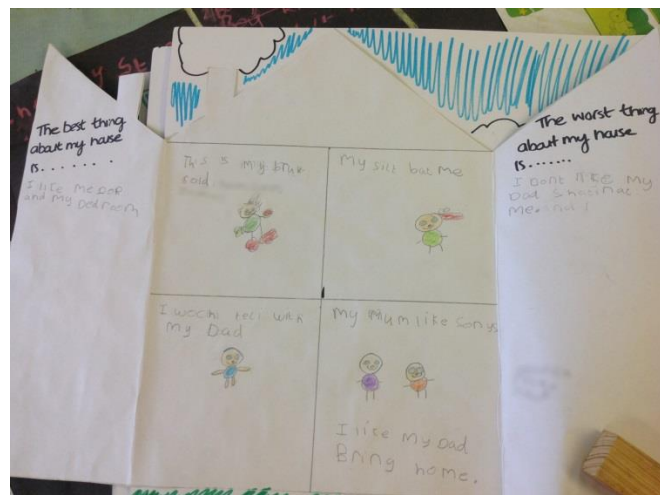# NURTURE GROUPS IN PRACTICE: CHILDREN; CLASSES; SCHOOLS

Final report of Comparative study of nurture groups and alternative provisions for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

Commissioned by NGN

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Acknowledgments

Contents

Executive Summary

This report provides a comparative analysis of Nurture Groups in seven school settings across the North West of England: five with traditional Nurture Groups in school, and two 'alternative provisions' pursing either 'integrated nurture', or practice based upon attachment principles but without specialised Nurture Group provision. The broad aims of the report centre upon uncovering the principles of nurture-in-practice in relation to: the impact of the Nurture Group as a psychosocial intervention for vulnerable children; the influence of school leadership; the preconditions for effective communication; and lessons for mainstream primary classrooms.

The methodology included a range of data collection strategies: interviews with Heads; focus groups with a mix of NG/mainstream staff; interviews with NG staff; tours of the school; observations; the collection of Boxall profiles and other relevant data. We also carried out two child case studies within each school through informal conversations with the child and with a parent/carer.

The data was analysed across five areas: The Child; The Nurture Group; The Mainstream Class; The Parents/Carers; and The Whole School. Across these five areas two key themes emerged as being particularly important drivers of nurture-in-practice. These were:

- the importance of relationships to enhance communication and to model positive and functional ways of relating to children, parents and teachers.
- training for all staff members to instil an understanding of and value for nurture across the school to promote a vision of whole school as therapeutic community and an understanding of behaviour as communication.

More specifically, these two themes can be understood in relation to the development of strategies to:

- promote a multi-targeted and timely response; timetable nurture effectively; create a balanced Nurture Group dynamic; prioritise psychosocial concerns whilst simultaneously balancing academic aims and outcomes; stagger transitions; promote child-led and individualised approaches to behaviour management; and minimise the contrast between nurture and mainstream with particular attention to punitive in-class behavioural management systems.

In addition the role of senior leadership has been emphasised in relation to the need to:

- provide support for nurture; pursue clear aims and objectives; manage value clashes between mainstream and Nurture Group staff members; create a bridge between the contexts of nurture and mainstream; pursue simple and less punitive behavioural management systems; promote formal pastoral polices to support and involve parents; and recruit and retain staff on the basis of the right person for the job.

Overall, this report concludes that a commitment to the creation and maintenance of ongoing relationships; an understanding of behaviour as communication which naturally leads to less punitive, more restorative, forms of behaviour management; and a commitment to the support and

training of the whole staff-base are essential elements in the promotion of successful nurture practice in school. It is suggested that these principles are most effectively implemented through the simultaneous provision of specialised Nurture Groups as well as through an integrated nurturing philosophy that runs across the whole school.

Introduction

Aims of the study and research questions

This comparative study of Nurture Groups (hereafter NGs) and related provision for children with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties set out to compare seven different primary school provisions across five specific areas:

- the individual pupil,
- the NG/alternative provision,
- the mainstream class,
- the whole school,
- the carers/parents.

We aimed to produce two kinds of related analyses; an intra-case study set of findings about each of these five foci and a set of comparative inter case study outcomes. We outlined four research questions at the start of the study and we have born these in mind throughout the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting:

- What kinds of psychosocial interventions impact beneficially on vulnerable children?
- To what extent does the school leadership impact on the positive outcomes of the psychosocial intervention?
- How effectively do staff and pupils communicate with each other?
- What can mainstream primary education learn from interventions that are targeted to vulnerable children and that aim to support social and emotional development?

Methodology

Overview

Our methodology aimed at collaborating closely with senior leaders, NG staff, mainstream staff, parents and pupils in each of the schools. Each setting was visited on three occasions and included various data collection strategies: interviews with Heads; focus groups with a mix of NG/mainstream staff; interviews with NG staff; tours of the school; observations within the NG rooms; collection of Boxall profiles and other relevant data. We also carried out two child case studies within each school through informal conversations with the child and with a parent/carer. In addition, a supplementary interview was carried out with a child who was particularly representative of positive practice in one setting (see Appendix). The rationale for the strategy taken in relation to these case studies was to try and capture the child's own voice within the larger research picture (Sanders, 2007). Our overall aim was to compare the settings to understand more about what kinds of psychosocial interventions impact beneficially on vulnerable children (Boxall and Bennathan 2000; Cooper, Arnold and Boyd, 2001; Colwell and O'Connor, 2003; Sanders, 2007; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; MacKay, 2015; Scott Loinaz, 2014; Bennett, 2014; Hughes and Schlosser, 2014).

Sampling of the seven settings: 5 established Nurture Groups (NGs) and 2 'Alternative Provisions' (APs)

For our selection of the 5 NGs we discriminated between settings that have a serious engagement with NG principles and those settings who pay 'lip service' to NG provision and for whom nurture is more peripheral. We developed sampling criteria based on Bennett's overview (2014) of influences on NG outcomes: leadership commitment and whole school understanding (Cooper and Tiznak, 2005; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007) size of setting; longevity of provision (O'Connor and Colwell, 2002); and level and quality of staff training (Davies, 2011). We also worked with a consultant, Jen Waite, an educational psychologist in the NW of England who has a long history of NG training and consultancy and was able to provide local knowledge and access. Jen was able to offer insights about settings according to these criteria: those who had a long history of NG work; those that were new to NG provision; those that seemed especially committed and enthusiastic; those with designated NG rooms (a possible indicator of commitment); those who send staff to the Nurture Forums she runs. In particular we looked for NG settings where:

- Staff are NG trained

- There is a designated NG room

- Staff are willing to engage in the research

We selected 5 primary school NGs in a range of settings including urban/rural, large/small, NG trained/untrained, long established NG/newly established NG (settings 1- 5).

Our intention behind the selection of the two alternative provisions was to identify settings based on nurturing principles and ethos with a clear emphasis on relationships and an acknowledgement of the importance of early attachments. This enabled us to examine provisions that are clearly related to NGs although perhaps not always recognised or acknowledged as such.

We were particularly interested in a setting identified by Jen which had a long history of nurture group provision but which had quite recently made the radical decision to close down its NGs. Instead the school staff acknowledged that the nurturing principles had become so firmly embedded across the whole school, including amongst non- teaching staff that the whole school is run as a nurturing school. The setting was keen to be involved as they felt they would have much to contribute to the study in the light of this significant recent change. This is setting six.

It was not so easy to find a second alternative provision. Two PRUs were considered where there were already established links with Jen and her team at Acorn Psychology. However, in discussion with NGN we clarified that we were looking for teacher-led psychosocial interventions that allow for students to remain in their school. We also recognised that the emphasis on behaviour management in these two PRUs did not have the underlying philosophical emphasis on attachments that we were looking for and that would provide a point of comparison with NGs. Through contact with a local Teaching School Alliance (in NW England) we became aware of a residential setting for children with extreme social and emotional difficulties. This setting has a very strong emphasis on repairing damaged attachments and an aspiration to maintain unconditional positive regard for the children who attend. This is setting seven.

	Size and type of setting	Free School Meals ratio (2014)	Level of training	Longevity of provision	Size of setting	Designated NG room	Age group
Setting 1	Large/Urban	25.5%	Nurture staff trained externally; low levels of whole school training	4-5 years	Large	Yes	1&2
Setting 2	Medium/ Urban	75%	Nurture staff trained externally; low levels of whole school training	5-6 years	Medium	Yes	KS1
Setting 3	Large/Urban	59.1%	Nurture staff trained externally; high levels of whole school training	9-10 years	Large	Yes	KS1
Setting 4	Large/Urban	70%	Nurture staff trained externally; high levels of whole school training	1-2 years	Large	Yes	KS1
Setting 5	Small/Urban	61.4%	Nurture staff trained externally; low levels of whole school training	2-3 years	Small	Yes	KS 1&2
Setting	Large/Urban	22.5%	Emotional-	2 years	Large	No	KS

6			Wellbeing Team trained externally; high levels of whole school training				1&2
Setting 7	Very small/Rural/ Residential	N/A	High levels of whole school training in psycho-social approaches	20 years	Very small	No	KS 1&2

Table 1: Settings 1-7 representing 5 discrete NGs and 2 alternative provisions based on attachment

The models of provision

Overall, three models of provision resulted from the selection of settings in the comparative NG study. These were:

1. **Traditional NG provision:** a mainstream school model characterised by separate provision in discrete nurture rooms that are either within the body of the school or located in a separate building within the school grounds.
2. **Integrated nurture provision:** a mainstream school model characterised by integrated nurture provision delivered within the mainstream class with no discrete nurture room anywhere in the school.
3. **Residential provision:** a special school model characterised by adherence to principles strongly based on nurture provision, attachment and relationships whilst simultaneously utilising individualised behavioural management strategies.

Sampling of the children who comprised our 14 individual child case studies, two in each setting.

In selecting the individual children to comprise our group of child case studies we aimed to have a mix of gender, age group, types of social and emotional difficulties and we particularly wanted some children who had the experience of being reintegrated into mainstream classes. We also wanted to ensure we could access parents/carers. Above all we wanted to select children who would not find the experience too difficult and who might benefit from it. The selection was discussed with the head of each setting, and NG staff during the first research visit with follow-up from NG staff to confirm the selection after negotiating consent with children and parents.

We arrived at the following selection (all names fictionalised):

	Setting	Age	Gender	Length of time in NG/Reintegration	Points of note
Ceris	1	11	F	2 1/2 years from age 8. Now reintegrated in mainstream	Transition to secondary school
Dale	1	7	M	1 year from age 6. Still attends NG, and will continue after September 2015.	Attends mainstream classes under supervision of 1-1 learning mentor/nurture teacher. This provision is currently being phased due to cessation of funding.
Gemma	2	6	F	6 months from the age of 6. Now reintegrated in mainstream.	Question as to whether she will have more nurture in future according to need – flexible provision.
Casey	2	6	F	1 year from the age of 5. Now reintegrated into mainstream	
Josi	3	7	F	1 ½ years from the age of 5. Now reintegrated in mainstream	Extended recent transition from nurture due to considerable psychosocial difficulties
Andrew	3	8	F	1 year from the age of 5. Now reintegrated in mainstream	
Lucas	4	6	M	10 months from the age of 5. Now reintegrated in mainstream	Recent ADHD diagnosis linked to regression in behaviour since leaving nurture
Christine	4	6	F	10 months from the age of 5. Now reintegrated in mainstream	
Martin	5	10	M	8 months from the age of 10. Now reintegrated in mainstream	
Robbie	5	9	M	11 months from the age of 8. Still attends nurture	Will be attending a special school from September 2015 due to his ASC diagnosis
Nicole	6	9	F	2 years from the age of 7	

Maddie	6	8	F	2 years from the age of 6	
Noah	7	10	M	6 months from the age of 10	
Richard	7	10	M	1 year from the age of 9	

Table 2: 14 case study children in all 7 settings

Ethical issues

We manged a process of informed consent for participation through the strategies recommended and approved by Lancaster University. On our initial access visit we gave Participant Information sheets to each Head with copies to pass on to staff and an opportunity to reinforce this information verbally and answer questions. We also discussed the ethical issues implicated in our individual child case studies. In negotiation with Heads we established a key participation principle of willingness to engage – for children and their carers/parents. The NG staff then took on the necessary gate-keeping responsibility for explaining the research to all the NG children we would be observing. They also took on liaison with parents and carers making use of our parent consent forms.

All names have been anonymised.

More details about the methodology aspects presented above are contained in an Interim Report (Hibbin and Warin, September 2015) available from the NGN.

Structure of this report

The structure of this report is organised to demonstrate our findings at the **inter-case study** level, intended to draw attention to comparative conclusions across the seven settings. This is organised according to our five areas of focus: the individual pupil; the nurture group/alternative provision; the mainstream class; the whole school; the carers/parents. The interim report was organised to demonstrate our findings at the **intra-case study** level. It included more detail about each of the settings and our analysis of the 14 child case studies. Here we are aiming to produce a distillation of our analysis and our overall findings and conclusions.

Chapter 1: The Child

The main findings in relation to the child highlight the importance of early intervention; the quality of relationships between the child and nurture practitioners; the need for a multi-targeted therapeutic response; integration between mainstream and nurture; and the impact of senior leadership in terms of support for nurture and ideological positions in relation to permanent exclusion.

1.1 Early intervention

Early intervention was seen as being ideal in all settings, to beneficially impact upon the psychosocial development of children. Older children were seen as having difficulties that were considerably more embedded and as such while nurture was still useful, it had limited impact. For such children a more intensive route was viewed as being required:

"there's not been the success stories in year five and six because there's so much to strip back and to try and build it back up again…For the older children it[the nurture provision] could probably do with being all day, and this is their class all day and they do maths, literacy, science mixed in with the SEAL, their writing stories and doing problems with it – [this kind of all-day provision would be] a different way of learning." **Year 3 and 4 Class Teacher: Setting 5**

'Firefighting' in the early years of an NG was observed to be the tendency where older children were frequently targeted to ameliorate unaddressed difficult behaviours that had become entrenched throughout school, as well as being more pronounced in the older children. In such situations issues in relation to opportunity costs (Howes *et al*, 2003; Cooper and Tiznak, 2005) were prescient where the time taken away from academic learning, particularly for older children, was seen as being potentially detrimental. Also, the delayed impact of nurture was emphasised in Setting 2 where children were seen to regress before making significant gains, emphasising the importance of early intervention. This was evidenced by the quantitative data where Boxall Profile scores in the diagnostic profile were seen to rise after admission to the NG, before coming back down to a much lower score further on in the nurture process, lower scores being indicative of progress (see Table 3, page 17).

1.2 Relationships

Relationships were viewed as being crucial and children were observed to be attached to the nurture practitioners in all settings. This aspect was seen as being essential for a successful nurture process in all the settings. Children were able to build on the NG attachments and then form good relationships with other adults throughout school. In addition to their relationships with staff, children also had strong attachments to the physical location of the nurture room and this was particularly the case in Setting 3 where the utilisation of the nurture room by a variety of ex-nurture children was observed:

"I think as well it's when they leave nurture it's that link back to nurture, quite a lot of children come back to you don't they? Whether it's at lunchtime or anytime they can drop in." **SENCO: Setting 3**

The discrete nurture rooms we observed were fairly typical of nurture group principles for creating a family type environment with comfortable relaxing spaces, sofas and easy chairs, a dining table area for shared eating, and a kitchen. The photographs below are all taken from one setting.

In Setting 5 the material provision of the room was much more sparse because the room had a multi–functional role within the school. It was used for examinations and indeed on one occasion we observed it to be used as a punishment area at the end of the school day, for a form of detention. Whilst we recognise the resource issues that might mean the nurture room sometimes has to be maximised for other uses, these particular functions seemed to undermine the intentions of the NG staff to create a really safe and secure family base and indicated a lack of whole school support for NG provision. However, this setting was exceptional and elsewhere we saw that considerable attention, time and resources had gone into the creation of an optimal physical environment.

The differential nature of attachment was emphasised and operationalised in Settings 6 and 7, the alternative settings where members of staff would work with children according to the level of

attachment and all staff members knew "which staff members may be better with that child" (**Class Teacher**: Setting 7). Similarly, in Setting 3 a strong attachment to the Integrated Arts Therapist (IAT) was also in evidence highlighting the importance of both relationships and a multi-targeted response:

"*...I think I'd seen Josi about 4 sessions on the run up to Christmas, over Christmas she was on a bus with her Grandmother, and she looked out of the window and suddenly said 'I need to talk to Sarah' and her grandmother said 'you can talk to me' and she said 'no, I need to talk to Sarah', so she bracketed me off...and as soon as she came back after Christmas she was bursting to see me...and it was like at torrent, so much had happened in her life...and she just really needed to off-load..."* **IAT: Setting 3**

1.3 A multi-targeted response

A strongly multi-targeted approach was taken in the settings that were most successful in relation to psychosocial approaches to nurture. Settings 3,6 and 7 were notable for their extensive use of alternative ways to help children struggling with psychosocial difficulties. Setting 3 had a dedicated IAT (as we have just seen), access to counselling, mentoring, a personalised curriculum for NG children and a part-time social worker employed within school. Settings 6 and 7 had similar levels of provision. Setting 6 also used the 'Rounded and Grounded Framework' - a framework of words emphasising prosocial attitudes and dispositions that was developed by the Head in Setting 6 based on the work of Guy Claxton (2002) - that gave all children a language and understanding of the emotional attributes that the school was trying to develop and instil. In Setting 7 a strongly therapeutic approach was taken overall, along with speech and language practice that was built into the curriculum on a weekly basis in recognition of the strong link between deprivation, expressive language difficulties and socio-emotional problems.

There was a very well developed understanding in Setting 6 that nurture could not work for certain children until issues more closely related to trauma had been worked through in therapy. This was described by the Head who talked about one boy who needed a much higher level of support before nurture could work:

"*Some children's needs are too deep seated for nurture to work… sometimes we have to solve the trauma before we can put the nurture into place…The point at which we realised that nurture wasn't going to work for Simon was when he said 'you keep talking to me about how I feel, but I don't know what you mean, I don't feel anything, I'm empty'…He couldn't manage any relationships, because it was too much for him.*" **Head: Setting 6**

1.4 Contrasts between contexts

Integration between the contexts of nurture and mainstream characterised the most successful settings in relation to nurture. In the least successful settings children experienced a sharp contrast between contexts, with strong Behaviour Management Systems (hereafter BMS) used in class (Traffic Light System and 5 Steps) as well as divergent views between nurture and mainstream staff members in relation to the best ways to manage difficult behaviour in school. This contrast was best articulated by the Head in Setting 6:

"…*one of the failings of the nurture classes is that children…are immersed it in, and then go somewhere that they're feeling completely different. And that adjustment from that to that, is just too much*." **Head: Setting 6**

Particularly high levels of integration were seen in Setting 3 and this was related to such aspects as the classroom environment that children experienced in the mainstream, communication between practitioners, and the teacher's responses to children that emphasised reassurance and "staying calm" (**IAT: Setting 3**). Integration was achieved in Setting 3 through the use of shared pedagogical devices such as the TEACHH approach (an autism-based approach designed to organise the physical environment, develop schedules and work systems, make expectations clear and explicit, and use visual materials) which was utilised in both contexts for certain children with specific learning difficulties. In addition, Setting 4 linked practice across contexts using Bucket Fillers (McCloud, 2006) where the metaphor of a bucket that can be filled or emptied with happiness is used to manage behaviour.

1.5 Support for nurture from Leadership

Finally, in all settings there was strong support for nurture and attachment-based approaches from senior leadership in school. In the most successful settings (3, 6 and 7) there were particularly uncompromising positions taken by the Heads in relation to the use of such approaches across school. In addition, a position in relation to exclusion was taken in a number of settings, where permanent exclusion was viewed as being something that school explicitly avoided due to it being seen as being "unintelligent" and "a completely illogical way of dealing with things" (**Head: Setting 3**). In setting 7 this was taken to the next level where a policy of 'unconditional positive regard' was taken where children were never excluded under any circumstances:

"…*we will never exclude them, we will never send them anywhere else. I've worked in places they do exclude and the kids get the message, punch a teacher, scratch a number of cars, break enough windows and you go out of here and I, that doesn't feel to me like the right place to get the children through feeling really emotionally secure and safe.* " **Head: Setting 7**

1.5.1 Children's explanations about what they get out of participation in the NG or AP

"I'm glad to be out of [the NG] because I liked being a part of my class like everyone else, but that I do miss it a bit." *Ceris: Setting 1*

"the things I most like are circle time and talking about my family." *Gemma: Setting 2*

"I like choosing things to do and the turtle story" (a relaxation story). *Casey: Setting 2*

"I like the NG because everyone is kind to me…it's different to my class because there's not many people in here." *Josi: Setting 3*

"I used to feel angry before I went [to the NG]….it's helped me not to feel angry anymore." *Andrew: Setting 3*

"I like colouring, Talking Turtle [a turn taking device used during circle time] and painting…I'm good at playing well, sharing things, giving a cuddle and hand writing." *Lucas: Setting 4*

"I like playing with my friends." *Christine: Setting 4*

"It's helped me because it's quiet in the nurture room and they never leave your side…. I like circle time, because it's an opportunity to express yourself." *Martin: Setting 5*

"My teachers have helped me understand my mums depression, and they listen to my worries and its helped me not to worry about her…I'm not worried anymore because I know she is going to be OK even though mum's depression has come back a bit." *Nicole: Setting 6*

"I like my friends at this school. I didn't like the schools I went to before because they lied about me and made me angry, which they don't do here – everyone tells the truth about me here, everyone treats me the same." *Noah: Setting 7*

"When asked what he liked about Setting 7, he first listed his teachers and then listed his friends, before settling on a best friend, emphasising the strong attachments that are central to the success of the approach taken in this setting." *Richard: Setting 7*

Chapter 2: The Nurture Group

The main findings in relation to the NG highlight the importance of positive and functional relationships between staff members; the impact of the NG mix in relation to the externalising and internalising behaviours of children; practical concerns about timetabling nurture and balancing academic aims and outcomes; and the impact of senior leadership in terms of entrusting staff, commitment to nurture principles and negotiating different points of view.

2.1 Modelling relationships

In settings 2, 4 and 7, the modelling of functional relationships was seen as an important reason why staff members needed to get on due to the idea that practitioners were "modelling how adults treat each other in a very small environment" (**Nurture Teacher: Setting 2)**

Good relationships between staff members were seen as being especially crucial in Setting 7 due to the mental strain of dealing with children with such challenging issues. Strategies were put in place to deal with staff tensions such as swapping classrooms or problem focussed clinical sessions with the psychotherapist who came in on a weekly basis where staff members could talk about personal issues relating to their interactions with the children. There was an acknowledgement in Setting 7 that it was not good for children to pick up on staff tensions.

2.2 Nurture group mix

Nurture was seen as being most effective when there was a balance between children with 'externalising' and 'internalising' behaviours. Relatedly, the Head in Setting 3 suggested that the quieter more internalised children tended to be easily missed when the focus of staff attention was on the behaviour of children who presented the greatest disruptive challenges in school. There was also an awareness of the gender composition of NG groups although a preponderance of boys was evident across all the settings. The Head in setting 3 suggested that there was always a likelihood of an unworkable top-heavy skew toward disruptive behaviour from boys in the early years for an NG and this had to be actively avoided.

We found a mixed view about who benefitted most from nurture group provision. It was viewed as being most effective for internalising children with low levels of self-esteem and confidence by the Class Teachers in Settings 2 and 5. A further elaboration of this question of who is most appropriate for nurture came from the idea raised in Setting 3 that for some children behaviour was more related to issues of maturity than attachment. Similarly, in Setting 4 there was a perception that certain children didn't respond well to nurture provision when they are not ready for it (see example in Chapter 1). There was a concern to ensure that children are ready for provision in order for it to have impact.

2.3 The time-tabling of nurture

The timetabling of nurture was strongly linked into discourses centring upon opportunity costs (Howes *et* al, 2003; Tiznak and Cooper, 2005) where diverting children from academic work in the morning was seen as being a high risk strategy. Nurture in the morning was seen as the ideal in the majority of settings. However, Setting 3 was the only NG to timetable nurture for the mornings for all children regardless of year group. While there was a view of children needing to make academic

progress in nurture in this setting, psychosocial needs took precedence. Setting 4 did have children in the NG in the morning, but only Year 1's for whom SAT progress was less of a pressing concern, and overall they maintained a strong academic focus for all of the children in nurture regardless of year group.

A different approach was adopted in setting 6, one of the two 'alternative' settings. Here there had been a long-standing history of NGs, of around 9 years. The training and indeed the recruitment of staff meant that the principles of nurture had become embedded across the whole school. Consequently, one and a half years before our research visits occurred, the school had taken a significant decision to disband its discrete NGs and attempt to bring its vision of whole school nurture into operation. However, during the time that we conducted the study, the setting had taken the decision to re-introduce discrete nurture groups. During the phase of integration of nurture across school, a flexible and responsive approach was taken where nurture provision would take place within the mainstream class on an intervention style basis. Since re-establishing the NG, this intervention style approach continued with children going to the discrete NG for a couple of hours once or twice a week in a much more targeted manner, depending on the needs of the child and capabilities of the school. This was in contrast to the time-tabling of nurture pre-integration when children would spend much more time in the NG.

2.4 Impact of leadership upon the NG

Different themes came out of each setting in relation to senior leadership's impact upon the NG. In all settings there were very good relationships between NG staff and senior leadership where staff felt supported in their roles within the NG: In Setting 1 the head had entrusted staff to develop curriculum materials and teach in 'nurturing ways', and in Setting 4 the Head had encouraged the NG teacher to lead staff meetings and in-house training aimed at embedding nurture in the school. In Setting 3 the NG staff compared the way their Head exemplified a one hundred per cent commitment in contrast to other schools they had visited where there was considerably less support from senior leadership:

"We go to peer support meetings with other mentors and staff, and the amount of times we go in and share practice…and the amount of times you hear the phrase 'my Head won't go for that'. It's unbelievable…I think some schools are paying lip service" **Nurture Teacher: Setting 3**

In Setting 6, there was recognition that staff held rather different points of view to each other regarding the advantages and disadvantages of discrete nurture groups. The Head attempted to incorporate the values and views of the practitioners that were entrusted to deliver nurture-based interventions in school. The following comment was made about her leadership:

"*Also, she can take a little bit of a backseat and let you get on with it sometimes, so she's that driver, and that's why we don't always agree …when we felt it wasn't working, we had that conversation with her - quite firmly - and said, it's not working. She went "no, you're right", which was brilliant..***"**
Safety and Behaviour Team Leader: Setting 6

2.5 The use of Boxall Profiles

Settings 1-6

In Setting 1-6 the Boxall Profile (Boxall and Bennathan, 2000) was used to measure and track children's progress. Figure 1 outlines the Diagnostic Indicator (DI) scores for each child in each setting with an average of three scores per child over time, while in two schools (Setting 4 and 6) an additional fourth score is given for some of the children. In contrast to the Developmental Strands, which also form part of the Boxall Profile, DI scores rise along with the severity of Boxall identified behaviours. For simplicity and also in recognition of the usefulness of the DI scores overall (Bennathan and Haskayne, 2007) we have chosen to only include DI scores in the final analysis.

	Child	DI Score 1 + Date	DI Score 2 + Date	DI Score 3/4 + Date	Total +/-
Setting 1	Ceris	**70**/ June 2011	**42**/Unknown	**27**/July 2012	**- 43**
	Dale	**93**/Oct 2013	**69**/June 2014	**53**/March 2015	**- 40**
Setting 2	Gemma	**81**/Feb 2015	**32**/June 2015	-	**- 49**
	Casey	**102**/Oct 2014	**60**/Feb 2015	**28**/June 2015	**- 74**
Setting 3	Josi	**74**/Dec 2013	**88**/June 2014	**53**/April 2015	**- 21**
	Andrew	**82**/June 2012	**62**/Jan 2013	**22**/April 2013	**- 60**
Setting 4	Christine	**5**/Sept 2014	**7**/Dec 2014	**1**/March 2015 **4**/July 2015	**- 1**
	Lucas	**24**/Sept 2014	**16**/Dec 2014	**28**/March 2015 **11**/July 2015	**- 13**
Setting 5	Robbie	**50**/Oct 2014	**94**/Feb 2015	-	**+ 44**
	Martin	**23**/Oct 2014	**9**/Feb 2015	-	**- 14**
Setting 6	Nicole	**10**/Nov 2013	**0**/Jan 2014	**2**/June 2014	**- 8**
	Maddie	**27**/May 2012	**33**/Dec 2012	**68**/Nov 2013 **62**/Oct 2014	**+ 32**

Table 3: Boxall Profile Diagnostic Indicator scores for each child settings 1-6

Setting 7

In Setting 7 Boxall Profiles were not used, instead the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's Assessment of Learning, Conduct and Emotional Behaviour (2001) scores were used to measure and track the progress of children experiencing additional emotional and behavioural difficulties. Noah and Richard's QCA Conduct and Emotional Behaviour scores are set out below. In contrast to Boxall DI scores, a higher score indicates improvement in psychosocial functioning:

Noah:
July 2014 = 45
October 2014 = 39
December 2014 = 46
February 2015 = 50
March 2015 = 46
May 2015 = 62

Richard:
February 2015 = 50
March 2015 = 47
May 2015 = 50

Discussion of Boxall DI and QCA-CEB scores

From the data above it can be seen that children had generally improved in all settings to varying degrees. In those children that had experienced a backsliding in Boxall scores, this tended to precede improvement further along the road, highlighting the finding that children frequently regress in behaviour during nurture provision before going on to significantly improve. The two children who did not experience an improvement in their Boxall Profile scores were Robbie (Setting 5) and Maddie (Setting 6). Both of these children had received autism diagnoses and the issue of note is that while Setting 5 had found an alternative special school placement for Robbie due to the unmanageable nature of his behaviour, Setting 6 had managed to retain Maddie in mainstream school, despite her Boxall score increasing over a period of 2 years. The caveat here is that while it is difficult to suggest that nurture provision has a significant positive impact upon SENs such as autism, successful provision may in fact make it possible for such children to remain in mainstream education over the long-term. Further research is needed to examine this possibility.

Overall, it is difficult to compare scores across settings due to the subjective nature of the Boxall Profile where one example problematic behaviour may be less indicative of a high score on a DI to one person than it is to another.

Boxall targets

The illustrations below are taken from the material produced by the NG staff in Setting 4 to illustrate the progress of one of our case study children, Christine, against the Boxall Profile criteria:

_____ focused well to complete her table mat for our shared meal. She returned to the task the second day.

Attends and concentrates on a task for 'x' minutes. (Boxall-DP: T)

Completes a piece of work begun at an earlier time. (Boxall- DS: C)

_____ has beautiful manners during our shared meal. She waits patiently and takes turns.

_____ enjoys role-playing in the kitchen.

Next step: To engage in role play with 2 or more children.

Target met (p15) ☺

...rs formed ...tated IC)

Figures 1, 2 & 3: Evidence of Boxall targets alongside Christine's work in Setting 4
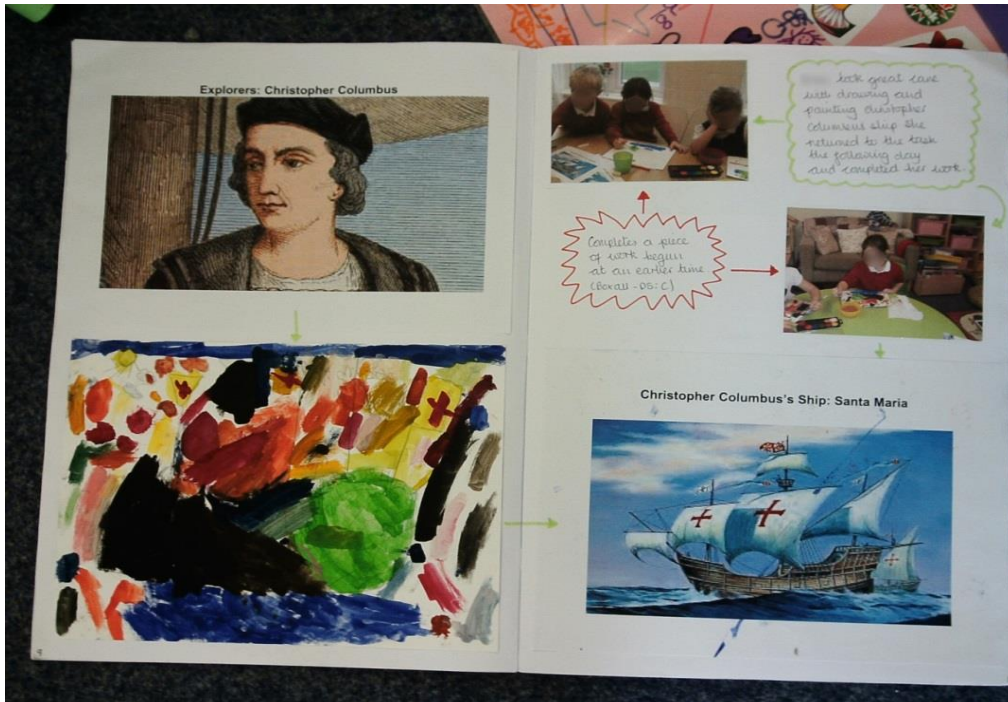
Figure 2

Figure 3

Chapter 3: The Mainstream Class

The main findings in relation to the mainstream class highlight the training of mainstream staff in nurture-based approaches; staggered and careful approaches to reintegration and the regression associated with transitions; behavioural management and nurturing approaches in the mainstream class; balancing academic concerns psychosocial development; and the leadership's role in managing value-clashes, providing in-house training and bridging activities between the contexts of nurture and mainstream, and producing coherent behavioural management policies across school.

3.1 Training

There were variable levels of training of mainstream staff in the different settings. The schools that had the least training of mainstream staff were characterised by value clashes and generally a weak comprehension about nurture provision on the part of some of the teaching staff:

"I've had no training, so I don't really understand how it works. From what I've seen though, it could be a lot more individualised…For example I've seen one child who struggles to take turns and work collaboratively with others just sat on his own playing with lego. I don't quite understand how that's helping him learn with others or take turns - I don't get it." **Year 5 and 6 Class Teacher: Setting 5**

In contrast high levels of in-house training for mainstream teachers were seen in Settings 3,4,6 and 7:

"…we had some training when we first started…worked with the whole school on being a nurturing school so that we could get those nurturing principles in the classroom, because the children are only in the nurture group in the morning and then they go back to class in the afternoon. So there has to be that same approach and an understanding of what they've been doing in the morning, in the classroom…" **Head: Setting 3**

Furthermore, training across the whole staff base, including for TA's and welfare staff, was seen as being essential in Setting's 6 and 7 so that "every adult that [children] come into contact with has a really good understanding of it" (**Nurture Teacher: Setting 3**). This was particularly the case in Setting 7 where everyone from groundsmen to cleaners to teaching staff was highly trained in attachment and child development to create a large skilled staff base that was entirely consistent across contexts.

3.2 Reintegration

Staggered transitions whereby children were slowly phased back into the classroom context was seen as being ideal in all settings:

"…[the children] view it as I'm not part of the [NG] anymore, but because we do it so slowly – Josi now is added to the mentoring list, which is still in that room, still with those familiar adults, still following those same principles for as long as she needs it. So for children there isn't actually a final - gone." **Nurture Teacher: Setting 3**

However, the degree to which this was achieved was variable. In particular, Settings 2 and 4 had not managed to achieve this aim due to whole school constraints including staff absence. In the case of Setting 4 the nurture children from Years 1 and 2 had been reintegrated in a rush due to the fact

that a particularly difficult Reception cohort had required the expertise and attention of the Nurture Teacher. In recognition of the importance of the transitional process, whole school constraints in both settings seemed to have resulted in a less than ideal reintegration which is likely to have adversely impacted upon the progress that was made in nurture.

The question of whether children should be allowed to return to nurture was a significant one. In Settings 1, 2, 4 and 5, it was permissible for children to return to nurture if needed. In Settings 3 and 6 there was an explicit policy of 'no return' once provision had ended. In Setting 3 the question of alternative provision outside of the school became relevant if reintegration did not work. This seemed to result in a particularly considered approach to reintegration, whereby the end of nurture provision was something that was very carefully thought about for each child:

"…particularly with Josi at the moment, she's had the slowest resettlement ever, in all the years we've been doing…and we're still supporting her, but we've got to the stage where 'you go, you've got to go'. Because everytime we got to a positive place, something would happen at home and we were right back again. And it's how long can you keep doing that for…but we hold onto them until they're absolutely ready, if there's a grey area we hold back…" **Nurture Teacher: Setting 3**

In addition the regression in behaviour connected to transitions was noted in Settings 3 and 6, whereby children were observed to take two steps forward and one step back before making large socio-emotional and educational leaps as a result of progress through nurture.

3.3 Behaviour management in class

There were varying amounts of behaviour management systems (BMS) used across all the settings. Settings 1, 2 and 5 were observed to have the strongest BMSs in class, with the Traffic Light System being used in Setting 1 and 2, and the 5 Steps being used in Setting 5. In addition, these settings were also observed to use a considerable amount of extrinsic motivation to encourage their children to comply, with class Dojos being used in Setting 1, and a particularly complex system of rewards being used in Setting 2. The effectiveness of the BMS was called into question in Setting 1 by the Class Teacher who viewed the approach taken in this school as reactive:

"*I wouldn't say very effective …I think sometimes it's quite ad hoc because we have quite difficult children in our school…I think sometimes it can be an organic behavioural system because we're reactive***." Class Teacher: Setting 1**

Setting 4 had a mid-way level of behaviour management in class with the TLS being used but in a modified way so that children were able to 'move back' and restore behaviour. In addition they were changing their system from the more punitive approach that had existed under the previous Headship, to a more reflective one based less upon extrinsic rewards for behaviour.

Setting 3 had a very minimally articulated BMS that left rewards up to the class teachers on an individualised basis. However, overall there was little reliance on extrinsic motivation in this school and a less punitive, more reflective system of behaviour management:

"…there's such an awareness in this school - this school is extraordinary… here it[disruptive behaviour] is dealt with compassion, and it's not punitive - they don't do this punitive business, 'red card yellow card three strikes you're out business'. There's none of that. It's more like they need more, they need time, they need somebody there…." **Integrated Arts Therapist: Setting 3**

The strategy in Setting 6 was very much linked into nurturing approaches across the whole school, an emphasis on the importance of relationships and a practice of Restorative Justice. There was a very strongly articulated idea of the school being entirely reward and sanction-free. Any kind of reward/sanction was seen in a negative light, related primarily to the school's push for intrinsic motivation, self -regulation and children learning the ability to 'do it themselves'.

In contrast, a system based upon behaviour management enforced through relationships was used in Setting 7, where extrinsic motivation in the form of rewards and sanctions was used, but it was only viewed as being workable due to the strong relationships that existed between staff and children. This was summed up by the idea forwarded by one of the Class Teachers that it was "really difficult to calm a child down in a restraint if you haven't got a good relationship with them" (Class Teacher: Setting 7). Strategies to manage behaviour included linking the loss of Golden Time to 1-1 mentoring over jobs such as "making a cup of tea or doing some laminating" (**Class Teacher: Setting 7)**, and also taking a highly individualized approach to behaviour management:

"…every child reacts different to everything. You put a boundary in place for one child and it's not going to work for another. You have to nurture that individual child to their specific needs. So every time a child walks through these doors the first thing we do is read up on a ridiculously huge history of everything that has happened for this child from day one, and you can get a good guideline of 'well that consequence isn't going to work, so it's pointless, get rid of it'. You nurture that actual child itself and not the behaviours" **Care worker: Setting 7**

In addition, child-led approaches to behavioural management were in evidence in Settings 4, 6 and 7. Children were asked to choose their own consequences for inappropriate behaviour in Setting 4 (by one of the Class Teachers in an individualised approach), and also in the Best Practice Procedure in Setting 7 where children were asked to reflect on the efficacy of individualised consequences as part of school policy towards behaviour management. In Setting 6, this child-led approach was linked to restorative practices where children were asked what they thought about how they had behaved and what should happen next.

3.4 Balancing academic and psychosocial concerns

In Settings 2 and 5 mainstream class staff articulated concerns about children's lack of learning in the NG. They also pointed out constraints in relation to SATs and performance related pay. The Head in Setting 2 commented that "if you don't get so many level 2As then you don't get paid". In Setting 1 the NG teacher emphasised a problematic oppositional view of nurture and academic forms of learning, reinforcing the problematic schism between nurture and mainstream in this school:

"But you see I said to the girls [co-workers in NG], some of [the children] come in here and they find it difficult to write, read, put things down on paper and I just say to the girls "don't make em, we're nurturing, we're not doing lessons, we're nurturing". If he struggles to write in class and he's always getting in trouble because he can't do it, just write it for him. We're nurturing." **Nurture Teacher: Setting 1**

In contrast, Setting 3 and 4 managed to balance academic and psychosocial aims in the NG and there was less concern about academic costs from the Class Teachers as a result. Setting 4 had the most academic focus of all the schools but learning was approached in a more experiential manner, while

Setting 3 prioritised nurture whilst also incorporating academic aims at a much slower pace so that they had their "foot on the accelerator the whole time" (**Head: Setting 3**):

"…it's split 50 50 - we never let them regress…so if something needs to be put in place for their individual academic targets - they have an IEP through the Pupil Passport system - we will spend time on those targets, and put them in on the continuous provision so those targets are in mind when they're accessing CP which isn't guided by an adult" **Nurture Teacher: Setting 3**

In Settings 6 and 7 there was a solid view of psychosocial development as being foundational to academic progress where it was seen as being necessary to fill any psychosocial developmental gaps before academic learning could be maximised:

"… it looks like they're doing babyish things but have a look at these ones at the other end of the process and they did the same thing and being confident that if you're doing the right thing by the child their learning will come along and they will accelerate." **Head: Setting 7**

3.5 The impact of leadership on the mainstream class

The impact of senior leadership upon the mainstream class was most clearly seen in relation to managing value clashes across the mainstream staff-base and the NG staff. It was also clearly apparent in the approach to the behaviour management policy that was explicitly articulated by the school. This varied from setting to setting, but on the whole the least integrated settings saw strong value clashes and a lack of understanding of the benefits of nurturing approaches for targeted children. In these settings these issues were not resolved through in-house training. In addition, there were fewer attempts to create bridging activities between the NG and mainstream classes, such as mainstream staff members (and also non-nurture children) spending time in the NG to embed an understanding of nurturing principles and experience of NG practice, across school. Furthermore, bridging activities in relation to the use of shared pedagogical devices such as the TEACHH materials that were used in Setting 3 and the bucket fillers used in Setting 4, were not observed to be used in the least integrated settings.

On the whole, non-compulsory in-house training had resulted in a situation in the least successful settings where staff members – particularly TAs – had not taken training seriously due to a 'not my job' attitude where working outside of school hours was deemed as being undesirable and unnecessary to their roles within school. This attitude extended to some teachers on an ideological basis who had a more traditional view of school "where children come in to learn… and we are teachers, not social workers or counsellors or psychologists…." (**Head: Setting 1**).

Complex BMSs that were based heavily upon rewards and sanctions for good and bad behaviour seemed to be a hallmark of settings that struggled to integrate nurture across school. The need to keep things simple and balancing BMS's with nurture-based approaches was voiced by the Head in Setting 2 as an issue of significant complexity:

"…trying to make the behaviour system in school as simple as possible so that the staff are quite aware and the children are quite aware of what's expected…Running that alongside that kind of nurture approach and understanding, that's been a little bit, for me the conflict of trying to get your philosophical head…around, how do I do a system which is consequence based, and I've got this nurture system going as well…" **Head: Setting 2**

In contrast, the behaviour policy in Setting 6 harnessed the simplicity of one overall approach across the school centring upon nurture, restorative justice, and other relationship-based approaches as one explicitly articulated policy. There was even a script and explicit instruction for the utilisation of RJ in school within the school's official documentation:

 "…I dont feel there is different approaches, its just one approach really…There's the restorative theme as well…I think the approach is about relationships and within that are the firm boundaries, every child has an individual strategy plan who needs one so its very individualised for that child....its not rewards and sanctions, its about the relationships." **Emotional Wellbeing Team + Safety and Behaviour Team Leader: Setting 6**

Chapter 4: Parents/Carers

The main findings in relation to parents highlight the importance of involving parents in the process of nurture; and the impact of leadership on parental involvement though the provision of formal pastoral policies in school.

4.1 Involvement, cooperation and consent

Key factors emerged in relation to parents: the involvement of parents in the process of nurture; the importance of cooperation and consent, and the importance of forming good communicative relationships between home and school. Some settings managed this better than others. In particular Settings 1, 3 and 6 had high levels of parental involvement, and cooperation. In Setting 4 strategies had been developed to involve parents in the process of nurture such as parental goals that were set for the child at the beginning of the nurture process, illustrated below.
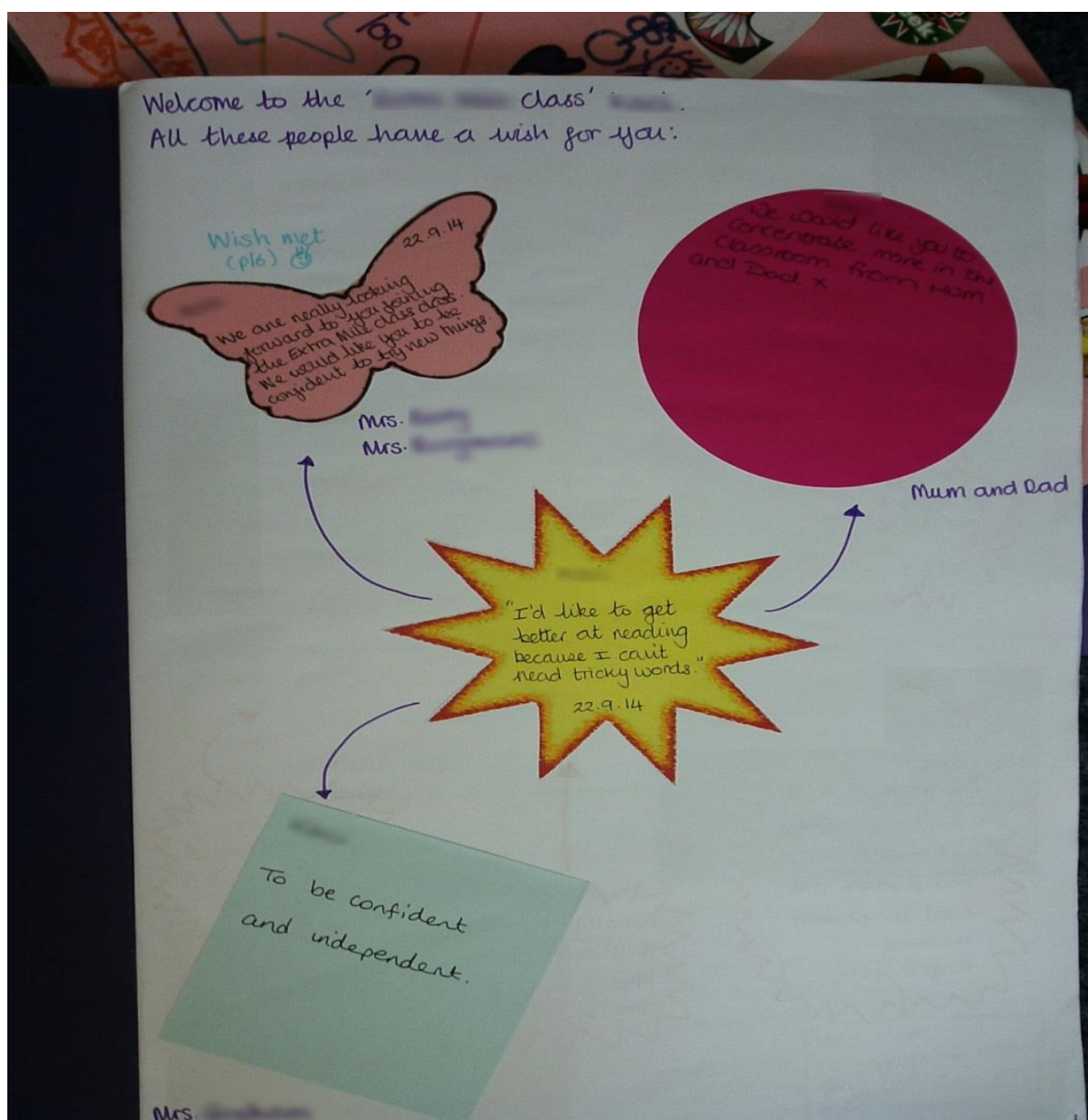

Figure 4: An example of the use of personalised goals, teacher goals and parental goals for NG children in Setting 4

This setting also used the system of 'bucket fillers' (McCloud et al, 2006) which operated across home and school (the metaphor of a bucket that can be filled or emptied with happiness is used to manage behaviour). Relatedly, cooperation was seen as being important across all contexts and this was achieved in different ways. The issue of parental consent for NG placement was central to this:

"*I wouldn't put them in [without consent] cos you need that co-operation, it isn't going to work if you don't have it…what you're doing is fighting against not only the problems that exist and are real and huge and entrenched but you're also inviting a family that doesn't want you to be doing it so every time the child goes home with the story of what they've been doing, they're going to complain about it. They're going to find something that they don't like.*" **Head: Setting 3**

Therefore trying to engage with parents in a non-threatening manner was a significant focus in all settings so as to work alongside parents and avoid alienating them. This had been achieved in Setting 1 through the application of informal communicative strategies such as giving a father "loads of positives first, and then the negatives, and then loads of positives again" (**Nurture Teacher: Setting 1**), with the explicit recognition that causing parents to feel alienated resulted in a 'vicious circle' where the parents took out their frustrations with the school on their children at home.

In settings with high levels of parental involvement, bringing parents on board was aligned with a multi-targeted approach where other practitioners, such as the play-therapists in Settings 3 and 6, provided parents with someone else they could talk to and confide in who was seen as being outside the formal authority of the school. Relatedly, the importance of finding the right person for parents to talk to was emphasised in Setting 6 to "put the parent at ease as much as possible" and "maintain that relationship as its going to help the child in the long run" (**Behaviour and Safety Team Leader: Setting 6**). In contrast, in settings where relationships and involvement seemed less well-developed, this was linked to a lack of understanding of nurture overall where parents didn't have a strong understanding of the principles and purpose of nurture. For example, in Setting 2 there was resistance from parents in relation to the need for nurture, with the NG either being seen as a soft option or something that was a source of stigma akin to a child receiving a Social Services Care Plan. In addition, Casey's father indicated that he would not want his younger child to attend this setting specifically because he did not want her to be labelled as a child with SENs, emphasising parent's lack of understanding of nurture in this setting.

4.2 Formal pastoral policies

There was a distinct split between settings in relation to the formal pastoral policies they had in place to support parents. Settings 1,2 and 5 had a lack of formal pastoral policies that were in evidence in other settings (see below) to engage parents with school and serve as a point of contact between families and formal levels of support within and beyond school. In these settings the lack of formal pastoral policy was discussed in relation to the difficulty of finding creative ways to engage parents, as well as the lack of wider support due to cuts to services more generally:

"*…a lot of the services, you know the people you could refer to, they're no longer there really. You've still got the Children's Centre but other than that you're really struggling to find people that you can refer families on to.*" **Head: Setting 5**

In contrast, Settings 3 and 6 had very high levels of formal pastoral policy and seemed to create their own social support network in lieu of diminishing external services. Overall the pastoral team was seen as a crucial link to nurture in school:

"I'm linking completely with the pastoral team - there's a very strong pastoral team here - and my link into that nurture team is the nurture teacher." **IAT: Setting 3**

In Setting 3 nurture was viewed as the 'ice breaker' that would then funnel parents into various levels of pastoral support including multiple groups such as cookery skills, academic skills, child development, a parent managed support group and an adult college group as examples of different routes parents could take within school. Similarly, in Setting 6 parental provision had been formalised into a charity working around issues of food poverty giving out food parcels, and encouraging participation in the cookery school that had been set up by the school. There was a mobile food service during the holidays and members of the Emotional Wellbeing Team would regularly take parents to Citizens Advice and debt counselling. Setting 4 took a mid-way position between the two extremes of low and high levels of parental support where formal pastoral policies were not as strongly articulated as they had been in Settings 3 and 6, but there was a fairly well developed response to supporting parents in the community.

Chapter 5: The Whole School

The main findings in relation to the whole school highlight the importance of integration, processes and structure for successful NG provision; the need for high levels of training and an understanding of behaviour as communication; and the need for leadership to take an uncompromising position to avoid a 'deskilling' effect within the mainstream and to instil an understanding and implementation of nurture-based principles and practice across the whole school.

5.1 Instilling a value for nurture: Training, processes and structure

There were highly variable levels of integration across settings on a whole school basis. The least integrated settings had strong value clashes between mainstream staff members and nurture staff members where nurture was viewed as a 'soft option for naughty kids':

"*rules are rules and if it's going to work, you've got to stick to them...even in the nurture room, because their theory is we don't have rules, we have expectations which is fine, but if they're doing whatever they want in there and are swearing in there, then they think I'm getting away with it in there… so when they go back into class…they're like 'I could do that in there and I didn't go on report'...so there's no consistency is the issue.*." **Year 5 and 6 Class Teacher: Setting 5**

In addition such settings were characterised by a lack of processes and structure for nurture provision across school and 'ad hoc' ways of communicating between nurture practitioners and mainstream staff members. Furthermore, and perhaps unsurprisingly, lower levels of whole school in-house training were observed in such settings. This lack of integration was exacerbated in settings that did not have a nurture room in the main body of the school, so that there was a physical dislocation between nurture and mainstream, as well as an ideological one.

Settings that had a high level of integration across contexts such as Settings 3 and 6 in contrast, were characterised by a high level of whole school in-house training. There were bridging activities between mainstream and nurture where teachers and TAs would "work with staff in the nurture group for a little while and try some different approaches, in class" (**Head: Setting 3**) to promote an experiential understanding of nurture. Stemming from this, such settings were characterised by a solid understanding of behaviour as communication:

"*…once you stop reacting to the behaviour and looking at behaviour instead as 'what is that telling me about the child', it's distress so often that is causing that [the behaviour]….*" (**Head: Setting 3**)

'Not taking things personally' was also identified as one way that highly integrated settings viewed behavioural problems in children as a whole. In Setting 6 there was an emphasis on working with staff on 'how it makes me feel' when staff members – particularly the TAs – were confronted with children's difficult and insulting behaviour. In addition, in Setting 3, a reflective way of viewing behaviour was seen as an important indicator of whole school integration in relation to nurture:

"*And understanding child psychology, you have to understand that behaviours, the point where we really turned a corner is when staff really understood that this isn't personal, that that behaviour isn't personal…*" **Head: Setting 3**

5.2 The impact of leadership on the whole school

The impact upon the whole school is where the senior leadership's approach to managing and implementing nurture is most clearly realised. In settings 1 and 5 there was an effect of 'deskilling' of the mainstream where value clashes, poor relationships across contexts and low uptake for training in nurture for mainstream staff, resulted in a situation where a number of mainstream staff members were not proficient in dealing with difficult and disruptive behaviour in school and children took control. The 'wait til you father gets home' strategy of behavioural management that had been 'drip fed' to teachers as a response to bad behaviour was equally applicable to children and resulted in a cycle of reinforcement where children learnt who was really in charge in school:

"…and so some of our staff have started to see the nurture room as, I can't manage you but the nurture room can so if you are not doing what I want you to do then I will phone the nurture room and ask them to come and get you. And we've had really open discussions about 'wait til your father gets home' and how it doesn't work because then the children see you as, well I don't have to behave for you because I only have to behave when the Nurture Teacher is called…." **Head: Setting 1**

In Setting 2 a different effect was observed where the existence of an overly complex BMS system seemed to be the result of the Head's attempt to take everyone's views into account and accommodate them. The resulting strategy was seen to be 'neither one thing nor another', and resulted in an inability to fully integrate nurturing approaches in school. In contrast, in Setting 4 the Head had very clear aims and objectives in relation to taking the dual approach of academic and psychosocial outcomes within nurture and she made it a priority to emphasise her vision in relation to this.

In Settings 3, 6 and 7 senior leadership took the approach towards the whole school of recruitment and retention as being key to embedding nurture-based approaches across school. Staff members were employed upon the basis of being able to work with the whole school approach, and they were also retained upon that basis:

"…it's a mind-set, you can either work with it or you can't …if somebody has a sympathy towards it you can train them. But if somebody is absolutely adamant that it is ridiculous, [and thinks] "they just need a bit of discipline...they've got to survive in the real world", then if you've got that resistance, you're not going to break through it. So at some point somebody needs to make a decision about whether this is the right place for them. If they really don't support that fundamental philosophy then this isn't going to be right." **Head: Setting 3**

This concept of everyone being on board with the same approach was highlighted to an even greater extent in Setting 7 where the whole school could be understood as a therapeutic community. All staff members were responsible for the psychosocial wellbeing of the child, from welfare staff to Head Teacher. There was no hierarchy in terms of who received training in nurture – everyone who worked at the school needed to be "singing from the same hymn sheet" and was trained to a very high level accordingly:

 "…. because it's really important that every single person who the children come in contact with has got the same approach. It's no good if the cleaner goes and shouts at them for having an untidy bedroom." **Head: Setting 7**

Chapter 6: Overview of Main Findings

6.1 The Child

The delayed impact of nurture and the importance of ***early intervention*** to maximise the positive effects of provision is highlighted (O'Conner and Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007). In addition, the ***importance of relationships*** (Colwell and O'Connor, 2003) and the differential nature of attachment where it is necessary to focus on ***'the right person for the child'*** have been emphasised.

The most successful settings had ***a multi-targeted response*** (MacKay, 2015) that recognised the difference between trauma and attachment issues, and the need to work through past trauma before children could successfully access nurture provision. Furthermore, these settings had ***high levels of communication*** between teaching staff in the mainstream classes and the nurture practitioners in the NG (Cooper and Tiznak, 2005; Davies, 2011), and they employed strategies to ***minimise the contrast between the contexts of nurture and mainstream*** (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). In settings that had managed to create integration between the contexts of nurture and mainstream, there was ***strong support for nurture from senior leadership*** (Cooper and Tiznak, 2005; Davies, 2011) and an uncompromising position was taken in relation to not permanently excluding children.

6.2 The Nurture Group

The importance of ***modelling functional and positive adult relationships*** (Davies, 2011) and the need to create a ***balance between externalising and internalising behaviours*** within the NG is highlighted (Cooper and Tiznak, 2005). Relatedly the question of selection of children for issues that may be more closely related to immaturity than attachment and also preparing traumatised children for nurture provision who may not be ready for it have been emphasised.

The ***timetabling of nurture in the morning*** was seen as being an ideal but high-risk strategy in terms of the opportunity costs for academic learning, and as a result most schools timetabled nurture in the afternoon. However, in the most successful setting with a discrete NG (Setting 3) the timetabling of nurture in the morning and the consequent ***prioritisation of psychosocial concerns*** was achieved, whilst simultaneously ***balancing academic aims and outcomes*** (Davies, 2011).

The importance of ***senior leadership entrusting staff, committing to nurture and negotiating different points of view*** have also been emphasised.

6.3 The Mainstream Class

In the least successful settings there were ***low levels of training*** in nurture for mainstream staff members (O'Connor and Colwell, 2002; Davies, 2011); ***value clashes*** and ***a lack of comprehension*** amongst mainstream staff about nurture provision; and ***the strongest and most complex behavioural management systems.***

In the most successful settings there were ***high levels of training*** (Davies, 2011; Hughs and Schlosser, 2014) and shared ***value for and understanding of nurture provision*** amongst mainstream staff members***; less punitive behavioural management systems*** that were based upon relationships and/or RJ and also a tendency towards more simplified BMSs overall; ***child-led and individualised approaches***; and a strong ***understanding of behaviour as communication***.

Staggered transitions were seen as the ideal in all settings (Hughs and Schlosser, 2014) and the initial regression associated with transitions was emphasised. Relatedly *a policy of no return to nurture* (Settings 3 and 6) seemed to result in a more considered and reflective approach overall.

The need to *balance academic learning with psychosocial aims and outcomes* was highlighted in relation to opportunity costs (Howes *et* al, 2003; Cooper and Tiznak, 2005), SATs and pressure on mainstream staff members in terms of such aspects as curriculum constraints and performance related pay (O'Connor and Colwell, 2002). In addition an *oppositional view of nurture and academic learning* in less successful settings was contrasted with a more functional view in the most successful settings that did not controvert academic and psychosocial aims. Relatedly, *the foundational nature of psychosocial wellbeing* to academic learning was highlighted (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd , 2001; Cooper and Tiznak, 2005).

The importance of *senior leadership managing value clashes, promoting bridging activities* and *simple behaviour management systems* based on restoration and relationships has also been emphasised.

6.4 Parents/Carers

The importance of *cooperation and consent* and developing strategies to involve parents such as parental goals for children in nurture is highlighted. In addition, developing *positive, non-threatening relationships with parents* and promoting an *understanding of nurture principles* and practice has been emphasised overall (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd, 2001; O'Connor and Colwell, 2002; Colwell and O'Connor, 2003; Cooper and Tiznak, 2005, Sanders, 2007; Davies, 2011).

The role of senior leadership in developing *formal pastoral policies to support parents* is critical to engaging parents in the nurture process and also school.

6.5 The Whole School

The least integrated settings saw *value clashes* where nurture was seen by mainstream staff members as 'a soft option for naughty kids' and also a *lack of processes and structure* for supporting the integration of nurture between contexts. In addition, it was found that the *physical dislocation of the NG* exacerbated any existing schisms. The most integrated settings had *high levels of whole school training*, *bridging activities* to support integration between contexts and a solid *understanding of behaviour as communication* (Cooper, Arnold and Boyd, 2001; O'Connor and Colwell, 2002; Colwell and O'Connor, 2003; Cooper and Tiznak, 2005, Sanders, 2007; Davies, 2011; Hughs and Schlosser, 2014).

The role of senior leadership in *managing value clashes* and avoiding an associated *'deskilling' of the mainstream*; in promoting *simple and coherent behaviour management systems* as well as *clear aims and objectives*; and in having a focus upon *recruitment and retention* to get the 'right person for the job' (Davies, 2011) and to promote a vision of the *whole school as therapeutic community*, has been emphasised overall.

Conclusion

We have come to recognise some deep principles that can be presented as drivers of nurture-in-practice, in the course of answering our research questions about the impact of the NG as a psychosocial intervention for vulnerable children, the influence of school leadership, effective communication and lessons for mainstream primary classrooms. They are:

- commitment to the creation and maintenance of ongoing relationships;
- an understanding of behaviour as communication which naturally leads to less punitive, more restorative, forms of behaviour management;
- a commitment to the support and training of the staff who have to handle, on a daily basis, complex and challenging social and emotional relationships with vulnerable children.

As we look, comparatively, across the seven settings, our concluding thoughts on the study concern the important underlying and persistent question about the benefits of whole school integrated nurture versus discrete nurture groups. Are these principles implemented most effectively through the provision of specialised classes, i.e. specifically designated nurture groups? Or are they best practiced through an integrated nurturing philosophy that runs across the whole school? We have come to the conclusion that schools need to work on both practice fronts simultaneously. We have seen examples of how nurture group principles have been weakened and sometimes undermined when the school's leadership is not committed or when staff members express a clash of values regarding the treatment of their most vulnerable pupils. We have also witnessed the practices of a setting that has really struggled with this important question and has been commendably experimental in its efforts to try out the different systems, moving from a longstanding provision of NGs, to a disbanding of these in order to emphasize whole school nurturing, and then moving back to the re-establishment of NGs. We have also witnessed the efforts of one setting that seems to combine the structured and yet flexible and responsive use of discrete NGs with a very clear nurturing vision for the whole school based on strong leadership from the Head. Finally, the practices in the specialised residential school can be emulated in all schools insofar as they are underlined by a powerful commitment to the creation of a lasting mutual attachment between the child and school staff and training for all adults in the school community that supports this value.

Appendix

Case Study of Josi:

Josi provides a helpful case study emphasising the ingredients for effective practice in relation to NG provision in school. Josi was selected for nurture because she was unmanageable in school exhibiting non-compliant, controlling, defiant and sometimes verbally and physically aggressive behaviour. Neglect, trauma and emotional abuse at the hands of her mother and her mother's partners, and also issues centred upon loss as a result of removal from her mother's care, had resulted in Josi's significant psychosocial difficulties. She had spent at least 1 ½ years in nurture from the age of 5 and she is now fully reintegrated into her Year 3 mainstream class.

Her journey demonstrates the importance of a multi-targeted response in terms of the extended nurture provision and therapy she has received in Setting 3. In addition, the importance of relationships to the therapeutic process has been demonstrated through the clearly strong relationships she had with the nurture practitioners, and also the Integrated Arts Therapist to whom she appeared very strongly attached. She also represents a child that in another situation may not have had such a positive response due to the fact that Setting 3 struggled considerably with knowing if they were making progress with Josi and whether what they were doing was the right thing for her. This resulted in her receiving an extended stay in nurture with a number of setbacks in terms of her readiness to reintegrate back into mainstream. However, the careful and responsive approach taken by Setting 3 that is reinforced by the policy of no return to nurture, has meant that Josi did not fully reintegrate until the school felt she was absolutely ready. In addition, the strongly integrated approach in this setting has also meant that Josi did not experience sharp contrasts between the environments of nurture and mainstream, and as a result she has had a very successful reintegration back into her mainstream class, highlighting the importance of a whole school approach to nurture.

We visited Josi after she had fully reintegrated back into mainstream to ask her to reflect on her time in the nurture room and the transition from the NG back into the mainstream class. Her interview below reinforces aspects of successful provision in relation to the importance of positive relationships and strong attachments; a multi-targeted approach that is responsive to the needs of the child; and also the use of processes and bridging activities, such as making time for children to re-visit the NG on a structured basis, to support relationships and provide an integrated response overall. The excerpt below highlights the progress Josi has made in terms of rationalising her psychosocial difficulties over time. In addition the positive experience she has had in relation to reintegration are emphasised, as evidenced by her preference to be 'learning' in her mainstream class rather than receiving provision in the NG, and also her clear enthusiasm for her new role on the school council:

Interviewer: What do you miss about the nurture room?

Josi: All the teachers….we used to write what we did at the weekend when we were in there and I liked doing that. I liked writing in my diary.

Interviewer: Would you rather be in there than in your class?

Josi: I'd rather be in class because I'm learning

Interviewer: Do you visit the nurture room?

Josi: Yeah, every Tuesday afternoon…we play board games and stuff. When I'm walking past sometimes I pop in and say hello and on a Monday dinner time I go in.

Nurture Teacher: We have lunch together don't we?

Interviewer: How was it going back into class from the nurture room – was it easy or hard?

Josi: Easier, because I was knowing that someone else was taking my place that needed it, I didn't need to go in the room anymore, it was somebody else's turn.

Interviewer: Can you remember why you needed to go in the nurture room in the first place?

Josi: Because mummy had some not very nice people in her life.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about all of that now?

Josi: It's in the past now.

Interviewer: And do you still talk to Sarah? [IAT]

Josi: I've got three more sessions with her and then I stop seeing her. She said I'm the person who's been seeing her the longest.

Interviewer: So what's good about talking to Sarah then?

Josi: I get quite angry and she gives me different ways of making me not be angry.

Interviewer: Well that's fantastic, it sounds like it's all going really well for you, and I believe you're part of the school council now!

Josi: Yes, I'm going to a meeting today at dinner…I was talking to [my classmates] this morning and writing it down on a piece of paper, to make sure I ask…one of them said gymnastics – I will mention that – and basketball, and shelter from the rain, and bringing food outside, and a little singing club.

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