

Appendix 14 **Nurture Group Information Sheet**

What is a Nurture Group?

In effect, a nurture group is inclusive early intervention and prevention for the development of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within a mainstream setting. It is also a provision in which the day is one of carefully structured routines providing a balance of learning, teaching, affection and structure within a homelike environment. It is also a group in which children are placed not due to their limitations with regard to ability, but simply because they have missed out on early experiences that promote good development – particularly in the areas of social, emotional and behavioural skills.

Nurture groups offer a context and a model of relationships to children who have been missing out, or who have insufficiently internalised essential early learning experiences. They are generally a within-school resource, staffed by two adults for up to 10 children, and offer short or medium placements where the children attend regularly. They usually fully return to their mainstream classroom within two to four terms. Nurture groups do not in any sense stigmatise the children who attend since the intervention is planned as part of a whole-school approach to supporting children. In fact, the children generally have strong links with their mainstream class, e.g. registering there in the morning, attending selective activities and spending social time in lunchtimes with their classroom peer group.

Setting up a Nurture Group Room

The room is intended as an educational setting but clearly includes the elements of a secure and supportive home. Alongside the normal classroom furniture there are comfortable chairs and sofas, a cooking area and a large mirror. The room should ideally have four or five areas: a kitchen area, a dining area, a role-play area and a quiet area. All these areas will be appropriately resourced, while supplementary resources may also include the following:

- ▶ A small writing or book making corner
- ▶ A listening station, which is valuable when children want to listen to story tapes or simply record their own stories, thoughts and feelings and share them later if they so desire
- ▶ Sand and water areas
- ▶ Dolls, pushchair or buggy
- ▶ Train sets and play bricks
- ▶ Basket or similar for children who need to curl up and be apart from the rest of the group at any point during the sessions
- ▶ Early years' resources and activities which are available generally (these can be rotated from time to time so that all children are not overwhelmed by choice)
- ▶ Display boards for children's work and also for parents' information and staff timetabling.

The Timetable

The majority of nurture group sessions are likely to be approximately two hours in length and it is clearly more practical – in terms of the school timetable – to ensure that times remain consistent throughout the year.

- ▶ The first half hour of the session is when the children engage in **Free Play**. They can access a range of activities at this time and it is an ideal opportunity for staff to observe the children's learning and development of social and emotional skills. Table top and floor activities can be set up to cover each area of learning.
- ▶ The second 45 minutes of the session is when the children engage in **Group Time**. One member of the staff will lead the group while the other becomes a member of the group, providing a role model for the children. Activities in this session may include the following:
 - Days of the week
 - Weather
 - Finding name cards
 - Choosing a special helper
 - Playing a short game linked to number or letter recognition
 - Playing the 'bag' game (see below)
- ▶ The next 30 minutes is for **Toast Time**. This is when a special helper helps prepare and serve the toast and drinks to the peer group. During this time, both the adults and the children sit down together at the table. This enables the adults to model social conversation and engage in any problem solving regarding a current issue that may have arisen within the group.
- ▶ The next part of the session involves **Focused Teaching**. This is when one member of staff will carry out focused teaching tasks with individual children. Each child will try to complete the task during this time, either in a one-to-one or a small group context. This enables the other member of staff to interact with other children in their play while these activities are being implemented.
- ▶ The final part of the nurture group session is that of **Story Time**, where one member of the staff reads a story to the group as a whole while the other becomes part of the group once again. This enables them to model appropriate behaviour, listening skills, etc, and also support the children's enjoyment, learning and development of language skills.