

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 19 AUGUST 2009

PILOTING OF NURTURE CLASSES IN EAST AYRSHIRE

Report by Executive Director of Education & Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To seek Cabinet approval to pilot nurture classes in East Ayrshire primary schools and develop nurturing approaches in Early Years establishments.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Nurture groups/classes were developed by Marjorie Boxall (1976) to meet the needs of vulnerable children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They have been identified as a highly successful area of good practice by the Inspectorate in England (OFSTED) (2005), Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) (1999) and the Scottish Government Education Department (2007). Nurture now forms a part of the Scottish Government's Positive Behaviour Strategy and an HMIE publication on the benefits of the approach is in preparation. Nurture provides both a preventative and reactive strategy for supporting children and young people experiencing, or at risk of developing, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The programme is a key element in a nearby authority early intervention strategy, where they currently have 58 nurture classes.
- 2.2** A nurture class is typically a small supportive group of pupils, usually within a mainstream primary school. Staffed by two adults, the nurture class supports a maximum number of ten children who are having difficulties learning within their mainstream class. Target groups are vulnerable children who typically have a history of withdrawn or disruptive behavior, who are at risk of exclusion or who may have a pattern of non-attendance or experience difficulties in the family environment. The nurture class is an integral part of the whole school as pupils attend regularly for part of the day and remain with their own class for the remainder of the day.
- 2.3** Children in the nurture programme adhere to their academic curriculum but the focus is predominantly upon social and emotional development through developmentally appropriate play and explicit modelling of social skills by the two adults. The nurture class intervention is time-limited and there is an expectation that the children will return to their mainstream class full-time in two – four terms. The resource is flexible to allow for a small majority of children who may need to access the support over a longer period of time.
- 2.4** Nurture classes are based on the 'Principles of Attachment Theory'. See Appendix I for further explanation of the relevance of Attachment Theory for the educational context.

2.5 Nurture classes can make a significant contribution to supporting the local authority's development and practice in relation to the following policies and legislation: The Curriculum for Excellence, Getting it Right for Every Child, Equally Well, The Early Years Framework and the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act (2004). Please see Appendix II for details.

2.6 Research suggests that nurture classes improve attainment and increase inclusion. Particular gains for pupils in nurture classes have been noted in literacy attainment. See Appendix III for further information.

3. CURRENT POSITION

3.1 The local authority has supported the development of a nurture class at New Cumnock Primary School over the last academic year. This was funded through increased staffing allocated to support the amalgamation of Castle and Cairnhill Primary Schools. The school supported six primary one to three pupils. Of the six, four children returned to their mainstream class after two terms having made significant improvements in their social and emotional functioning and in their behavioural skills, as measured by the Boxall Profile. They no longer require the additional support of the nurture class.

4. PROPOSAL

4.1 It is proposed that Cabinet support the following developments:

- (i) Pilot nurture classes in four East Ayrshire Primary Schools for two academic years aiming the resource at identified pupils in primary one to three.
- (ii) Support Nursery Schools and Family Centres to develop a flexible model of Early Years nurturing practice.

4.2 In order to attempt to meet greatest need, target schools would be those which have some of the highest numbers of pupils in the most deprived fourth and fifth quintiles as measured by Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation. These schools would then require to be matched to similar schools for evaluative purposes. Account has also been given to school readiness to be involved in nurture, school roll, geography and aligned pre-school provision. The proposed schools for the pilot are Hillhead, Shortlees, New Cumnock and Auchinleck primary schools.

4.3 Each pilot school would be allocated 0.7 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to release an experienced member of the school's teaching staff to deliver nurture to a maximum of ten primary one to primary three children four mornings a week. Four 0.6 FTE classroom assistants would be allocated to each school to support nurture. The fifth morning would be used for liaison with external agencies, support services and engaging and supporting parents.

4.4 In the Early Years sector, all family centres, nursery schools that operate a wraparound service and nursery schools aligned with the primary pilots would

be invited to undergo training in nurture. These establishments tend to cater to a higher number of children who may be deemed 'at risk'. Through support from Psychological Services, early years establishments would be encouraged to develop a 'nurturing ethos' and possible small group nurture supports where target children may be extracted for short periods of time if required.

- 4.5** A formal evaluation of the nurture pilot would be undertaken by Psychological Services. This will involve both quantitative and qualitative assessment tools. Central support would also be provided by Psychological Services through training and monthly network meetings.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** In order to pilot nurture in four primary schools, 2.6 FTE teachers and 2.4 FTE classroom assistants would be required. Each of the pilot schools would be supported by 0.1 FTE Community Link Worker and 0.1 FTE Family Support Worker in order to undertake parenting support work.

- 5.2** In the Early Years sector there are currently no implications for personnel.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The teacher costs are covered through the use of the Scottish Government allocation of fully funded probationers to the authority. Each of the pilot schools, with the exception of New Cumnock primary school, will be allocated a fully funded probationer. New Cumnock primary school was previously allocated an additional staffing allocation as part of the merger programme and the school has used 0.5FTE of this additional funding to support a nurture class. The classroom assistants will be funded using the remaining £25,000 residue from the previous early intervention budget that was available to support projects across establishments. The Community Link worker and Family Support Worker will be funded from existing budgets held in Community Support.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** Nurture is commensurate with the Community Planning themes of promoting lifelong learning and improving health and wellbeing.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** Nil.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1** It is recommended that Members:

- (i) approve the pilot of four nurture classes and support a model of early years practice in nurture;

- (ii) seek from the Executive Director of Education & Social Services regular updates on the ongoing impact of the nurture approach;
- (iii) otherwise, note the contents of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

RW/MMcK
August 2009

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Service: Community Support or Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service: Schools

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICERS

Tom Williams: Principal Educational Psychologist,
Ruth Irwin: Educational Psychologist.

Appendix I

What is the theory behind nurturing principles in schools? Nurture and Attachment Theory

The vast majority of behaviours we see in children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (clinging, attention-seeking, panic, anger, restlessness, low self esteem, inability to self-regulate etc) can be understood in the context of how a child's attachments with their primary care-giver develop.

The vast majority of children have experienced life in the context of secure relationships with their primary caregivers. In such a relationship the adult is both readily available, sensitive to the child's signals, responsive when protection or comfort is ought *and* consistent, reliable and predictable in their response. They also provide a secure base for the child to explore from and return to. As a result the child is confident that their parent/carer will be available, responsive and helpful. A securely attached child learns positive internal models of how adults are (i.e. predictable, responsive and interested in them) and positive internal models of themselves (as worthwhile, interesting, lovable and loved). They learn that exploration is safe (the child knows the adult will check on their well being and safety so they don't have to worry) and that learning is interesting.

Difficulties in the attachment process arise when the care giver is not consistently available to the child or responsive to their needs. As a result the child becomes uncertain that their needs will be met and defences are learnt in order to give protection from disappointment or hurt. They develop negative internal models of adults (i.e. that they are unpredictable, unreliable, disinterested and untrustworthy) and negative internal models of themselves (i.e. they are worthless, uninteresting & unlovable). They learn that exploration is not safe (the child has to look after themselves without knowing the risks) and that learning is risky as the child has not learnt through appropriate risk taking with appropriate adult support.

What does this mean for the educational setting?

Securely attached children are better able to learn. If they have had a positive experience of attachment they will be able to make new attachments more readily (e.g. to their teachers). As a result they will more readily seek help when experiencing difficulties (academic or social) and are more willing to share the attention of adults with their peers.

Insecurely attached children may feel lost and unnoticed in a large and complex organisation like a school. If their internal model of themselves is of worthlessness they may set out to prove this is the 'right' model each time they meet new adults, to the extent that it becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. As a result the child may provoke unresponsive or hostile reactions in adults and peers thus reinforcing their feelings of self-doubt and insecurity.

The nurture class setting attempts to meet the needs of insecurely attached children by providing reliable and consistent adults, predictable and clear interactions, routines and boundaries, a developmentally appropriate curriculum, specific attachment figures and a challenge to their negative internal models. The nurture class could also meet the needs of a small number of children with additional support needs such as moderate learning difficulties and social communication difficulties as it may provide enough support for them to remain within a mainstream environment.

Appendix II: Where is Nurture placed in the context of national policy frameworks?

Curriculum for Excellence 2008	GIRFEC (2008)	Concordat (2007)	Equally Well (2008)	Early Years Framework (2009)	Additional Support for Learning Act (2003) and Inclusion
<p>Nurture classes explicitly enable children to develop the Four Capacities as outlined in the Curriculum for Excellence and specifically targeting those at risk of requiring additional support to develop them.</p> <p>Nurture actively involves parents in the work of the class and through, sensitive parental engagement, attempts to promote children's development across the contexts of both school and home.</p> <p>It aims to support parents to better understand their parenting style and the needs of their children</p> <p>It actively attempts to reduce children's difficulties and promote both physical and mental health and well-being, as outlined in Health and Wellbeing outcomes</p> <p>Views children as individuals and plans for their learning accordingly</p> <p>Emphasises the transferability of life skills across the context of the Nurture class, mainstream class</p>	<p>The approach is in keeping with the core principles and values of GIRFEC, such as building on strengths and promoting resilience, promoting the well-being of individual children and young people, working in partnership with families and coordinating supports</p> <p>It is commensurate with the GIRFEC principle of providing additional help that is appropriate, proportionate & timely by providing help as early as possible and considering short and long-term needs</p> <p>It supports the GIRFEC philosophies of Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included and Safe</p> <p>The target children</p>	<p>It also underscores the Scottish Government's assertion that the 'early intervention identification of need and provision of service is essential for children who have additional support needs.'</p> <p>Aims to improve the learning experience for children at risk of school failure in the early stages. May also impact positively on those in the mainstream class whose experiences may be improved due to improved engagement of their peers who are experiencing Nurture</p> <p>May be used to support children who are in kinship care</p>	<p>Nurture is early intervention in action.</p> <p>It aims to build children and their family's emotional and physical resilience.</p> <p>Through location within a mainstream school or early years establishment (the universal service) parents can seek support through a non-stigmatising and sensitive approach by professionals</p> <p>It aims to engage with families with the highest levels of need in the areas of highest deprivation</p> <p>Allows professionals to work co-operatively with high risk families by developing the knowledge base and skill set of education personnel</p> <p>Offers a platform or focal point for joined up partnership working</p>	<p>Nurture can actively support the key themes of the Early Years Framework, in a holistic way for children under 8.</p> <p>Operates a model of risk and protective factors and aims to build resilience</p> <p>Nurture Links strategy & policy clearly to the national performance framework, creates positive opportunities, empowerment & capacity building for children & families, focuses on prevention, risk identification and early intervention, offers opportunities for action at individual, environmental, family & service level, better manages transitions and attempt to break cycles of poor outcomes</p> <p>Help parents and carers provide a nurturing and stimulating home environment in order that they can better help their children</p> <p>Ensure that we equip young people with good literacy and numeracy skills – giving them the confidence & ability to continue to learn & develop</p>	<p>Supports early intervention and a personalised approach to additional support needs, in order to address inequality and promote positive outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>Support transition in accordance with the ASL Act from preschool to primary school for children whose development is delayed</p> <p>Offers a curriculum and approach to meet the needs of children with, or at risk of developing, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties across the 3-18 curriculum</p> <p>It is part of the mainstream school or early years establishment. It thus promotes inclusion and protects learners rights to access mainstream provision (Standards in Scotland's</p>

<p>and home environment</p> <p>Is early intervention to promote resilience, educational success and reduce the later likelihood of becoming in need of more choices, more chances post-school</p> <p>Has been identified as good practice by HMIE in improving attainment and meeting individual needs</p> <p>Has been identified by Scottish Government Positive Behaviour Team as an area of good practice</p>	<p>most vulnerable as identified by GIRFEC, for example children who are, or are at risk of becoming, looked after and/or accommodated, living in poverty, experiencing domestic abuse or parental substance abuse</p>		<p>with other agencies to improve outcomes for families</p> <p>Could be used to engage parents and deliver evidenced based parenting interventions</p>	<p>other skills</p> <p>Supports the goal to ensure that support is provided to improve the life chances of those most at risk</p> <p>In keeping with the framework Nurture is an evidence based strategy</p> <p>Supports planned reduction in class sizes in P1-3 in a way that has the greatest impact on outcomes for children</p>	<p>Schools Act, 2001)</p> <p>Affords an opportunity to better meet the needs of children whose additionality is due to being bullied, living with parents who are abusing substances or have mental health problems, are experiencing domestic violence are on the child protection register, are young carers have experienced a bereavement</p>
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Appendix III: What Outcomes would we hope to see?

Recent evaluations, most notably in Glasgow's roll out of 59 Nurture Classes, have provided a strong evidence base for the efficacy of the approach. Information below has been collated from Iszatt & Wasilewska (1997), Cooper & Gerrard (2005), Lovey (1999), Foyle (2001)Boorn , (2002), Sanders (2007), Reynolds & Kearney (2007) and Cooper & Whitebread (2007).

Outcomes: Gains made by children in Nurture groups

Learning and Teaching

- Children made measurable, significant academic gains, particularly in literacy attainment.
- Children developed more effective learning skills (as measured by the CATM)
- Children's motivation to learn and independent learning skills improved

Additionality

- Children were 7 times less likely to need specialist educational provision
- They were more likely to remain within their own mainstream school (85% of Nurture class attendees remained in mainstream with only 17% requiring additional supports 2 years later)
- Attendance levels improved
- Exclusions decreased

Social Emotional & Behavioural Gains (As measured by SDQ & Boxall Profile)

- In the Glasgow pilot of 108 pupils receiving Nurture support only 8 did not significantly improve their social, emotional and behavioural skills.
- Academic and social emotional and behavioural skills improved in comparison to a control group who received standard behaviour management and social skills input
- The majority of pupils can generalise their newly acquired skills into the mainstream setting after a relatively short period of time (approx four school terms)
- Quality of social interactions with adults and peers improved

Whole School Gains: The 'Nurturing School'

- Staff reported that the attainment levels of the pupils in their mainstream classes improved
- They report reduced level of exclusions
- They report increased attendance rates
- Teachers across the school spoke more positively about pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who were not included in the nurture cohort and felt better skilled to support them within mainstream classes
- Staff absenteeism and high turnover reduced

Parent Report

- Children's attitudes towards school improve
- They feel more optimistic about their child's ability to remain within mainstream
- Parents became more involved in the school as they felt that the cycle of 'negative feedback' about their child had been broken

- Parents reported that the children behaved better in the home

Glasgow are in the early stages of a longitudinal study but emerging data would suggest that these gains remain over time. In an East Ayrshire pilot, we would hope to see similar gains for our target pupils and schools. Longitudinally we may also see a reduction in referrals to Supported Learning Centres, Communication Centres, Special Schools, Youth Strategy and Outwith placements. We may also see a reduction in onward referrals to Health and Social Services, for example to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or Community Youth Support Team (CYST). Conversely, we may see the opposite as Early Intervention may lead to earlier identification of difficulties