

CASE STUDY 6

St Mary's Primary School, Newtownbutler

(School Ref: 203-1869)

Effective practice: A whole school nurture approach to emotional health and wellbeing

Baseline Position

The staff identified children's high levels of need prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and prioritised a whole school nurture approach (WSNA) on the school development plan. The principal completed Nurture Training as part of the Shared Education Signature Project (SESP) and disseminated the learning to the staff. The school's use of the Education Authority's (EA) [Readiness for nurture analysis](#) affirmed the school's strong emphasis on pastoral care and highlighted the many internal and external activities the school provided to promote the health and wellbeing of the pupils. The analysis identified that the staff: review all school transitions in order to develop the pupil's skills to manage and cope with change more effectively; increase their knowledge of interventions to use in response to the recently introduced [GL PASS](#) (Pupils Attitudes to Self and School) assessment tool; review the school's current behaviour management models for all staff; and develop staff understanding about early brain development, attachment and building resilience in children. On return to school after the COVID-19 lockdowns, staff observed a further rise in the number of children who had social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing (SBEW) needs. School data revealed an increase in the number of referrals being made to support services such as, Action for Children, Barnardos, Parenting NI, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other parent/partnership agencies.

Action to effect improvement

Following the EA's WSNA training in 2020/21, [the six principles of nurture](#) were introduced into whole school practice and displayed in all classroom and communal areas for easy reference and shared



online with parents., Interventions from: [Calm Plan](#), [EA Neuronimo 12-week programme](#), [EOTAS](#), [Middletown Autism Centre](#) and other wellbeing providers were used to complement the WSNA. Circle time was also re-introduced. [The Boxall Assessment tool](#) administered by all class teachers identified children who required additional interventions to support their SBEW needs. The [Engage](#) teacher liaised with class teachers to write pupil learning plans (PLPs) and plan nurture group programmes for these children. In most cases, the children had access to two sessions per week for a six-week period with the Engage teacher. A shared nurture resource area was created to provide access to sensory and nurture items including, wellbeing books and access to a wellbeing app which provides short lessons to support health and wellbeing in schools for pupils and staff.

Staff evaluations confirmed the need for a nurture space and suitable accommodation was sought to enable the nurture group to be established in a room with soft seating, a sink and kitchen utensils to facilitate snacks during nurture sessions, as well as, for literacy, numeracy support and play therapy sessions. The nurture teacher regularly models lessons in all classes to disseminate WSNA strategies.



Following Nurture group intervention, any child identified as requiring additional support via the results of the Boxall assessment, teacher observation and parental consultation, is referred onwards to access play therapy in school.

Outcomes

Intervention strategies agreed between the nurture teacher and the class teacher are reported to be supporting effectively the children's full integration to the classroom from the nurture group sessions. The analysis of the individual Boxall Assessment, and in-house wellbeing surveys demonstrate the positive impact from the introduction of the WSNA. All children's self-regulation and motivation to learn has improved.



There has been a significant reduction in those pupils identified as not achieving in line with their ability in English and mathematics in autumn 2020, and now, almost all pupils are achieving in line with their ability in both areas of learning. In June 2022, 100% of parent surveyed indicated that children are encouraged to value one another, express their views and appreciate the views of others. All parents reported that children's self-esteem is enhanced and their achievements are celebrated.

Main lessons learned

Teachers and classroom assistants reported that invaluable classroom practical sessions led by the EA Nurture team helped to develop their practice. All staff agreed that the school's implementation of the Neuronimo Programme had been successful, as reversing trends of apathy in the children were apparent. Staff found the Boxall assessment tool very useful. They also found that it was very time-consuming and not appropriate for all children. There is agreement among the school community that although there is no one-solution-fits-all to address the children's SBEW needs, the nurture approach is extremely effective. School data reflects an increase in children's independent emotional self-regulation and readiness to learn. The staff are committed to further embedding the WSNA approach and through staff reflections, they understand that this long-term commitment

I used to be angry a lot, I don't want to go back to that way. I've come so far. I've learned how to manage my emotions better!

(A child who received Nurture group support)

will require regular review and dissemination of practice to teachers, classroom assistants and parents.

