



Greysbrooke Primary School Nurture Room Case Study



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Introduction

My colleagues and I have noticed a decline in our pupil's mental health, for those of us who have been teaching a long time this seems to worsen year on year. Children are exposed to so many factors which can have a detrimental effect on their well-being and mental state. We pride ourselves at Greysbrooke School for being aware of these needs and responding when and where we can. Good communication with parents is of paramount importance to us and the good relationships we have fostered with parents means that many factors which may affect a child's well-being in the family home are often reported to us, eg marriage splits. External pressures including the use of social media and so on have been dealt with in the usual manner within school through raising awareness, providing cyber bullying workshops and so on. However we felt that more should and could be done to support children with specific emotional needs.

Identifying the need

Our school was lucky in that a suitable room became available due to new building works. The head of the school Mrs T Holmes who is acutely aware of the ever increasing need for additional emotional support suggested that the room should be made available as a nurture room.

My initial response to this was to ascertain the need within school. All staff members were approached and asked to make a list of all the children in their class whom they felt would benefit from additional emotional support. The list that came back was long; in a one form entry school the list was comparable to a whole class of children in need of support. Each teacher also wrote a brief reason for their choices, these ranged from lack of self-esteem, emotional distress due to a marriage split, anger issues, children with identified needs such as autism and children who were struggling to form friendships. It became very obvious that there was indeed a need within the school for a nurture room.

The school then set out in identifying groups of children whom had similar concerns eg lack of self-esteem and friendship issues. The teachers of these children were then asked to complete a 'Boxall Profile' which can be completed online and identifies children's emotional responses to certain situations. The Boxall Profile is an assessment of a child's social, emotional and behavioural development; including early identification assessment, target setting and intervention and tracking progress. This identified the starting points for the children.

Aims of the Nurture Room at Greysbrooke:

The Nurture room is designed to be a bridge between home and school; a place where children can feel safe and secure and therefore develop their individual needs further. The Greysbrooke Beach Hut has a table to share snacks, a beautiful seating area to play games and work collaboratively plus a kitchen to prepare snacks.

What is the purpose of Nurture Groups and its Philosophy?

Nurture Groups normally consist of a small group of pupils (6-8). Its composition is carefully thought out to create a balanced and functional group. The Nurture Group is part of the school's Inclusion and PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) provision. Its purpose is to offer children opportunities to re-visit early learning skills and promote and support their social and emotional development. There is much research evidence that children's learning is most effective when they have a sense of emotional well-being, good self-esteem and a feeling of belonging to their school community. The Greysbrooke Beach Hut provides children with this opportunity and so helps to develop their maturity and resilience. The Nurture Room is a place of learning.

The Greysbrooke Nurture Group Principles:

- Children's learning is understood developmentally
- The classroom offers a safe base
- All behaviour is communication
- The importance of transition in children's lives
- Builds a child's self-esteem and confidence
- Builds skills for classroom learning
- Has crafts and games.
- Language is a vital means of communication

Nurture Room Resources

We then focused upon staffing, two members of staff had expressed great interest to be involved in delivering nurture. We met several times to discuss how best to group the children on age and need and then formulated a 6 week programme of fun activities aimed at boosting self-esteem. These programs were very successful, children loved the new nurture room and enjoyed coming to work in it, and a biscuit and juice can't be underestimated for making a child feel special and listened to.

The Greysbrooke Beach Hut theme was easy to develop, which child or adult alike doesn't enjoy the relaxation and calm of the seaside? Hardwearing adhesive wallpaper was applied to the walls; a beautiful seaside scene is depicted. Inspirational quotes are also on the wallpaper, along with bunting, postcards and photographs. It really is a beautiful room and one can't help but feel calm as soon as you enter it. We wanted the space to feel very different to a classroom; there are no desks just a small table for carrying out activities which is surrounded by four child sized blue beanbags and four plastic relaxed style chairs. There are beautiful seaside themed cushions which were made and donated by a very kind dinner lady. We have a CD player which again was donated; this is used to play calming music during the sessions. There are two glass display boxes on the wall which display shells and other objects with a beach theme. The floor needed a soft touch so we bought a beautiful blue rug which is soft and squishy underfoot. We really are incredibly proud of the Greysbrooke Beach Hut and so are all of the children who use it.

In addition we have collected a box of objects which the children love to play with and are an aid to release stress such as squishies, fidget spinners, cuddly toys and sensory toys. Many of these were donated or were bought for minimal cost. All the children love the chest of toys and enjoy choose one to play with during the sessions.

Costings to be considered:

Wallpaper, decor chairs, table, bean bags, staffing costs art materials, sound system, lighting.





Analysis of Provision

ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)

I have been privileged enough to undertake ELSA training. ELSA training is a seven-day therapeutic mentoring course to support practitioners in nurturing the emotional resilience of vulnerable students.

The ELSA project was developed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils from within their own resources. ELSA is a national programme of staff training to support children and young people with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

ELSAs are trained to plan and deliver programmes of support for pupils in their school or setting by ELSA registered Educational and Child Psychologists. It is a holistic approach, embedded at a systemic level. Training is delivered one day per month and is interspersed with psychological supervision at six weekly intervals.

It takes approximately six months to train and following training, it is expected that ELSAs continue with supervision and continue to access support from ELSA practitioners.

So far I have worked with six pupils; ELSA is carried out on a 1:1 basis once a week for a period of half an hour. The children I have worked with have varying needs, I have worked with pupils with behaviour difficulties, anger problems, friendship problems, a child with poor self-esteem, one with anxiety, one with autism and one who is struggling with a difficult home life. Working 1:1 enables me to really focus on a child's specific needs and target these specifically. There are specific targets which are discussed with the child, they are measurable and specific.

The nurture room has provided a calm, secure place where children feel safe and able to talk freely. They can share their thoughts in an environment which is very different to the classroom. The setting has enabled the school to provide a valuable nurturing ethos which, although we had before, was not as visible. As an ELSA I keep very detailed records of all of the sessions, a plan is made prior to the session and I also complete weekly evaluations which shows evidence of impact of the session. Children have really enjoyed the 1:1 time and teachers of the children involved in the sessions have commented on improvements which they have seen in the classroom.

One child who was suffering from anxiety was given strategies to cope when he felt overwhelmed, the teacher and I had discussed these strategies and the child was able to go to the back of the class when he felt overwhelmed and he carried out his calming strategies independently. This had a huge impact not only on the child but also those in the class around him.

LEGO Therapy

What is LEGO®-based therapy?

LEGO®-Based Therapy is a collaborative, play based social skills intervention designed to improve social competence in children with social difficulties. The intervention was originally created for use with children with autism, although its use has been widened to children with related conditions. Groups often also include children without any identified difficulties.

Groups are run by a trained facilitator and children are encouraged to build together within set roles. Each child plays the role of an 'engineer', a 'supplier' or a 'builder' and together they follow pictorial instructions to build a model. The assignment of roles allows the children to practise social interactions in a safe environment, and encourages the development of skills for social interaction. Sessions also include opportunities for more natural play in the form of freestyle building. The role of the facilitator is to promote positive social interaction and skills for social competence.

LEGO®-Based Therapy aims to:

- Promote the development of appropriate social, communication and play skills
- Utilise children's strengths to help develop areas of difficulty

Who is LEGO®-Based Therapy suitable for?

Age range?

LEGO®-Based Therapy has been used effectively with children aged 6- 16 years in research studies.

Who?

LEGO®-Based Therapy was originally developed as an intervention to develop social competence in children with ASC, however, it is thought that it may also be helpful for children with social communication difficulties, anxiety, depression and adjustment disorder. However, research has yet to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention for these conditions, and to date, research has only been conducted with children with ASC.

I have been providing LEGO®-Based Therapy to a group of 3 children over a 12 week period. The children were selected because of their individual needs. The children's ages ranged from Year 3 to Year 5.



Evaluation of Sessions so far

As a facilitator, I have noticed that the children quickly became aware of the rules and sequence of the sessions. We had to revisit appropriate vocabulary for the Lego pieces at the beginning of each session so that we could collaboratively devise a consistent vocabulary that everyone understood. Children have also become much more aware of how to communicate appropriately with each other and what behaviour is acceptable within the session. The children have become a lot more confident in reading and understanding the instructions to give, being able to order their thoughts, describe the different pieces clearly and then announce a well-structured clear instruction, as well as being able to follow the instruction. Behaviour is far calmer during the sessions and the relationships of the children have grown and developed in a positive manner. The Nurture Room contributes a calm, positive environment which helps the children to relax and feel special whilst focusing on an important task.

Children's Quotes

"I've found it actually really good. I have enjoyed working in team and building stuff together. My memory has got better and I've got better at being the engineer"

"It's amazing and spectacular! I've got better at everything, I found calming down tricky, but I've got better"

Nurture through Art

Nurture sessions often involve lots of discussion and talking, informal chats can be very beneficial as the children feel relaxed and able to speak freely. The nurture team has spent some time researching art activities for use in nurture sessions so we can provide creative activities that children can work on whilst engaging in discussion. The activities we have done have involved making something the children can be proud of, whilst encouraging them to think about the message of the session (the nurture focus), for example, 'developing positive self-talk'.

One art activity we did was to make 'inspirational canvases' with both KS1 and KS2 nurture groups. These involved the children decorating a small canvas each, using paint, stickers, glitter etc. The focus of these sessions was to help the children develop their self-esteem by using positive words / affirmations to describe themselves. We then used these words to decorate the canvases, in a creative decoupage style. During the sessions the children discussed the words they wanted to use, we talked about the meanings of the words, and how our personalities are unique. The children also described each other and helped each other pick out suitable words, working well as a team. By the end of these sessions, the children could not wait to take home their canvases and display them at home! They were very proud of them.

Another art project we have done involved decorating and making a special box, again using a variety of materials and techniques, tissue paper, paint, decoupage, jewel stickers etc. The children loved selecting from the materials available to make their boxes really special and personal to them. The nurture focus of this activity was to develop pupils' positive 'self-talk'. We spent lots of time discussing how our inner dialogue can affect our mind-set and that we must be kind to ourselves and aim to have an 'I can' attitude. The children wrote positive sentences about themselves to put in their boxes, such as 'I am a kind friend to others,' and 'I make my friends laugh when they feel sad' and we spoke about their achievements and positive qualities with the aim of raising self-esteem. At the end of the session the children also wrote positive sentences about each other to 'secretly' put in their boxes to be read at home.

Evidence of success

Nurture through art has been really successful for the 3 nurture groups that have had these sessions this year. The children all said that they really enjoyed the sessions and would like to do more nurture work. Art is a fantastic medium through which to let children express their creativity, grow their self-esteem and make something they are really proud of. The children improved their emotional literacy during these sessions, by the end of the unit they were able to talk about why they had made their artwork and why it was special to them. Since finishing their art projects, several of the children have asked me when they will get to take part in a nurture group again and expressed how much they enjoyed it. A few weeks after making the boxes, one child told me that she still has her box at home and often looks inside it to cheer herself up as she likes reading all the messages.

An Ofsted survey carried out in 2011 reported on the impact of nurture groups as follows:

At their best, the nurture groups have clear outcomes. They:

- significantly modified pupils' behaviour
- improved pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills
- gave parents and carers practical support, strategies and confidence
- accelerated academic progress or restarted it when it had stalled
- enabled the pupil to reintegrate into their mainstream class
- modified the practice of other staff, such as the class teacher
- influenced the rest of the school's practice
- Improved pupils' attendance.

Quotes/statistics

To date 47 children have received some form of nurture session/support in the Nurture room during the first year of its development. This means that 23% of the whole school have so far been impacted in a positive way through their use of the nurture room.

Hard evidence of impact is hard to demonstrate however the following quotes from some of the children who have attended sessions are as follows:

"It was good I liked the art activities especially making the canvas. It is on my shelf at home. The sessions helped me to feel better about myself. I liked the memory box; the wooden duck which I put in there reminded me of my dad who hunted ducks. It was a good experience"

(bereaved child)

"I love the room it's colourful and calming I liked the music too. The activities like writing down my worries helped. I think the sessions helped me to feel calmer. I would like to go in again especially if I feel sad again"

(child suffering with depression and anxiety)

“I do it now with Mrs Tweedie I’m in the ‘lego group’. I like the room, it makes me feel happy and it calms me. The sessions helped me I still use the breathing cards; they’re at the back of my classroom. I like lego it helps me to work as a team. I’m calm and more settled. I haven’t had a yellow card for months now.

(child diagnosed with autism)

“I like the ‘lego’ sessions. I liked the sessions because I spent time with you and I liked the activities we did. I loved the painting; it’s in my room on the shelf. It helped me feel better about myself. We do team work in ‘lego’ I like that. It’s nice and quiet in there. I look forward to my Wednesday session.

(child diagnosed with dyslexia and lacking in confidence)

“

I felt the room was very calming. I liked the bean bags they’re really comfy. I liked a lot of the things we did I liked the memory boxes we made; I put my Buddhist books and beads in there and a hair clip which belonged to my grandma. They helped me feel less stressed and nervous, if someone is ill or something goes wrong, the little things set me off and make me stressed but the sessions helped with that”

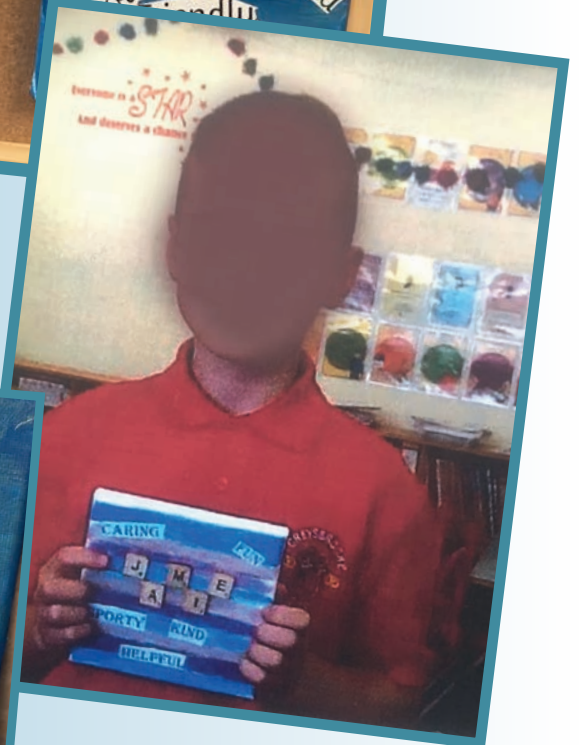
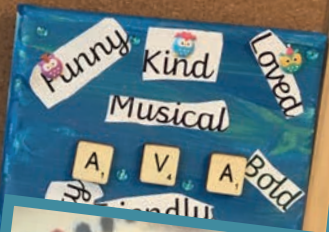
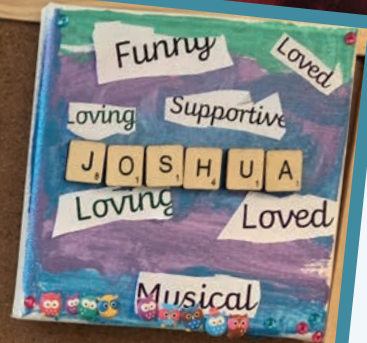
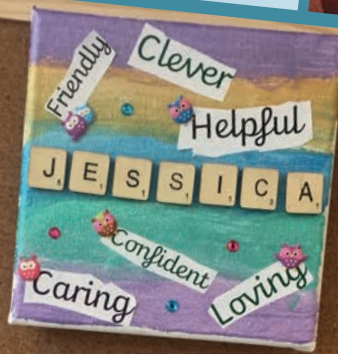
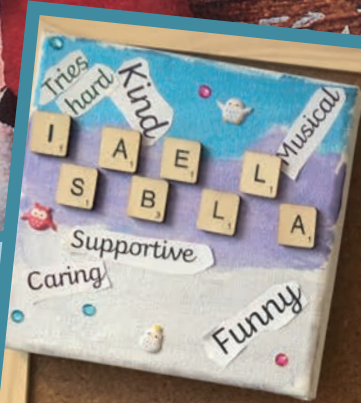
(a young carer)

“I felt really happy I only get to share feelings with my mum but I can share them in the nurture room, it helps to share my feelings. I’d like to go back again. The room is calm and I like the displays. I liked the canvas, it’s at home now. I liked the memory box too. I really want to go back, it’s really nice in there, I loved doing the arty crafty things”

(bereaved child)

“I think it’s good I like the biscuits and the calming toys, they made me feel calm. I’ve enjoyed it so far, I think it will help me because I can talk about things in there”

(child with OCD)



Teachers have seen an increased love of school, confidence, attainment and self-esteem. They have talked about pupil's excitement and desire to work in the nurture room. In addition several parents have approached me and asked me to consider their child for some form of nurture provision. There is a real buzz of excitement around the room and I am excited about forthcoming projects which are in the pipeline.

One of these projects is an after school club based around well-being. Baljeet Baba (a University Lecturer in Human Physiology with 17 years' experience) is going to provide an emotional fitness and life coaching programme. This programme will be to all children in school. The programme will run as 2 separate sessions for Key Stage 1 and for Key Stage 2. There has been a huge response to these sessions. As a school we have been over whelmed by the success of the nurture room. It provides a calm purposeful learning space for children who really need it. We are so excited to be instrumental in its further development. I know the nurture room will continue to have a hugely positive impact on all the children who use it.

Written by Clare Glandfield

Contributions from Mrs T Tweedie and Mrs R. Hepworth

