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**Whole School Policy for:**

**The Nurture Programme**

**Saint Finian's NS**

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

* The Nurture Group Network, helping children and young people to succeed.

**Rationale**

At Saint Finians NS, we believe that to enable our pupils to learn effectively, they need to feel safe in their environment and be both socially and emotionally ready to learn. We understand the importance of holistic development and where possible, offer nurturing and enriching experiences to enable the development of the whole child. We recognise that some of our pupils are not always emotionally ready to learn when they come to Saint Finians and require an increased level of support for them to access the wider curriculum. For this reason, we offer a Nurture Group for key pupils to support their social and emotional development.

**The Principles of Nurture**

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

1. Children’s learning is understood developmentally – the foundations of learning begin at birth and develops via a close relationship with an adult. Independence develops through dependence. Social empathy as well as learning develops from being thought about, valued and encouraged. Staff in the nurture group respond to each child at whatever emotional or social age s/he appears to be with the appropriate degree of control and nurture. We respond to the child’s developmental age, not their chronological age. The quality of this response enables the child to progress. Children’s developmental progress is assessed through the Boxall Profile handbook.

2. The Nurture Room offers a safe base – there is a structure to the routine which is predictable, an adult who is reliable and who can set firm boundaries without being punitive. Children see adults working together and supporting each other, this provides security and reassurance. The Nurture Room offers a balance of educational and domestic experiences aimed at supporting the development of the children’s relationships with each other and with the Nurture Teacher.

3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing – nurture is listening, being responsive, remembering and engaging in reciprocal, shared activities such as play, having snack, reading, learning, talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and being thought of as individuals.

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

Words are used instead of actions to express feelings and opportunities are created for extended conversations or encouraging imaginative play to understand the feelings of others.

5. All behaviour is communication – Understanding what a child is communicating through behaviour helps staff to respond in a firm but not punitive way. If the child can sense their feelings are understood this can help to diffuse difficult situations. We use the Emotion Coaching approach. We are trauma-informed and use Psychological First Aid as recommended by our NEPS Psychologist. This principle underlines the adult response to the children’s challenging behaviour. ‘Given what I know about this child and their development what is this child trying to tell me?’

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

**Aims**

We aim to:

* Encourage the development of positive social relationships with both peers and adults.
* Provide opportunities to understand emotions and develop pupil’s self-worth, confidence, motivation, trust, self-esteem and adaptability.
* Provide a safe, calm and nurturing environment, alongside a programme of activities structured to the emotional, social and intellectual needs of each pupils, while keeping them in close contact with their base class.
* Support pupils to understand their behaviour and to develop strategies to self-regulate emotions and anxieties.
* Support the development of a whole-school nurturing ethos focused on optimal inclusion through trauma informed practice.

**Referral and Entry Criteria**

* Initial concerns from a Class Teacher would be discussed informally with the Inclusion Coordinator/SEN Teacher.
* Pupils are then discussed at a fortnightly pastoral care management meeting. At this meeting, any concerns will be raised and appropriate actions identified and put into place to address these concerns. It would generally be the case that a pupil who is identified for the nurture group would be discussed at this meeting.
* The following pupils would be considered for a place in the nurture group:
* Pupils who appear emotionally insecure – this may present as a lack of self-acceptance, low self-worth or a lack of trust.
* Pupils who are withdrawn and unresponsive.
* Pupils who appear unsettled and struggle with transitions and communication.
* Pupils with poor social skills, who cannot share, are demanding or uncooperative.
* Pupils who have difficulty making and keeping friends.
* Pupils who demonstrate immature behaviour.
* Pupils who behave aggressively, impulsively or inappropriately in other ways.
* Pupils who find change upsetting.
* Pupils who appear unable to integrate into a mainstream classroom.
* ***It is important to note that children with ASD with behaviours similar to those noted above will be catered for within a social/emotional withdrawal group specifically catered for ASD related needs.***

***The Nurture Room caters for children who present with behaviours or circumstances, separate to ASD, which hinder their ability to access the curriculum and thus are barriers to their learning.***

**Selection Process**

Selection process for candidate for the Nurture Programme will be as follows:

1. Whole school assessment of each class using The Developmental Portrait.
2. Summary sheets highlighting the lowest scores from each class.
3. Compilation of a list of target children.
4. Liaison with management, HSCL and pastoral care.
5. Compilation of a list of target children, continued. Following liaison with relevant staff.
6. Carry out the Boxall Profile on target children.
7. Confirm final selected 12-15 children.
8. Consent meetings with parents to ensure a collaborative approach and strong home school link.
9. Create and draw up a Boxall Learning Plan based on the Boxall Assessment Results.

***It is important to note that a child may be chosen for placement in The Nurture Room for the following reasons:***

* ***Boxall Profile/ Developmental Portrait Assessment result***
* ***Child’s personal circumstances (this may include a recent traumatic event, attachment difficulties, a bereavement and or/ other complex familial situations which is impacting the child’s learning experience at school.)***

***NB: the selection process is not rigid in its use as not all children who are in need of nurture will show up in the assessment process – and so this is why the process relies heavily on active communication with relevant personnel and regular liaison with principal and HSCL.***

**Day-to-Day Operation**

At present the Nurture Provision operates daily, catering for 14 Pupils who are collected and returned by the Nurture Lead Practitioner from their classes. In the rare event of staff absence, the Principal will make the decision, dependent on the needs of the pupils and the availability of other staff, as to whether to use another member of the SET Team (who is well known to the pupils in the provision and trained specifically to support the needs of this provision) to support in the group for the day, or whether to close the provision for the day. In the event of other staff being absent, the Nurture Lead Practitioner will not be called upon to cover absence. The Nurture Group timetable is non-negotiable, changing only in the event of training and/or visits from professionals such as our NEPS Psychologist and/or review meetings with our Drama Therapist.

The Nurture Class Lead Practitioner will plan for the Nurture Groups fortnightly. Each fortnight will have a ‘Theme’ and two core picture books will be used as the teaching stimuli. The organisation of each session daily is as follows:

1. Morning Welcome Circle/Zones Check In – check in using the Zones of Regulation
2. Snack Time – Children sit together through the act of sharing a meal.
3. Work Station – Children gather at the horseshoe table to carry out a collaborative task.
4. Sensory Circuits – Alerting section, Organising section, Calming section.
5. Structured Play – Teacher facilitated role play.
6. Feelings Mat – Children gather around the Feelings Mat for a final check in.

*Children recite a transition rhyme after each section of the session. There are displayed on the wall of The Nurture Room.*

**Teaching and Learning**

The Nurture Group has a themed curriculum which has a large emphasis on Social, Personal and Health Education activities with a particular focus on wellbeing and life skills. Activities are planned around a fortnightly theme to provide a stimulating environment for the children. Weekly planning incorporates developmental and age appropriate skills informed by the pupils' individual Boxall Profiles. The Nurture Group runs every morning, afternoon and evening and always begins with Circle Time around the dining area using a talking object, allowing the children to share news, talk about their feelings and develop speaking and listening skills. This is usually followed by a themes task or activity, individual target work and a shared snack time, providing the opportunity to socialise with peers and adults as well as take responsibility for preparing food and clearing away. Teaching and learning activities come primarily from the morals taught through the relevant picture books (all recommended and recognised by Beacon House and PDST)

Other aspects of teaching and learning is informed by a combination of programmes such as:

* Saint Finian's SEBD Curriculum
* The Zones of Regulation
* A Lust for Life
* Stay Safe
* TalkAbout

**Involvement of Parents and other staff members**

The Nurture Group Lead Practitioner will keep in regular contact with parents and work to build a positive and productive relationship in relation to their child’s needs and progress. Parents will be invited in and discussions about their child’s progress be carried out within a warm and nurturing environment.

The Nurture Group Lead Practitioner will keep up active communication with class teachers in relation to children in their class attending Nurture.

An open and collaborative relationship with our Drama Therapist will also be developed as many children working with her may also be attending Nurture.

Regular reviews with the HSCL teacher will be carried in order to pass on any relevant information and/or to communicate how best to approach a particular family or situation.

The principal and DLP will be kept in regular contact regarding child protection concerns.

**The Equine Project**

The Equine Project will take place once a week and involve 4-6 children attending Forrest Equestrian Centre in Swords. The focus of the project will be the development of a bond between the child and their horse; and the development of empathy through acts such as brushing, minding and feeding the horse. The children will be chosen with the help of our NEPS Psychologist and those attending Nurture. The children will leave at half 9 in the morning and be back at half 11. They will be accompanied by the principal, the Nurture teacher and one SNA.

**Monitoring and Review**

Children will attend The Nurture Room for between 2-4 terms. Where a child needs longer than this, it will be discussed and facilitated through liaison with the management team and the child’s parents. Children will be assessed using the Boxall Profile before they begin, and again after two terms. Before their discharge, they will be assessed again and their results compared.

Where a child does not require the full two terms, perhaps for circumstantial reasons such as a recent bereavement – and where a shorter period in Nurture would be sufficient – then the child will be placed and monitored within the Nurture setting through consultation and liaison with management and HSCL. Their progress will be monitored and class teacher and relevant staff will be kept informed of their progress.

The results of all assessment data will be compared and progress discussed with the relevant staff. This will be reviewed in conjunction with their general assessment data, such as the NEPS My Thoughts About School Checklist Tool. Regular monitoring and assessment will be carried out through behaviour tallies and anecdotal notes, in conjunction with their class teacher. Class teachers will hold responsibility for the recording of behaviours through tally charts, as progress within Nurture can only be fully witnessed when assessed within the mainstream setting as their inclusion within this setting is the ultimate goal.

Where a child has made significant progress, their assessment results will be shared with parents and relevant staff and they will be discharged from Nurture when all stakeholders involved in their care agree that this is the most productive action to be taken for the child.