

The National Nurturing Schools Programme
Assessment Report



Establishment name and address	St. John's Preparatory and Senior School The Ridgeway Potters Bar Herts EN6 5QT
Headteacher/Principal	Mrs. Poppy Tardios
NNSP trained staff	Mrs. Michelle Aylott – Mental Health Lead Mrs. Fiona Winterhalder - Mental Health Team Mrs. Jane Richardson - Mental Health Team Mrs. Elle Bewley - Mental Health Team
Assessment date	28 th November 2024
Assessor	Miranda Collins
Trainer	Suus-anna Harskamp
Review date	November 2027

STANDARDS

1. Stakeholders		1a. Pupils		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
1a.1	The social and emotional needs of pupils are assessed and tracked.		✓	
1a.2	Nurture principles are defined and explained to pupils.			✓
1a.3	Pupils are encouraged to develop responsibility for themselves and learn self-efficacy			✓

1. Stakeholders		1b. Parents and Carers		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
1b.1	Parents and carers feel valued and welcomed in the establishment.			✓
1b.2	Nurture principles are defined and explained to parents and carers.			✓
1b.3	Reports to parents and carers reflect pupils' strengths and areas of need.			✓

1. Stakeholders		1c. Staff		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
1c.1	There are systems and procedures to welcome, support and induct new staff and visitors.			✓
1c.2	Nurture principles are defined and explained to all staff.			✓
1c.3	Staff are given opportunities to discuss, develop and review shared values.			✓
1c.4	There are clear expectations of how all adults in school relate to children when in or out of class.			✓
1c.5	Staff are actively involved in The National Nurturing Schools Programme.			✓

1. Stakeholders		1d. The Community		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
1d.1	The establishment works with stakeholders within the community.			✓
1d.2	Nurture principles are defined and explained to stakeholders.			✓
1d.3	The establishment is used as a resource within the community.			✓
1d.4	The community is included in development plans.			✓

1. Delivery		2a. Meeting Pupils Needs		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
2a.1	Nurture principles are incorporated in curriculum planning and delivery.			✓
2a.2	The social and emotional needs of pupils are addressed.			✓
2a.3	Behaviour is dealt with consistently by all staff.			✓
2a.4	Pupils are involved in developing and evaluating their learning.			✓

2. Delivery		2b. Wellbeing: Pupils		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
2b.1	Provision and strategies promote pupil welfare and wellbeing			✓
2b.2	Pupils feel safe and secure.			✓
2b.3	Pupils feel valued, respected, included and listened to.			✓
2b.4	Pupils are prepared for transitions in life.			✓

2 Delivery		2b. Wellbeing: Staff		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
2b.5	Provision and strategies promote staff welfare and wellbeing			✓
2b.6	Staff feel valued, respected, included and listened to.			✓
2b.7	Staff access relevant professional development.			✓
2b.8	There are opportunities for reflective collaborative problem solving for staff			✓

2 Delivery		2c. Environment		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
2c.1	Nurture principles are reflected in the development of the environment.			✓
2c.2	The environment is safe and welcoming for all stakeholders.			✓

3. Leadership and Management		3a. Policy		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
3a.1	Organisational and curriculum policies reflect and support nurture principles.			✓
3a.2	Stakeholders are involved in the development and review of policies.			✓

3. Leadership and Management		3b. Partnership		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
3b.1	Partnership working reflects a nurturing rationale.			✓

3. Leadership and Management		3c. Resources		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
3c.1	There are clear development priorities regarding nurture principles and practice.			✓
3c.2	Resources are deployed to develop nurturing principles and practice across the setting.			✓

3 Leadership and Management		3d. Monitoring and evaluation		
Standard		Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
3d.1	Monitoring and evaluation protocols include evidence of planning, reviewing and evaluating processes for the National Nurturing Schools Programme (please include attendance and exclusion data from the first self-assessment and in all subsequent self-assessments).		✓	

Assessors Summary	
<p>This report cannot reflect the hard work that goes on at school every day. A comprehensive evidence file and related documents have been provided as part of the assessment process by the school. This includes attendance and exclusion data and Case Studies for Partnership, Community and The Boxall Profile® along with a clear understanding of The Six Principles of Nurture, evidenced in the application and Principles into Practice report.</p> <p>In meetings with stakeholders, many words were used to describe the school. The range of words captured a sense of care, nurture and kindness but the words used most often were <i>safe</i>, <i>supportive</i> and <i>family</i>. We don't often find a school that openly speaks about the love felt by and expressed to children, families and colleagues but in this school members of staff said, "We are often told that we are loved" and parents commented, "The school makes you feel like home, you get that love".</p> <p>The school's approach to wellbeing is led with great determination and curiosity by the charismatic Principal and proprietor, Poppy Tardios. She has created a culture where the whole child is carefully shaped according to their individual strengths, interests and needs. She said, "We don't talk about labels here." She told me that she encourages teachers to be less "subject orientated but child orientated". She recognises the impact of poor mental health on children and families and stated that she endeavoured to bring something different to support the school community every year. Examples of this</p>	

included bringing an individual into school to teach a Buddhist approach to meditation and mindfulness, implementing a whole school approach to developing emotional literacy and regulation skills and seeking a therapeutic response to behaviour.

The Mental Health Lead heads a dynamic team who implement a range of strategies and interventions across the school, responding to the vision of wellbeing shared by staff and parents. The school's commitment to a nurturing and relational approach is summed up in these two quotes. One of the team who undertook the National Nurturing Schools Programme (NNSP) acknowledged the amount of work involved but said, "It's a big undertaking but I'm really proud of how far we've come." The Principal said, "We can never say it's finished - there is always more we can do".

Examples of excellent practice include:

Getting the fundamentals right. There was so much excellent practice to observe and celebrate at this school. It is truly a nurturing and inclusive school. All groups of stakeholders gave me wonderful examples of relational practice, the group of support staff and specialist teachers I spoke to really captured the essence of it.

When I asked them what their advice would be to members of staff wanting to adopt this approach, they gave the following feedback:

- It's important to ensure that staff members are approachable
- Create an environment that feels warm and welcoming
- Ensure that staff members are knowledgeable and have the skills needed to support children and young people and to create strong relationships within the staff team.

As a school that serves children from the age of 3 to 18 when they leave the school's Sixth Form, St. John's demonstrates the determination to get it right from the start and follow that through, providing what is needed by each individual. Alongside the Principal, the school's Mental Health Lead (who also leads the Early Years team) has played a key role in introducing Zones of Regulation and mindfulness for the youngest children in the school.

A growing appetite for understanding how secure the foundation of skills is for each child has led to the use of the Boxall Profile® for all children when they start in the school's Nursery and Reception classes. Boxall Profile® assessments are used to determine interventions that will support children and the school has trained two members of staff in the Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups to ensure that nurture groups have a high impact.

Concepts related to growth mindset and resilience are introduced in Nursery and Reception by connecting ideas to familiar storybook characters. Parents observed that their young children had benefitted from increased confidence to speak in the Christmas

show and achieve academically. One said, “They are given opportunities to develop as individuals – the school brings out the best in my child”.

The environment in the Early Years and Prep school has been carefully considered to enhance wellbeing and great thought is given to how transitions are supported. From the moment children arrive in the morning, connections with trusted adults are made so that anxiety is minimised and eagerness for the day ahead is created. Music is played in classrooms at every point of transition and becomes a calming anchor for children, soothing worries and ensuring that they can engage with activities positively.

The commitment to wellbeing for all children and meeting the needs of the whole child continues across the whole school. As children progress through the Prep school, they have emotional regulation strategies, including access to calm areas in the classroom. Should they have worries, they can access Time to Talk with the Mental Health Lead by putting their name in a box. For greater needs, the school funds a school counsellor to provide specialist support.

The Time to Talk programme continues in the Senior school, where young people have a calm room to access when they need a safe space. Relationships continue to be prioritised here and the Sixth Form has a comprehensive programme of mentorship for students across academic, personal and pastoral aspects. I was told of a young person who applied to undertake A Level study in another setting but returned to St. John’s because the availability of a personal mentor was felt to be so valuable.

Children and young people benefit from a holistic approach – it’s not just academic progress and success that are celebrated at St. Johns. The Principal, Poppy talked about expecting teachers to be less subject oriented and more child oriented, focusing on the unique combination of strengths and needs in each individual. She also said that the school doesn’t “talk about labels here,” meaning that the child is a person first and that needs were addressed as they arose. The Boxall Profile® is a key strategy in ensuring that staff have a secure understanding of all pupils in the school.

This is a whole school endeavour. Poppy values a unified approach to nurture and wellbeing. Specialist teachers working across the school are encouraged to adopt the principles of nurture in their sessions with children and young people. The NNSP was felt to have brought the two geographically separate parts of the school closer together through developing the shared ethos and approach. As well as all staff being involved in the NNSP, cooks, gardeners and admin staff will undertake training in a therapeutic approach to behaviour in January.

Members of staff value the relationships with each other and felt that connections had been made through working on shared priorities, creating a shared network for colleagues. They felt that there was a “community of care” and that the focus on children and young people’s wellbeing trickled down to classroom staff as well. They

talked about feeling valued and loved, and having mutually respectful relationships with parents too. The school guarantees parents a swift response to queries but teachers spoke of no pressure to respond at unsocial hours.

Parents echoed the feeling of being loved and cared for – “it (the school) makes you feel like home”. They value the range of methods used to communicate with them and believe that to be a strength of the school. Being able to see their child’s teacher at drop offs and pick ups builds relationships and facilitates communication. Parents also spoke about being “close as friends” with others they met at the school.

All parents I spoke to felt just as supported as their children. They said “the door is open” and would feel no fear of judgement in asking for support for themselves. They were confident that the school would do what they could to help, lovingly and with great care.

Sixth formers are very present in the school, helping to support and assist younger children. Parents spoke about how the children look after each other. When I asked the children what advice they would give a new child at the school, one child mirrored the ethos of the school by saying, “make friends, relax and start to feel like you belong”.

The school increasingly embraces the wider community. Throughout the process of undertaking the NNSP, the school has actively considered its links with the community outside the school family. The portfolio of evidence contained examples of fundraising activities initiated by young people, both to support wellbeing charities and families in need. The Harvest collection is taken to benefit a shelter for local homeless people. Parents value that their children are encouraged to appreciate their blessings and think of others.

The youngest children in the school had given their Christmas performance in a local theatre and many stakeholders spoke of the impact of utilising a community venue for the event. Parents spoke about the trips and outings offered to their children, “They are going on trips all the time, there are so many opportunities,” and, “They go the extra mile.”

Links with the local church have been made and are secure. The priest leads services for Remembrance Day that include the whole school. The Carol Service has recently been opened up to include members of the public and the school sings for elderly neighbours in the community. The Fireworks display is also open to the community. A recently formed Community Events team will further develop this aspect of school life.

Thank you so much for all you do to support wellbeing in your school. It was a delight to meet you all and be inspired by your work.

Quotes from the assessment day:

The Time to Talk box helps you to express your feelings. (young person)

One of my favourite things about school is art - I can be creative and there is no limit on creativity here. (young person)

The teachers are quite accommodating and take account of the views of students well here. (young person)

It's a very supportive school. (young person)

It's safe the teachers are supportive. (young person)

We are often told we are loved. (member of staff)

You feel you really get to know parents and families as well as knowing their children. (member of staff)

It's a community of care. (member of staff)

They go the extra mile. (parent)

The children are given opportunities to develop as individuals - the school brings out the best in my child. (parent)

They nurture the individual and provide a chance for everyone to thrive. (parent)

The school has given a platform for my child's talents to shine through. (parents)

Recommendation

**We recommend St. John's Preparatory and Senior School
for the National Nurturing Schools Award**

Areas for development	Timescale
<p>The Boxall Profile®. Continue to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In specific cases as a tool for those needing additional external social or emotional support; for groups of pupils where necessary 	Ongoing
<p>Nurture Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote and embed nurture group principles throughout the provision for pupils and staff. • Continue to familiarise your families and community with the Six Principles, for example, mention them in reports, on letters and emails, in Newsletters and keep updates on your website and social media platforms to ensure all stakeholders are familiar with their meaning and impact. 	Ongoing
<p>Your support for larger transitions is great and very considered. Just make sure that you are also being as intentional in supporting children and young people with smaller and micro transitions.</p> <p>The latter may include transitions within lessons for example moving from one part of a task through to completion. Or for children in Early Years it may be transitions as they progress through particular activities. Observe where some children may not have secure skills to make those choices of activities. Your plan to use the Boxall Profile® and develop nurture groups within the Early Years classes will support you with this.</p>	<p>This may be an interesting point for consideration within your Therapeutic Thinking training in January.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>You have worked hard to develop the learning environment to be nurturing and inclusive for children, young people and members of staff. Consider what this might look like for your specialist teachers who do not have a base. For example, are there routines at the start of each lesson that could support a sense of safety (e.g. a quick emotion check-in followed by three calming breaths to orient children and young people in the space). It would be a useful piece of work to consider making the Six Principles portable!</p>	<p>This may be an interesting point for consideration within your Therapeutic Thinking training in January.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Continue to monitor and evaluate the provision within your setting completing the National Nurturing Schools self-assessment on an annual basis.	Ongoing
Engage with the re-accreditation process for the National Nurturing Schools Programme.	2027