

SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
Care, Learning and Wellbeing

Nurture Group Initiative

Evaluation Report
South Ayrshire Psychological Service

March 2013

Final Evaluation Data Analysis and Report Compilation
South Ayrshire Psychological Service

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1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Nurture Groups are an inclusive approach for addressing children's social, emotional and behavioural needs within a mainstream school setting. They are based on the principles of attachment theory, early intervention and prevention, and are targeted towards children who for a variety of reasons have missed out on early experiences that promote secure social and emotional development.
2. Following approval by the Council's Leadership Panel and Children and Community Directorate, Nurture Groups were established on a pilot basis in Newton Primary School, Braehead Primary School, Heathfield Primary School and Girvan Primary School in September 2010.
3. The pilot period was set for 2 years with an interim evaluation being carried out at the end of year 1. Following the interim evaluation a decision was taken to expand the initiative during year 2 by appointing an additional nurture teacher to each of the four pilot schools. In year 2, nurture groups targeted more children within the younger age group and nurture teachers undertook collaborative work with colleagues to develop and apply nurturing principles in work outwith the nurture rooms.
4. The Nurture Group initiative was clearly aligned to the Council's Curriculum for Excellence, GIRFEC, Early Years Framework and Corporate Parenting strategies.
5. Nurture Groups were staffed by experienced teachers and pupil support assistants who had completed accredited training with The Nurture Group Network.
6. Over the two year period of the pilot, 103 nurture group places were provided in the four schools. Children accessing these places were identified, following screening and assessment using the Boxall Profile, as having a profile of needs indicating that they were likely to benefit considerably from participation in a Nurture Group. Groups ran on a part-time basis four sessions per week and targeted pupils in stages P1-4 and/or pupils in stages P5-7.
7. All children participating in Nurture Groups had additional support needs as defined by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009. 17% of children participating in the Nurture Groups were looked after and 73 % were boys.
8. At the end of the first year of the initiative, children attending Nurture Groups showed:
 - ∟ Significant improvements in average scores on the developmental strand of the Boxall profile;
 - ∟ Significant improvements in average scores on the diagnostic profile of the Boxall profile; and,
 - ∟ Significant improvements in average scores across all five sub-sections of the Boxall profile.
9. At the end of the second year of the initiative, children attending Nurture Groups showed:
 - ∟ Significant improvements in average scores on the developmental strand of the Boxall profile;
 - ∟ Significant improvements in average scores on the diagnostic profile of the Boxall profile; and,

- ∟ Significant improvements in average scores across three out of five sub-sections of the Boxall profile.
10. Teachers and parents/carers of children who attended the Nurture Groups reported improvements in:
- ∟ Behaviours reflecting self-esteem; and,
 - ∟ Behaviours reflecting emotional and behavioural development.
11. Children attending the Nurture Groups reflected positively on social aspects of the groups and high levels of overall enjoyment of the experience.
12. The Nurture Group initiative, although at an early stage in its development, is having a significant effect on participating pupils. This finding is supported by within child measures, the Boxall profile, and by the perceptions of pupils, parents/carers and staff.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Nurture Group Intervention

Nurture Groups were developed by Marjorie Boxall (1976) in Inner London as a response to the large number of children presenting with severe social, emotional and behavioural problems on entering school. Boxall identified problematic early nurturing experiences as contributing to the difficulties that many of these children had in being able to make trusting relationships with adults, respond appropriately to other children and cope effectively with the demands of school life. The aim of Boxall's Nurture Group Intervention was to "create the world of earliest childhood; build in the basic and essential learning experiences normally gained in the first three years of life and enable children to fully meet their potential in mainstream schools". Since these early developments, Nurture Groups principles and practices have continued to develop, with the approach now established as a popular and effective method for addressing the social, emotional and behavioural needs of vulnerable children in schools across the UK.

2.2 Nurture Group Principles and Practice

A Nurture Group is an inclusive, early intervention and preventative approach for addressing children's social, emotional and behavioural needs within a mainstream school setting. The approach provides a carefully routinised day, where there is a balance of learning, teaching, affection and structure, within a home like environment. Nurture Groups are targeted towards children who for a variety of reasons have missed out on early experiences that promote secure social and emotional development. They offer a context for modelling and developing relationships for children who have missed, or have insufficiently internalised, essential early learning experiences.

Nurture Groups are a within school resource staffed by two adults for up to eight children. They offer short or medium term placements where the pupils attend regularly, usually returning fully to their mainstream class within 2-4 terms. Nurture Groups do not stigmatise children who attend since the intervention is part of a whole school approach to supporting children. Most Nurture Groups operate on a part-time

basis with all children maintaining strong links with their class peers throughout the period of their attendance.

Nurture Groups are delivered within a specifically designated and designed area of the school. This area, the nurture room, aims to provide a secure, predictable and stimulating environment to meet the needs of each pupil. There is a strong focus on supporting positive emotional and social growth and cognitive development at the level of the individual child by responding to his/her needs in a developmentally appropriate way.

In addition, activities and experience offered within the nurture room:

1. Fully align with Curriculum for Excellence;
2. Place an emphasis on communication and language development through intensive interaction with an adult and other children;
3. Provide opportunities for social learning through co-operation and play with others in a group with an appropriate mix of children; and,
4. Recognise the importance of quality play experiences in the development of children's learning.

All Nurture Groups are guided by the following six key principles:

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally;
2. The nurture room offers a secure base;
3. The importance of nurture for the development of self-esteem is understood;
4. Language is a vital means of communication;
5. All behaviour is communication; and,
6. The importance of transition in children's lives is understood.

2.3 Nurture Groups – National Context and Developments

Within the context of Scottish education, Nurture Groups have been recognised as having a significant role to play in addressing educational disadvantage and underachievement, promoting resilience, and ensuring educational success for all. The approach closely aligns with the strategic priorities of the Early Years Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). Nurture Groups are now being developed in most Scottish Local Authority areas, have been identified as good practice by HMIE, and are being actively promoted and supported by the Scottish Government Schools Directorate.

2.4 Nurture Groups – Local Context and Developments

In April 2010, South Ayrshire Council's Leadership Panel accepted a report by the Executive Director, Children and Community, recommending that a Nurture Group initiative should be coordinated and evaluated by the Council's Psychological Service, with four Nurture Groups being established on a pilot basis in Braehead, Newton, Heathfield and Girvan Primary Schools.

The Nurture Group initiative was aligned to the following strategic priorities areas:

1. Curriculum for Excellence – health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes;
2. Curriculum for Excellence – additional support for learning;
3. Getting it Right for Every Child – achieving, nurtured and included outcomes;
4. Early Years Framework – early intervention for vulnerable children; and,

5. Corporate Parenting – targeted support to improve outcomes for looked after children.

3. THE PILOT NURTURE GROUPS

This section presents data from the four pilot schools related to the operation of the Nurture Groups for both year 1 (September 2010 - June 2011) and year 2 (September 2011 - June 2012). This section includes qualitative and quantitative data.

3.1 Pupil Characteristics

Tables 1 identifies the number of pupils who were included in year 1 of the nurture initiative. The table also includes information on the groupings in each pilot school, in addition to pupil age, gender and, where appropriate looked after status.

TABLE 1					
School and Nurture Group	Number of Pupils	Mean Age (years)	Number of girls	Number of boys	Looked after
School 1 Group 1	8	6Y4M	3	5	1
School 1 Group2	7	10Y6M	-	7	1
School 2 Group 1	6	6Y6M	-	6	3
School 2 Group 2	3	9Y5M	-	3	-
School 3 Group 1	7	6Y4M	-	7	1
School 3 Group 2	5	10Y2M	4	1	-
School 4 Group 1	6	5Y11M	1	5	2
School 4 Group 2	6	9Y11M	2	4	1
All Schools	48		10	38	9

Tables 2 identifies the number of pupils who were included in year 2 of the nurture initiative. The table also includes information on the groupings in each pilot school, in addition to pupil age, gender and, where appropriate looked after status.

TABLE 2					
School and Nurture Group	Number of Pupils	Mean Age (years)	Number of girls	Number of boys	Looked after
School 1 Group 1	6	5Y11M	1	5	-
School 1 Group2	5	9Y3M	5	-	-
School 2 Group 1	5	7Y5M	-	5	-
School 2 Group 2	4	9Y9M	4	-	-

Group 2					
School 3 Group 1	11 *	7Y5M	2	9	2
School 3 Group 2	8	10Y3M	-	8	1
School 4 Group 1	16 *	6Y4M	6	10	5
School 4 Group 2	As only one set of pupils' data for both pre and post scores were available it was decided to exclude this data set from the final analysis.				
All Schools	55		18	37	8

* 2 sub-groups

3.2 The Boxall Profile

The Boxall Profile was developed by Bennathan and Boxall (1998) for specific use with Nurture Groups. It provides two types of information, 1) developmental and diagnostic information to inform the selection of children and provide a pre-intervention baseline; and, 2) developmental and diagnostic information gathered at set intervals to measure progress and impact and provide an individual learning/progress profile for each child.

The Boxall Profile consists of 68 descriptive items that are categorised under two sections:

I. The Developmental Strand.

This reflects what the child has made of their life experiences so far. It taps into characteristics such as the ability to listen to adults, awareness of others needs, adaptable behaviour when in a group and being able to work collaboratively. It is divided into two sub-sections, 1) organisation of experience and 2) internalisation of controls. A **low** score on these sections indicates that the child has missed appropriate learning experiences in their early years. Effective intervention should **increase** this score.

Three sample items are:

- ∟ Makes constructive and reciprocal friendships which provide companionship;
- ∟ Accepts disappointments; and,
- ∟ Takes appropriate care of something s/he has made or work s/he has done.

II. The Diagnostic Profile.

This reflects the child's social and emotional development. It taps into characteristics such as engagement with environment, self-image and attachment to others. It is divided into three sub-sections, 1) self-limiting features, 2) undeveloped behaviour, and 3) unsupported development. A **high** score on these sections indicates that the child has missed appropriate learning experiences in their early years. Effective intervention should **decrease** this score.

Three sample items are:

- ∠ Remembers a real or imagined offence, bears a grudge and determinedly takes his/her revenge;
- ∠ Abnormal eye contact or gaze; and,
- ∠ Over-reacts to affection, attention or praise; gets very excited and may become out of control.

3.2.1 Boxall Profile – Analysis 1 (Year 1)

Profiles were produced for each child in August/September 2010, prior to starting the Nurture Group (pre-intervention), and subsequently 8 months later (post-intervention stage1) as part of the final year 1 evaluation. The results of these are summarised in tables 2(a) and 2(b) below.

TABLE 2 (a)					
School and Nurture Group	Mean Scores for Developmental Strand	Mean Scores for Developmental Strand	t	df	P
	Pre-intervention (September 2010)	Post- intervention (June 2011)			
School 1 Group 1	77	108.6	8.037	11	**
School 1 Group 2	81	118.3	12	6	*
School 2 Group 1	68	102.16	-5.488	5	*
School 2 Group 2	81	91.66	-4.382	5	*
School 3 Group 1	77	86	-5.048	3	*
School 3 Group 2	96	112	-3.806	4	*
School 4 Group 1	62	97	-2.391	7	*
School 4 Group 2	79	95	-1.807	6	NS
All Schools	77	101.34	5.299	6	*

- * Significant difference $p < 0.05$
- ** Significant difference $p < 0.001$
- NS Difference not significant

TABLE 2 (b)					
School and Nurture Group	Mean Scores for Diagnostic Profile	Mean Scores for Diagnostic Profile	t	df	P
	Pre-intervention (September 2010)	Post- intervention (June 2011)			
School 1 Group 1	61	40.83	1.459	5	*
School 1 Group 2	55.5	31.33	1.763	5	*
School 2 Group 1	44.83	18.33	4.083	5	*
School 2	74.83	48	4.292	5	*

Group 2					
School 3 Group 1	83	65.2	2.378	3	*
School 3 Group 2	91	76	3.049	4	*
School 4 Group 1	46.12	21.5	5.634	7	**
School 4 Group 2	71	30	5.125	6	*
All Schools	65.91	41.40	-8.788	7	**

* Significant difference $p < 0.05$

** Significant difference $p < 0.001$

NS Difference not significant

As shown by the **increase** in scores in table 2(a), all of the school groups apart from one had increased their performance on the Developmental Strand of the Boxall Profile at the end of the stage 1 of the intervention. This difference between pre and post intervention scores was statistically significant at a $p < 0.05$ level in six of the school groups and statistically significant at a $p < 0.001$ level in one of the groups. As a single group of 48 children, performance on the Developmental Strand had improved significantly at the end of stage 1 of the intervention (pre-mean = 77, post-mean = 101.34, $t = 5.299$, $p = .002$).

As shown by the **decrease** in scores in table 2(b), all eight school groups had increased their performance on the Diagnostic Profile of the Boxall Profile at the end of the stage 1 of the intervention. This difference between pre and post intervention scores was statistically significant at a $p < 0.05$ seven in four of the school groups and statistically significant at a $p < 0.001$ level in one of the school groups. As a single group of 48 children, performance on the Diagnostic Profile had improved significantly at the end of stage 1 of the intervention (pre-mean = 65.91, post-mean = 41.40, $t = -8.788$, $p = 0.000$).

3.2.2 Boxall Profile – Analysis 1 (Year 2)

Profiles were produced for each child in August/September 2011, prior to starting the Nurture Group (pre-intervention) in year 2, and subsequently 8 months later (post-intervention stage2) as part of the final year 2 evaluation. The results of these are summarised in tables 2(a) and 2(b) below.

TABLE 2 (a)					
School and Nurture Group	Mean Scores for Developmental Strand	Mean Scores for Developmental Strand	t	df	P
	Pre-intervention (September 2011)	Post-intervention (June 2012)			
School 1 Group 1	87.17	116.17	-7.358	5	**
School 1 Group 2	89.2	128.8	-6.369	4	*
School 2 Group 1	83.25	100.25	-4.045	3	*

School 2 Group 2	86	97.75	-.956	3	NS
School 3 Group 1	84.82	83.45	.275	10	NS
School 3 Group 2	81	82	.227	7	NS
School 4 Group 1	75.6	93.9	-2.365	9	*
School 4 Group 2	As only one set of pupils' data for both pre and post scores were available it was decided to exclude this data set from the final analysis.				
All Schools	83.86	100.33	2.988	6	*

* Significant difference $p < 0.05$
** Significant difference $p < 0.001$
NS Difference not significant

TABLE 2 (b)					
School and Nurture Group	Mean Scores for Diagnostic Profile		t	df	P
	Pre-intervention (September 2011)	Post-intervention (June 2012)			
School 1 Group 1	35.60	21.6	3.347	4	*
School 1 Group 2	30.60	14.8	2.883	4	*
School 2 Group 1	49.25	21.5	3.942	3	*
School 2 Group 2	42	28.75	4.285	3	*
School 3 Group 1	51.64	42.36	1.482	10	NS
School 3 Group 2	74.75	54.5	2.132	7	NS
School 4 Group 1	46	38.4	.825	9	NS
School 4 Group 2	As only one set of pupils' data for both pre and post scores were available it was decided to exclude this data set from the final analysis.				
All Schools	47.12	31.70	-5.959	6	*

* Significant difference $p < 0.05$
** Significant difference $p < 0.001$
NS Difference not significant

As shown by the **increase** in scores in table 2(a), three out of the seven school groups analysed had increased their performance on the Developmental Strand of the Boxall Profile at the end of the stage 2 of the intervention. This difference between pre and post intervention scores was statistically significant at a $p < 0.05$ level in three of the school groups and statistically significant at a $p < 0.001$ level in one of the groups. As a single group of 55 children, performance on the Developmental Strand had improved significantly at the end of stage 1 of the intervention (pre-mean = 83.86, post-mean = 100.33, $t = 2.988$, $p = 0.024$).

As shown by the **decrease** in scores in table 2(b), four of the seven school groups analysed had increased their performance on the Diagnostic Profile of the Boxall

Profile at the end of the stage 2 of the intervention. This difference between pre and post intervention scores was statistically significant at a $p < 0.05$ level in four of the school groups. As a single group of 55 children, performance on the Diagnostic Profile had improved significantly at the end of stage 2 of the intervention (pre-mean = 47.12, post-mean = 31.70, $t = -5.959$, $p = 0.001$).

3.2.3 Boxall Profile – Analysis 2 (Year 1)

Children's performance on the Boxall Profile was further analysed according to the five subsections:

- I. The Developmental Strand
 - a) Organisation of experience
 - b) Internalisation of control

- II. The Diagnostic Profile
 - a) Self-limiting features
 - b) Undeveloped behaviour
 - c) Unsupported development

Table 3 shows the mean pre-intervention and post-intervention year 1 scores for all schools across the five sub-sections of the Boxall Profile.

TABLE 3					
Boxall Category	Pre-intervention Scores	Post- intervention (1) Scores	t	df	P
Ia. Organisation of experience	41	53.36	6.750	43	**
Ib. Internalisation of controls	36	46.05	5.572	43	**
IIa. Self-limiting features	13	8.36	-5.152	43	**
IIb. Undeveloped behaviour	17	8	-5.800	43	**
IIc. Unsupported development	34	21.05	-4.143	43	**

- * Significant difference $p < 0.05$
 ** Significant difference $p < 0.001$
 NS Difference not significant

As shown by the scores in table 3, at the end of year 1 of the intervention, the improvement in the overall group mean for the 48 children was statistically significant at a $p < 0.001$ level in all five sub-sections of the Boxall Profile.

3.2.4 Boxall Profile – Analysis 2 (Year 2)

Children's performance on the Boxall Profile was further analysed according to the five subsections:

- III. The Developmental Strand
 - c) Organisation of experience
 - d) Internalisation of control

- IV. The Diagnostic Profile
- d) Self-limiting features
 - e) Undeveloped behaviour
 - f) Unsupported development

Table 3 shows the mean pre-intervention and post-intervention stage 1 scores for all schools across the five sub-sections of the Boxall Profile.

TABLE 3					
Boxall Category	Pre-intervention Scores	Post- intervention (1) Scores	t	df	P
Ia. Organisation of experience	41	53.36	2.531	49	*
Ib. Internalisation of controls	36	46.05	2.159	49	*
IIa. Self-limiting features	13	8.36	-1.260	49	NS
IIb. Undeveloped behaviour	17	8.00	-1.270	49	NS
IIc. Unsupported development	34	21.05	-2.298	49	*

- * Significant difference $p < 0.05$
- ** Significant difference $p < 0.001$
- NS Difference not significant

As shown by the scores in table 3, at the end of year 2 of the intervention, the improvement in the overall group mean for the 55 children was statistically significant at a $p < 0.05$ level in three of the five sub-sections of the Boxall Profile.

4. EVALUATIONS BY PUPILS, PARENTS/CARERS AND STAFF

This section of the evaluation reports views of pupils, parents/carers and staff after 2 years of the Nurture Group initiative.

4.1 Teacher Evaluations

These comments were provided by the class teachers of children attending the Nurture Groups.

- ∠ Because ... achieves more in the nurture room he returns to class feeling pleased and more confident. Occasionally he will attempt subsequent tasks in class, but not always.
- ∠ He benefits from working in a small group with teachers.
- ∠ She certainly enjoys going and I would say she is making more eye contact when speaking to adults
- ∠ The Nurture Group enhances and improves ...'s school experience and goes some way to compensating him for the lack of nurturing in his pre-school years.
- ∠ ...'s social skills have improved slightly and he is better at taking turns and interacting in class with his peers.
- ∠ ... demonstrates a slight improvement in concentration and keeps on task for a greater period of time. He interacts and shares with others more readily and is involved during co-operative learning sessions.

- ∠ The group has a positive effect on all the children and adults in the school.
- ∠ Having a child from my class in the group has benefited the other children in my class
- ∠ I have been able to discuss any problems with the group's facilitators
- ∠ I would like more opportunities to visit the group.
- ∠ ...'s behaviour in the class in the afternoon session is much calmer having been in the Nurture Group in the mornings.
- ∠ At the moment ... is a much happier child and is showing a sense of humour. He is less self conscious and is more willing to co-operate and openly discuss his feelings. He is thoroughly enjoying his Nurture Group experiences.

- ∠ ... has demonstrated a much calmer, settled attitude having been in the Nurture Room. She is beginning to take instructions and be far less disruptive altogether. She comes back from the Nurture Room a happy girl!
- ∠ I feel that the children who have attended the group have made good progress functioning in the school.
- ∠ ... is really benefiting from the one to one, small group setting . His self-esteem and confidence is taking leaps!
- ∠ ...'s academic progress will increase with increased social and concentration skills which are being developed in the Nurture Room
- ∠ X is interacting much better with his peers, particularly at PE and co-operative learning. He is more settled and comfortable at coming back into class, however only just coping with a full afternoon in class.
- ∠ He is socially interacting more during Friday's Circle Time and is much better at waiting his turn.

- ∠ His parents and I have seen a big improvement in his social skills since he started going to the Nurture Room. It has been an invaluable experience for him.
- ∠ The Nurture Room is working really well with ... as it is somewhere he is safe and settled in his daily routine. This is helping him to be more settled and calm when coming back to class. The Nurture Room is also ensuring he is getting breakfast every morning.
- ∠ ... enjoys the quiet and small group. He comes back to class more settled.
- ∠ ... has settled into school more since attending the Nurture Room. He craved and needed more 1:1 teaching and the Nurture Room was able to provide this for him. He has made a lot of progress which I am not sure would have been as good if it wasn't for the Nurture Room.
- ∠ ... is very comfortable in leaving class to attend the Nurture Room and is increasingly settled to tasks on his return, when supported.
- ∠ The Nurture Room]is an excellent idea and set up for ... It is appropriate as he requires focussed support and small group accommodates this. ... has begun talking and responding to adults in classroom on occasions.

- ∠ ... seems a lot happier with a great decline in tantrums and leaving the class.
- ∠ At first ... was rather unsettled and a little unhappy on returning to class. This has changed recently. He is now playing with other children more, rather than alongside them. He is progressing very well academically. His speech is also coming on with him starting to address staff and take part in conversations.
- ∠ Having children from my class in the group has benefited the other children in my class. I can spend more time working with my middle ability group of children when I am not distracted by the demands of these children.

- ∠ Having children from my class in the group has been a positive experience for me.
- ∠ I feel that the children who have attended the group have made progress in the school and are more settled in the afternoon when returning into the class.
- ∠ A huge difference in’s social skills and self confidence. He can now play and work with his friends in class happily.
- ∠ has become a really cheerful, confident member of our class thanks to the Nurture Group.
- ∠ has only been in the Nurture Group for a short time; however, she remembers to knock on the door on her return and says “excuse me” or waits her turn more readily. She still needs to develop positive friendships within the class and learn how to behave appropriately (keeping hands to herself; following instructions; working with others etc.) and also not answering back!
- ∠ is beginning to work better with others in the class. She has developed more positive friendships within the class. She can still be heavily reliant on adult support to complete tasks but is gradually beginning to be willing to tackle tasks a little more independently.

4.2 Parent/Carer Evaluations

These comments were provided by parents/carers of children attending the Nurture Groups.

- ∠ ... definitely enjoys being in the Nurture Group and talks positively about being part of the group.
- ∠ ... has told me that she is a much happier and much more confident girl since she went in the Nurture Group. She is a good deal more relaxed and happier going to school.
- ∠ ... does enjoy coming to the Nurture Group most of the time. However, he is missing out on crucial elements of his learning...we feel that the amount of time spent in the Nurture Group is too much at this specific age and stage of his development
- ∠ My child has benefited from their time in the Nurture Room.
- ∠ I have found the group’s staff approachable and helpful.
- ∠ The group has had a positive effect on my child at home.
- ∠ My child appears to get in better in their own class now.
- ∠ The nurture group has really helped ...
- ∠ ... is a much happier boy and is totally different at home, we can now do things together, this is how families should be.
- ∠ I think it is a good idea but not effective for
- ∠ Think it is great. ... is starting to work now and is enjoying his time in the Nurture Room. Thank you.
- ∠ He is much happier coming to school.
- ∠ He loves coming to school now.
- ∠ I feel he is getting more attention.
- ∠ He talks more about what he is doing in school now.
- ∠ I feel I can speak to the teacher.
- ∠ I feel ... is doing so much better in the Nurture class with his work and manners. Well done to everyone in the Nurture class for a very positive and rewarding class.
- ∠ Even though my son still has his moments, I feel the Nurture Group has really helped him and has been great for him as he has had somewhere other than home to speak freely on how he is feeling. I cannot always be there for him if an

issue comes up at school and the nurture group provides that space. I am reassured that he can always get guidance from the staff in the nurture group. I think for future children the Nurture Group is a great support for them and should be continued.

4.3 Pupil Evaluation

These comments were provided by children attending the Nurture Groups.

- ∟ When my Mum first told me about the Nurture Group I felt scared but now I am glad I came because I get to meet new friends and cook.
- ∟ The Nurture Group has helped me to become more confident.
- ∟ I like the new friends I have made. We are happy together.
- ∟ I love the art activities we do.
- ∟ It helps me follow the rules.
- ∟ I can do good work, good sitting and good listening.

- ∟ We can go to the Nurture Group if we are feeling angry or sad and we can use the think tank.
- ∟ I would like to invite my friends to come and see what we are doing more often.
- ∟ It gives us an opportunity to do things that we don't do in class, e.g. cooking and playing games.
- ∟ I made a special friend in the Nurture Group.
- ∟ It is quieter than in my classroom because there aren't as many people.
- ∟ I enjoy going to the group and look forward to it.
- ∟ I enjoyed cooking with the group, also other activities.
- ∟ My favourite part is toast time
- ∟ You get to play on the whiteboard as well so it's sort of like class but different at the same time.
- ∟ It also lets me go somewhere to calm down- the tent. I can practice yoga there. You can't do that in the class.
- ∟ It's different from other classes, but we are still working hard.
- ∟ It's easier for me to learn in the smaller Nurture Group than the big classroom. You know when things are going to happen.
- ∟ ...I like sitting with other children. You learn to take turns and stuff.
- ∟ Well, we eat toast. And biscuits and drinks and that. And we all sit round the table together...and lots of people do jobs. Some people, well..., we all help each other but only two people do jobs. Only two people are allowed jobs at snack time.
- ∟ Walking to the Nurture Group after lunch each day is good because you are in school, but the Nurture Group doesn't feel like school and it's miles away from the classrooms.
- ∟ It's a different space.
- ∟ It has things in it that you don't get in class, and, erm ...it's away from the main class so you can get away from everyone if you need space.
- ∟ It makes you feel special as you are lucky to be in the Nurture Group as only a few pupils get to be in it.
- ∟ Everybody. I would show it to everybody- I would take it to show my class teacher sometimes but not very often.
- ∟ The charts are the same as we had in class for doing work and, er, for doing well. We also have a computer and a whiteboard in the nurture group which is the same. The other pupils from the classroom have visited the Nurture Group once, and, er [pause] I think they were really jealous of what we did in there because it is still different.

- ∠ I miss being in it now [referring to the Nurture Group]. Not been a visit for ages.
- ∠ I get to take work in from home, to the Nurture Group or to the class teacher which makes me feel good. I did some work in my normal class and took it to the Nurture Group and got it finished really quickly.

- ∠ My mum would say that it has helped me. My mum says that I talk more at home and do more things because I know I can do them now. Dad just says that I take more time with things, like, er..., I take more time with the dishes at home because I enjoy doing them.
- ∠ And I do the dishes at home, because I am confident doing them and I know exactly what I am doing. I am good at the dishes and I wash and dry them.
- ∠ Everyone would like the Nurture Group- all children- older and younger. But only children that are ready to listen will get something out of it. Children that ready to listen and to do a little work.
- ∠ We always got a choice because we have learned to behave better.
- ∠ Aye, you always get to choose after you have completed each job. And you don't get upset now, because you know you will always get a choice in the end. I used to get annoyed if I didn't get a choice in class...
- ∠ And I get to play with what I want all the time now as I finish my work all the time now.

- ∠ The Nurture group teacher doesn't tell you what to do. She talks things through with you and helps you to understand more and then you see how to talk things through with other people.
- ∠ She helps with everything, er, maths, drawing, language. Erm, I don't know. She is the best thing about the Nurture Group as she gives me lots of time and helps me to understand things. She doesn't shout at all.
- ∠ [laughing], well...she's lovely...yeah, she helps me.
- ∠ She keeps us safe and tells us what to do for work. And although I may want to do other stuff, I do what she asks me to do as she is the best teacher that I have had. So I listen to her.
- ∠ Well, it's Mrs M [Nurture Group teacher] who tells me what to do but also keeps me in control.
- ∠ I think it [referring to the Nurture Group] has just the right number of teachers and pupils in it.
- ∠ You can always go to Mrs M [Nurture Group teacher] and she always has more time for you.

5. CONCLUSIONS

South Ayrshire Council's Nurture Group initiative is aligned to the broad strategic priorities of Curriculum for Excellence (health and wellbeing and additional support for learning), GIRFEC, Early Years Framework and Corporate Parenting.

Pilot Nurture Groups were established for 48 children in four primary schools in September 2011 and 55 children in September 2011 to assess the benefits of this inclusive approach to addressing children's social, emotional and behavioural needs within a mainstream school setting.

The aim of each Nurture Group was to provide children with an environment that aids their emotional, social and cognitive development, and removes barriers to their engagement on these levels.

This two year evaluation demonstrates that the South Ayrshire Nurture Group pilot has had a significantly positive effect on the pupils who attended. This finding is supported by a) within child measures associated with emotional, social and cognitive development (Boxall Profile) and b) the perceptions of pupils, parents/carers and teachers.

At the end of the first year of the initiative children attending Nurture Groups showed:

- ∠ Significant improvements in average scores on the developmental strand of the Boxall profile;
- ∠ Significant improvements in average scores on the diagnostic profile of the Boxall profile; and,
- ∠ Significant improvements in average scores in all five sub-sections of the Boxall profile.

At the end of the second year of the initiative, children attending Nurture Groups showed:

- ∠ Significant improvements in average scores on the developmental strand of the Boxall profile;
- ∠ Significant improvements in average scores on the diagnostic profile of the Boxall profile; and,
- ∠ Significant improvements in average scores across three out of five sub-sections of the Boxall profile.