



# The How, What and Why of The Sanctuary

## **Introduction**

Many parents/carers have been enquiring as to why some of our children attend the Nurture Centre for their morning education. This leaflet tells you about The Nurture Centre - why it was set up; what it does and why it is needed at Amesbury CE Primary School.

## **Brief History**

An educational psychologist, Marjorie Boxall started the first Nurture group in London in 1969. There was huge success, with other areas following suit to set up other groups all over London. The 'Warnock' report in 1978 recognised the good work of the Nurture groups and hence they became an integral part of many schools all across the United Kingdom, helping children to develop and reach their full potential. Amesbury primary's Nurture centre was set up in March 2010 and has gained recognition from Wiltshire Council for its success with children who sometimes find school difficult.

## **What is a Nurture Group?**

The Nurture Centre has been set up to meet the needs of our children. It provides a short term intervention every morning to meet the social, emotional and behavioural needs of a small group of our learners. The short term aim is to address their needs and help them to develop skills in resilience. The School cannot alter the difficulties some of our children face in their lives but we can help to equip them with the tools they need to manage their circumstances, feelings and behaviour. The children join their own classes in the afternoon but ultimately the aim is to reintegrate them back in full-time to their class as soon as possible. In the afternoons our Pastoral Manager works with parents/carers to help them manage their children's behaviour and give them advice and strategies in helping keep family life smooth.

## **Why?**

Many children experience some 'disturbance' in their balanced lives. This is often temporary and, with help and support, they move on to face the future with a positive frame of mind. The Nurture Centre provides this help and support and believes that time spent concentrating on the above skills has direct benefit for the child and prepares them to be reintegrated into the learning required from the full curriculum. Sometimes there may be deeper anxieties, some that need professional help from outside agencies. The Pastoral Manager liaises regularly with different agencies and the services they offer to ensure that every child receives that help.

When children are having difficulties reaching their full potential it is the responsibility of the school to meet their needs. Each child in Amesbury CE Primary is individual - we aim to ensure that we meet the needs of these individuals so that they can realise their full potential and allow others to do the same.

The children in the centre normally have difficulties in successfully accessing the curriculum in a whole class environment. Supported by two members of staff, the children spend the morning in the Nurture Centre but remain as part of their mainstream class, joining the other children for the regular afternoon lessons. Some children start on a part-time programme and when able to do so, they start to integrate back in to lessons with their mainstream class during the afternoons with support.

The role of the Nurture Centre is to ascertain any gaps in development, to engage with the children introducing an exciting and innovative alternative curriculum focused on **their** particular needs. The whole ethos of the nurture centre is providing positive experiences, raising their self-esteem and rewarding them for good choices. Other children attending mainstream classes have their needs met within the class by the class teacher and additional teaching assistants.

## **How?**

The Nurture Centre provides an alternative curriculum through which the needs of these children can be met, usually with a more 'hands on' and 'real life' approach to learning. The criterion for selecting children is very strict and a great deal of assessment and consultation takes place prior to entry.

### **Who attends?**

Children who attend do so for a variety of reasons. They all however have one thing in common - they find it difficult to reach their full potential within their classroom without a great deal of extra adult support.

### **What happens once a child is selected?**

All children spend each afternoon in their classrooms (unless they are in on a part-time programme).

There are a minimum of two adults and usually up to ten children at any one time.

The structured routine of The Centre along with high adult ratio enables some children to make rapid progress while for others it may be more gradual.

The initial emphasis is based on the development of their social skills as follows:

## **SELF-AWARENESS**

Self-awareness is about trying to understand who we really are and why we do things the way we do, in the way that we do them. By becoming more self-aware we can gain a greater control over how we are operating in the present, instead of reacting to something conditioned by the past.

In learning it encourages us to look at our responses to the work we do, reflect upon them, and then develop our ideas further.

### **By being self-aware and understanding ourselves better we can:**

- gain more control over our actions
- be more confident
- deal with challenges in a more positive and less anxious way
- communicate with others more effectively
- make better decisions
- reduce stress levels
- generally enjoy life more

### **How can we help children increase their self-awareness?**

- talk to the children and value their opinions
- make them aware of their strengths - and weaknesses - help them to turn their weaknesses into strengths
- encourage them to reflect upon their responses after a situation
- teach them to be aware of their different feelings, thoughts and behaviours by looking at how people may respond to different situations
- think about things from differing points of view.
- Consider body language. Make the children aware that speech is not the only form of communicating feelings

## **MANAGING FEELINGS**

Feelings give us a quick assessment about whether something is good for us or bad for us and they motivate us to take action accordingly. Sometimes we feel sad, for example when someone we love goes away. Sometimes we feel happy, for example when we are having fun playing. Sometimes we feel scared, angry, guilty, lonely or one of a huge range of feelings and emotions. It is important not to be ashamed of having feelings. Everyone has them - good and bad. What counts is what we do about our

feelings - we can all learn to show our feelings in ways that are helpful to us and to others, not ways that are hurtful.

**By managing our feelings we can:**

- make ourselves feel happier
- avoid upsetting others
- be more able to tell someone what is bothering us
- be understood by others and allow them to show empathy

**How we can help children manage their feelings:**

- Individual or partner sessions where the adult can chat and listen eg cookery and breakfast
- Music - listen to or make music. It is also good for those 'feel good' chemicals.
- Positive thinking - make a list of all the positive things in our lives
- Talk to a friend - especially if they are a good listener
- If feeling angry, develop strategies to cope - try counting or going to a quiet place for a while

### **MOTIVATION**

Motivation is what drives us all on to achieve things. It is the energy which turns thought into action. With a lack of motivation we feel tired, bored, anxious and depressed. When we feel these things we can also feel stupid, like a failure, guilty and embarrassed.

**By being motivated we can:**

- achieve things
- feel good about ourselves
- enthuse others around us

**What can we do to help our children become motivated?**

- try to identify what it is that has contributed to the lack of motivation - what are the blocks to learning?
- maybe seek the help of other professionals if necessary
- keep learning stimulating and fun
- find interests that can be used to build motivation
- use other children sensitively to partner the child in school

### **SOCIAL SKILLS**

Social skills are a group of skills which people need to interact and communicate with others. Many social skills can be learned.

In our culture the act of socialisation means a person learns to act in an appropriate manner for the situation, for example, having regard for others or acting in a polite way during mealtimes. Basic social skills can be verbal or non-verbal, for example speech that is not too loud or eye-contact. Other more complex social skills include the showing of empathy or diplomacy. Children experiencing problems can be too self-centred to develop good social skills.

**By developing good social skills we can:**

- build friendships more easily
- allows others to relax more
- increase in confidence
- feel good about ourselves as others view us favourably
- be accepted by other groups of people

### **What can we do to help our children?**

- Model good social skills
- Talk about what is appropriate, and what is not, in a situation
- Be relaxed and try not to show anxiety
- Talk in a calm voice
- Give eye-contact and expect the children to look at you in a conversation
- Listen and show empathy
- Talk about the effects of positive body language
- Set meaningful school rules with appropriate rewards and consequences

### **EMPATHY**

Empathy is feeling what the other person feels - putting yourself in their shoes! It is not to be confused with sympathy which is where you understand the feelings of others but don't empathise or feel what it is like for that person.

Some people tend to show more empathy than others - something research suggests relates to the degree of adjusted personality, social skills and being positive.

Empathy is closely linked to listening skills and the ability to build trust in another. Empathy builds a rapport in a relationship whereas being preoccupied, resistant to listening or talking about oneself fosters negative relationships.

#### **By showing empathy we can:**

- build trust
- develop understanding, communication and better relationships
- let the other person feel they are receiving a 'psychological hug'!

#### **How can we help our children show empathy?**

- demonstrate empathy in interactions with the children
- ask children what it would feel like in certain scenarios - discussion groups
- relate incidents and experiences in school to the feelings of the child
- build trust through listening to the children

Children need a stable outlook and the ability to recognise their feelings in order to learn and be happy.

We hope that this leaflet has given you a clearer understanding of why the Nurture Group was set up and its function within the school. Should you need any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact the Headteacher, SENCo or Manager of the Nurture Centre, Miss. Handley-Wells.