

PACE is currently working towards a Nurturing Schools kite mark. There are the six principles of nurture which we implement as part of our core ethos:



1. Children's learning is understood developmentally – in a nurturing school, all staff respond to children not in terms of arbitrary expectations about ‘attainment levels’ but in terms of the children’s developmental progress assessed through the Boxall Profile Handbook. The response of the individual child is ‘as they are’, underpinned by a non-judgemental and accepting attitude.



2. The classroom offers a safe base – the organisation of the environment and the way the nurturing school is managed contains anxiety. The nurturing school offers a balance of educational and domestic experiences aimed at supporting the development of the children’s relationship with each other and with the staff. The school is organised around a structured period of time with predictable routines. Great attention is paid to detail; the adults are reliable and consistent in their approach to the children. Nurture schools are an educational provision making the important link between emotional containment and cognitive learning.



3. The importance of nurture for the development of well-being – nurture involves listening and responding. In a nurturing school ‘everything is verbalised’ with an emphasis on the adults engaging with the children in reciprocal shared activities e.g. play/ meals/ reading/talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and thought about as individuals, so in practice this involves noticing and praising small achievements; ‘nothing is hurried in a nurturing school’.



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. Nurturing schools’ children often ‘act out’ their feelings as they lack vocabulary to ‘name’ how they feel. In nurturing schools, the informal opportunities for talking and sharing, e.g. welcoming the children into the group or having breakfast 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 – this principle underlies the adult response to the children’s often challenging or difficult behaviour. ‘Given what I know about this child and their development what is this child trying to tell me?’ Understanding what a child is communicating through behaviour helps staff to respond in a firm but non-punitive way by not being provoked or discouraged. If the child can sense that their feelings are understood this can help to diffuse difficult situations.



6. The importance of transition in children's lives –the nurturing school 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 carefully managed with support.

