

**Supporting all Learners at Downfield PS – Rationale**

**Downfield Primary School is committed to providing an effective and flexible range of support for children who need different approaches to help them be successful.**

This enhancement to our learning provision is available to support children who attend Downfield Primary School and who have an additional support need. We:

* Provide education for each pupil in a safe, caring and stimulating environment.
* Value each pupil as an individual and treat him/her with dignity and respect.
* Acknowledge the pupil’s entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum, which is adapted to take account of individual need.
* Work in partnership with parents, families and other professionals in meeting the needs of the pupil.
* Develop skills, understanding and knowledge that will enable each pupil to achieve his or her full potential.
* Develop staff awareness of Nurture through continual staff development.
* Build on each pupil’s strengths and celebrate their achievements.
* Promote the understanding of Nurture amongst the wider school community.
* Develop effective collaborative working.
* Develop a whole school approach to supporting children and young people with attachment difficulties and who present challenge with self-regulation and relationships.

**What are additional support needs (ASN)?**

Education Scotland (2017) defines additional support needs as,

*…needs that can be both long-term and short-term, or can simply refer to the help a child or young person needs in getting through a difficult period. Additional support needs can be due to: disability or health, learning environment, family circumstances, social and emotional factors.*

In 2022, the number of children in Scotland requiring additional support was around 233,000, which is approximately one third of young people (Accounts Commission, 2022).

**How do we support additional support needs at Downfield?**

**Our ASN team**

Our ASN team is headed up by Mrs Clark; Principal Teacher and Mrs Hampson; ASN teacher and supported by our extensive support staff; Mrs Blackwood, Mrs Imran, Mrs Cummings, Mrs Simpkins, Miss Glowacka,

Our learners predominantly work within their class supported by staff but also sometimes work within our nurture rooms for focused targeted support and activities. We often support out children outside the classroom or nurture bases, through life skills activities such as Forest Schools Outdoor Education, DIY life skills projects and trips in the locality where children can build skills such as being safety aware, cooperating with others and following instructions from adults that they can then apply within the classroom or playground.

**Nurture Groups**

A nurture group is a small group of 6 to 10 children/young people usually based in a mainstream educational setting and staffed by at least two supportive adults. Nurture groups offer a short term, focused, intervention strategy, which addresses barriers to learning arising from social, emotional and or behavioural difficulties, in an inclusive, supportive manner. Children continue to remain part of their own class group and usually return fully to class within 6 to 8 terms. Central to the philosophy is attachment theory; an area of psychology which explains the need for any person to be able to form secure and happy relationships with others in the formative years of their lives and our ongoing knowledge of neuroscience.

Nurture groups are an effective, evidenced based approach supporting Additional Support Needs (ASN) in the form of Social, Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) in an inclusive manner. Through successfully addressing the barriers to learning, this results in both improved academic attainment and improved health and wellbeing. In Downfield Primary School we offer nurturing approaches within all classrooms and in our nursery so that children are supported wherever they are learning.

**What happens in our ASN groups?**

We provide a carefully structured day with a balance of learning, teaching, life skills and routine within a home-like setting; all offering a nurture group ethos. Across the week we provide groups which focus on; Teaching Children to Listen activities, cooking, art, My Hidden Chimp and PE.

We welcome parents and carers to join us for fun, games, to support activities and learning, and a coffee too! We share updates on our learning with parents via Seesaw. Parents can support with regular communication, building consistency of approach between home and school as well supporting learning through ‘pre-learning’ or consolidating new learning at home.

**How will Nurturing approaches help my child?**

The approach will help to develop:

* Self-esteem and confidence
* A good feeling about school and improved engagement with learning
* Literacy and Numeracy skills
* Social skills including sharing, following instructions and taking turns
* Ability to form and maintain positive friendships
* Stronger links between their family and school
* Improved readiness for learning

Trained staff create an attractive, safe, structured environment, within the context of a mainstream educational setting, with a number of areas and resources designed to bridge the gap between home and school. Building trusting relationships are core to the approach. The children are carefully selected according to their individual holistic profile of needs, identified using the Boxall Profile whilst also ensuring the establishment of a cohesive nurture group. We also track improvements through self-assessment using wellbeing wheels. Individual and group plans are then formulated, with all targets thoroughly discussed with all involved including the pupils themselves. Staff then provide a variety of experiences, opportunities, approaches and resources to address these needs within a culture of trust, understanding and knowledge incorporating the 6 principles of nurture as undernoted, with progress closely monitored.

**The six principles of nurture groups**

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

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

**3. Nurture is important for the development of self-esteem:** Nurture involves listening and responding. In a nurture group ‘everything is verbalised' with an emphasis on the adults engaging with the children in reciprocal shared activities e.g. play / meals / reading /talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and thought about as individuals, so in practice this involves noticing and praising small achievements; ‘nothing is hurried in nurture groups‘.

**4. Language is understood as a vital means of communication:** Language is more than a skill to be learnt, it is the way of putting feelings into words. Nurture group children often ‘act out' their feelings as they lack the vocabulary to ‘name' how they feel. In nurture groups the informal opportunities for talking and sharing, e.g. welcoming the children into the group or having breakfast together are as important as the more formal lessons teaching language skills. Words are used instead of actions to express feelings and opportunities are created for extended conversations or encouraging imaginative play to understand the feelings of others. You will often hear staff prompting “use your words to explain…..”

**5. All behaviour is communication:** This principle underlies the adult response to the children's often challenging or difficult behaviour. ‘Given what I know about this child and their development what is this child trying to tell me?' Understanding what a child is communicating through behaviour helps staff to respond in a firm but non-punitive way by not being provoked or discouraged. If the child can sense that their feelings are understood this can help to diffuse difficult situations. The adult makes the link between the external / internal worlds of the child.

**6. Transitions are significant in the lives of children:** The nurture group helps the child make the difficult transition from home to school. However, on a daily basis there are numerous transitions the child makes, e.g. between sessions and classes and between different adults. Changes in routine are invariably difficult for vulnerable children and need to be carefully managed with preparation and support.

For further information please go to [www.nurturegroups.com](http://www.nurturegroups.com) or ask a member of the Downfield PS team!