- Help to make sure that the needs of the children are met
- Provide a clear account of the work undertaken
- Help practitioners to provide evidence of their interventions and decision making processes
- Include information to help practitioners review, monitor and evaluate their work
- Provide an audit trail for stakeholders
- Assist in the further development and improvement of nurture group practice.

TEFAT expects that:

- A formal review with parents should take place on a regular basis
- On a termly basis The Boxall Profile is used to monitor each child's progress within the nurture group
- Each child should be monitored following re-integration into the mainstream class and appropriate records should be kept
- In addition, following re-integration, The Boxall Profile should be used annually to monitor each child for longer term analysis of their progress

- Longer term analysis, to evidence impact of the provision, should include for all children who have attended the nurture group:
- UPRN
- Age
- Length of time in the nurture group
- Boxall Profile entry and exit scores
- Position on the Code of Practice
- Any reduction associated with attendance at the nurture group in addition to annual attendance data, highlighting any improvements.

Appendix 7: example of the types of records that might be held

Inclusion and the Reintegration Process

Within 2 terms, practitioners with the nurture group will begin to consider a child's readiness to re-integration to their mainstream class full-time. They will consider:

- Evidence from their Boxall Profile
- Consultation with the child's class teacher including observations and records from those times in the day when the child has been in their mainstream class eg afternoons in the case of a morning nurture group
- Additional assessment of the child to further understand their strengths and development areas.

From this point the nurture practitioners will:

- Draw up a **reintegration plan** focusing on a staggered reintegration to ensure success
- Meet with the class teacher and parents to discuss the pupil's readiness for reintegration
- Meet with the parents to discuss the child's readiness for reintegration and to share with them the reintegration plan
- Have a discussion with the child which will determine the level of celebration when leaving the group
- Support class teachers through the reintegration process

6. Appendices

Appendix 1:

Nurture groups: when did it all start?

Nurture groups were started in 1969 by Marjorie Boxall, an educational psychologist working in Hackney, Inner London. Large numbers of children were entering primary school in Inner London with severe emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, leading to unmanageable rates of referral for specialist provision and support.

Marjorie Boxall recognised that the difficulties presented by most of these children were the outcome of impoverished early nurturing, so that they were not able to make trusting relationships with adults or to respond appropriately to other children. They were not able to meet the social and intellectual demands of school life which was further damaging their already fragile self-confidence and low self-esteem.

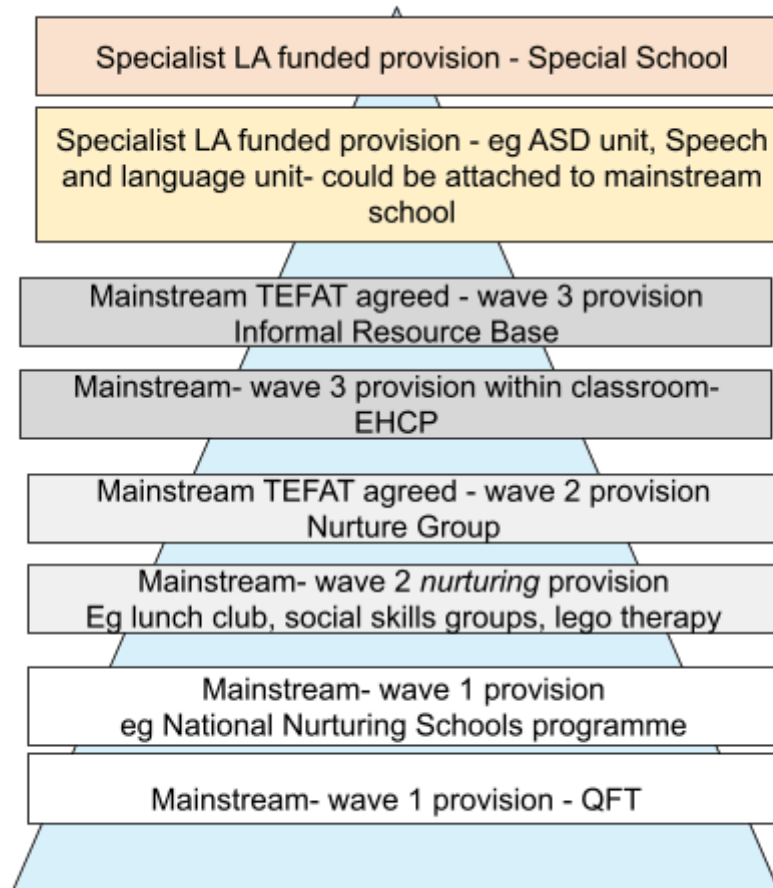
To address the identified concerns, children were placed in nurture groups, classes of up to 10 to 12 children with a teacher and an assistant. The aim was to support learning based on the incremental developmental needs of the children. The intention was that they would be accepted and valued, resulting in increased levels of learning based on higher levels of self-confidence and self-esteem.

So the children did not feel stigmatised, they registered with their mainstream class in the morning and returned for the later part of the afternoon.

The reputation of these early nurture groups was so high that they spread rapidly in Inner London and elsewhere in the UK, supported by Marion Bennathan who was working as an educational psychologist in Bath.

Appendix 2:

Nurture group provision within a graduated response to meeting children's needs



Appendix 3:

Why children who have, or are likely to have, an EHCP should not attend a Nurture Group

Fundamentally, a Nurture Group is a **mainstream, wave 2, form of provision that is time limited. It is intended for children who, following an appropriate time in the Nurture Group, will return full time to their mainstream classroom; their needs will then be met through QFT and periodic wave 2 provision i.e. without an EHCP.** This wave 2 provision may include provision such as attending a school lunch club, school run lego therapy, social skills group to support a transition as well as possible wave 2 provision to support academic progress.

An EHCP identifies a child's individual needs and the provision that should be in place in order to meet those needs. This will be mainstream or specialist provision. If mainstream provision is named, then this is understood to be provision within a mainstream classroom; any additional funding is intended to support the **longer term or permanent adjustments** that will be needed to provision in order to meet the child's identified needs.

Is there ever an exception?

When identifying children for the Nurture Group, the intention should always be to select children who will return to their mainstream class full time, and have their needs met through QFT and periodic wave 2 provision. Therefore if staff feel it is likely the child will be considered for an EHCP in the near future, then they should not be considered for a nurture group.

If a child has attended an effective and well led Nurture Group for the maximum time of 4 terms and staff feel that their social and emotional needs still cannot be met within the mainstream class without significant adjustment and additional support, then the SENDCo should consider gathering evidence for an EHCP. The observations and assessments during the child's time in the Nurture Group will prove invaluable. However this 'lack of progress' should not stop the child carefully transitioning back to their mainstream class full time after 4 terms. If an EHCNA is in progress, they do not remain in the nurture group beyond 4 terms just because their EHCP has yet to be finalised.

So, in this scenario:

- the intention was always that the child would successfully return to their mainstream class full time
- at the point where it was believed the child would not transition back successfully to their class, then informed conversations should take place with the LA and Trust to identify the provision and support that will be appropriate for the child
- the child cannot remain in the Nurture group beyond 4 terms- it is not a 'holding place'.

Appendix 4:

Which is best, mornings or afternoons?

The SLT, SENDCo and nurture group staff need to give careful thought to this.

When deciding on which time of the day the nurture group should run, it is important to remember the purpose of a nurture group alongside what it is not. It is intended to improve children's social and emotional well-being so that they are better able to engage independently in their learning.

Often, children who meet the eligibility criteria for a nurture group struggle to engage in the core curriculum without significant additional adult support, often disrupting the learning of others. It is often in these subjects that they lack the least confidence.

Running a nurture group in the mornings, means the learning around social and emotional well being and regulation can be applied to carefully planned learning linked to reading, writing and maths. Improving the children's confidence and feelings of self-worth as well as their ability to take risk and manage 'failure' can be carefully applied within the context of a thematic or topic based curriculum that focuses on these core subjects as well as other subjects. The children's increased self-confidence in these subjects will stand them in good stead when they return to their classrooms in the afternoons.

It has been suggested that nurture groups should run in the afternoons because by lunch time, the children have 'lost it'. In such contexts, considerable additional adult support is placed into the classrooms in the mornings to ensure that the children are engaging in what the school considers to be the important core subjects. However this begs the following questions:

- Does the afternoon nurture group become a 'holding' space?
- Is there not greater value in supporting the children to engage in aspects of the core subjects in a morning nurture group, when they are in a small, supportive group with adults who are specifically trained to meet their emotional and well being needs?
- In terms of feeling that they 'belong' in their mainstream class, is the learning that tends to take place in classrooms in the afternoons, more accessible to nurture group children?
- What's the priority- being heavily supported in the classroom so that they are *seen* to be engaging in the core subjects? or focusing on improving their social, emotional and well-being which will mean they can, in due course, better engage in all aspects of the curriculum?

Appendix 5:

Factors to consider in terms of the ages of the children

Nurture groups are appropriate for key stage 1 and key stage 2 children, however careful thought needs to be given to the age groups it will focus on as it needs to have impact.

Whilst there is no hard and fast rule, nurture groups in mainstream primary schools work effectively and have high impact when they are focused on:

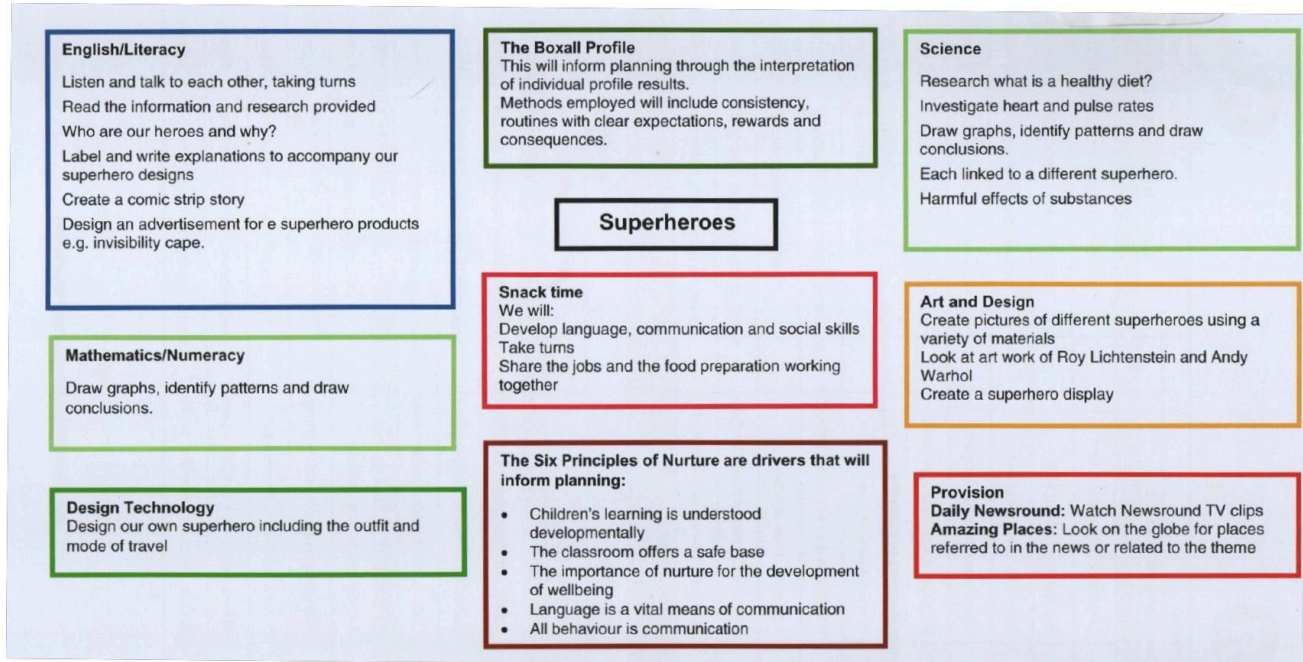
- Children in Years 2 and 3;
- or Years 2, 3 and 4

Year 1 children are often not considered for a nurture group as, if they were to meet the criteria, they would most likely still need an EYFS curriculum. This would make planning for the provision more difficult if there were older children in the group.

Year 6 children can be in a nurture group. However it would be better if the children had attended when they were younger, so that they had reintegrated full time into their mainstream class before Year 6, allowing plenty of time to then be prepared for the transition into key stage 3.

Given that a child might be in a nurture group for 4 terms, it would perhaps not be a good idea to consider them starting the group part way through Y4.

Appendix 6: Example of a simple curriculum plan



Note: the 3 boxes in the middle column remain the same for all planning

Appendix 7: Examples of the types of records that might be held

These can be personalised to include the academy's own records as well as those specific to the nurture group.

Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● referral forms ● expression of concern forms ● minutes of staff/referral meetings
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Boxall Profiles ● Goodman's SDQ ● data eg attendance, academic profile, incident report forms, ● exclusion data, social and emotional data
Nurture Group intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Photos of children working, of displays, work, trips and celebration events ● booklets and work completed ● samples of work ● floorbooks
Monitor and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reviewed individual learning/education plans ● ongoing data tracking; Boxall Profiles, academic, social and emotional levels ● records of views: children, parents and carers, staff and other professionals eg questionnaires, letters comments from review meetings
Resettlement / reintegration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reintegration plans ● ongoing tracking of the child throughout the process of resettlement and beyond ● ongoing data tracking; Boxall Profiles, academic, social and emotional levels ● records of views: children, parents and carers, staff and other professionals eg questionnaires, letters comments from review meetings

Appendix 8: Example of the attributes to be considered within a Person Specification for a Teacher leading Nurture Group provision

The academy will need to think carefully about the school's context and what knowledge, skills and experience will be needed by the teacher leading the nurture group provision. For example a nurture group set up for Y1 and Y2 children may benefit from a teacher with significant experience in the EYFS, whereas this may be less appropriate for a nurture group aimed at Y4, 5 and 6 children.

These attributes can be adjusted to align with the academy's usual HR template.

Essential	Desirable	Comment
QTS		
Completed the 4 day NurtureUK training		
Experience as a successful mainstream primary class teacher	Consistently good or better classroom provision where children make good progress	What about a secondary trained teacher for a nurture group of older KS2 children? Consider their knowledge, understanding and teaching experience of the whole primary curriculum, particularly of English and maths- do they have the subject knowledge to peel the learning back as far as it needs to go?
.	Has effectively planned and taught all subjects within the primary curriculum	Knowing how to plan and implement an effective curriculum which is relevant to the children in the group and which is engaging is critical
Good knowledge and understanding of the English and Maths curriculum relevant to the children for whom the nurture group is set up		Usually, regardless of the age of the children in a nurture group, the stage they are at in terms of maths and English tends to be within KS1.
Proven to have high expectations of behaviour and a range of effective behaviour management		

strategies		
Proven to effectively manage children whose social and emotional needs are such that they are a barrier to learning and the child is unable to positively access school life		
	Has experience as a Senco	
	Has taught in specialist or alternative provision	
	Has undertaken additional training that is relevant	
Highly skilled at assessing children's needs and identifying and planning their next steps		In terms of children's social and emotional development as well as the subjects within the national curriculum
Their practice indicates that they are a creative and flexible thinker who will think 'outside the box' when trying to meet children's needs.		
As a classroom practitioner, creates a positive culture where children feel supported and expectations for learning and behaviour are high		
	Has experience of effectively deploying additional adults so that children's needs are met and they make good progress.	
Effectively liaises with other colleagues (and professionals from other services where there has been the opportunity) in order to better meet children's needs		

Resilient, reflective and self-motivated		
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