

Last reviewed: March 2017

Intervention website: www.nurtureuk.org

GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Nurture Groups

Please note that in the ‘Intervention Summary’ table below ‘child age’, ‘level of need’, and ‘race and ethnicities information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Intervention summary	
Description	A group intervention providing a separate supportive classroom environment for school children of any age who are struggling to cope in mainstream classes and at high risk of social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. It is delivered by teachers and Nurture teaching assistants to groups of children for a variable length of time depending on need, generally between two to four terms.
Evidence rating	2+
Cost rating	4
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved self-esteem. • Enhancing school achievement & employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved academic attainment.
Child age (population characteristic)	5 to 7 years
Level of need (population characteristic)	Targeted Indicated

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Intervention summary	
Race and ethnicities (population characteristic)	Not Provided
Type (model characteristic)	Group
Setting (model characteristic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children’s centre or early years setting• Primary school• Secondary school• Sixth-form or FE college.
Workforce (model characteristic)	Teacher and teaching assistant
UK available?	Yes
UK tested?	Yes

Model description

Nurture Groups is a group intervention providing a separate supportive classroom environment for children of any age who are struggling to cope in mainstream classes and at high risk of social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.

Nurture Groups are delivered by teachers and Nurture teaching assistants to groups of children for a variable length of time depending on need, generally between two to four terms.

Nurture Groups are based on the ‘Six Principles of Nurture’; 1) the importance of transitions in children’s lives, 2) that children’s learning is understood developmentally, 3) all behaviour is communication, 4) language is a vital means of communication, 5) the importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing, and 6) the classroom offers a safe base.

In Nurture Groups, children are provided with a nurturing environment and activities that are typically experienced in a home setting, in order to increase their feelings of security and self-worth, and to support their social and emotional development along side their academic learning. There is an emphasis on communication, with staff providing clear explanations with no assumptions of prior understanding, and children being given time to listen and be listened to. Opportunities for social learning are provided by encouraging children to share food, and to help

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other members in the group. Staff members model a friendly and supportive relationship in their interactions with each other.

Target population

Age of child	4 to 18 years
Target population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children having difficulties coping in mainstream classes who are at risk of underachievement• Children at risk of social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties

Please note that the information in this section on target population is as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.



Theory of change

Why		Who	How	What		
Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Intervention	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmet attachment needs may lead to barriers to learning, as children who have difficulty coping in the classroom are at risk of underachievement. • Unmet attachment needs can also negatively impact mental health and wellbeing. 	<p>Replacing missing or distorted early attachment improves children and young people’s behaviour, wellbeing, and academic attainment.</p>	<p>Children with distorted early attachment who may experience difficulty coping in the classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Nurture Groups, children are immersed in an accepting and warm environment, they are listened to and given time to listen, and have opportunities for social learning, for example by sharing food. • Staff model friendly and supportive relationships with one another. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved self-esteem • Improved behaviour • Improved social interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved engagement and learning in the classroom • Improved school attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic achievement • Improved wellbeing and mental health.



Implementation requirements

Who is eligible?	Children in school settings at risk of social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties or underachievement.
How is it delivered?	Nurture Groups are attended for the majority of the school day for a variable length of time, usually between two to four terms, and are delivered by two practitioners to groups of up to 12 children.
What happens during the intervention?	In Nurture Groups, children are provided with a separate nurturing setting outside of the main classroom, where they participate in activities that are typically experienced in a home environment, such as sharing food, in order to increase their feelings of security and self-worth, and to support their social and emotional development alongside their academic learning.
Who can deliver it?	The practitioners who deliver this intervention are a teacher with QCF-6 level qualifications and a teaching assistant with QCF-3 level qualifications.
What are the training requirements?	The practitioners have three days of intervention training. Booster training of practitioners is recommended.
How are practitioners supervised?	It is recommended that practitioners receive supervision from three supervisors: one host-agency supervisor, qualified to QCF-6 level and with 20 to 40 hours of intervention training, and two intervention developer supervisors, each qualified to QCF-6 level with 5 to 10 hours of intervention training.
What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?	Intervention fidelity is maintained through the following processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training manual • Other printed material • Face-to-face training • Fidelity monitoring.
Is there a licensing requirement?	No
*Contact details	<p>Organisation: Nurture UK</p> <p>Website: www.nurtureuk.org</p> <p>*Please note that this information may not be up to date. In this case, please visit the listed intervention website for up to date contact details.</p>



Evidence summary

Nurture Group’s most rigorous evidence comes from a quasi-experimental design study which was conducted in the UK.

This study identified statistically significant improvements in child self-esteem and academic attainment.

Search and review

	Number of studies
Identified in search	7
Studies reviewed	2
Meeting the L2 threshold	2
Meeting the L3 threshold	0
Contributing to the L4 threshold	0
Ineligible	5

Individual study summary: Study 1

Study 1	
Study design	QED
Country	Scotland
Sample characteristics	221 pupils aged 5 to 7 years attending 32 primary schools in the Glasgow City Council area



Study 1	
Race, ethnicities, and nationalities	Not stated
Population risk factors	Not stated
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline Post-intervention (6 months after baseline).
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved self-esteem (teacher report) Improved academic attainment (child report).
Other outcomes	None reported
Study Rating	2+
Citation	Reynolds, S., MacKay, T. & Kearney, M. (2009) Nurture groups: A large-scale, controlled study of effects on development and academic attainment. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> . 36 (4), 204–212.

Brief summary

Population characteristics

This study involved a sample of 221 children between the ages of 5 and 7 (142 boys, 79 girls) attending 32 primary schools in the Glasgow City Council area.

Study design

This study utilised a quasi-experimental design with a matched control group. At time of study commissioning, 58 nurture groups were established in the research area of Glasgow. The researchers divided all 166 primary schools in the area into bands based on number of pupils and socioeconomic status, and each of the 58 schools with established nurture groups was linked to one or more potential control schools in the same band. Every pupil in all 166 schools in the study target age range (5 to 7 years, Primary 1 and Primary 2 in the Scottish school system) was assessed on an ‘audit of need’ designed for the study. The school banding and pupil need ratings combined resulted in the identification of 16 non-nurture group schools that were a close match to 16 Nurture Group schools on both school- and pupil-level criteria. Finally, pupils in the identified schools were assessed on the Boxall Profile, a diagnostic measure of emotional and behavioural functioning used to identify candidates who may benefit from intervention. Controls were selected if they matched the Boxall Profiles of pupils in Nurture Groups.



Measurement

Assessments took place at baseline (pre-intervention) and six months after baseline (post-intervention).

- **Child report** measures included the Baseline Assessment for Early Literacy.
- **Teacher report** measures included the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), the Behavioural Indicators of Self-Esteem (BIOS), and the Boxall Profile. As the Boxall Profile was designed specifically for this intervention findings from this measure were not regarded as being as robust as the findings from the other reported measures, and the outcomes from this measure have been excluded.

Study retention

86% (190) of families participated in post-intervention assessments for the SDQ measure, representing 83% (98) of Nurture Groups participants and 88% (92) of control group participants.

84% (185) of families participated in post-intervention assessments for the BIOS measure, representing 85% (99) of Nurture Groups participants and 83% (86) of control group participants.

85% (186) of families participated in post-intervention assessments for the BAEL measure, representing 80% (94) of Nurture Groups participants and 88% (92) of control group participants.

Results

Analysis of covariance was used to assess for intervention effects, followed by stepwise multiple regression to assess contributions of separate factors from emotional and behavioural outcome measures on the post-test baseline assessment for early literacy score.

The study observed significant improvements in academic attainment as measured on the Baseline Assessment for Early Literacy, and in self-esteem as measured on the Behavioural Indicators of Self-esteem.

Study 1: Outcomes table

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child outcomes					



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Academic attainment	Baseline Assessment for Early Literacy (child assessment)		Yes	186	Post-intervention
Overall psychological difficulties	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) – total difficulties score (teacher report)		No	190	Post-intervention
Prosocial behaviour	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) – pro-social behaviour (teacher report)		No	190	Post-intervention
Self-esteem	Behavioural Indicators of Self-Esteem (BIOS) (teacher report)		Yes	185	Post-intervention

Other studies

The following studies were identified for this intervention but did not count towards the intervention’s overall evidence rating. An intervention receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

Cooper, P., Arnold, R. & Boyd, E. (2001) The effectiveness of nurture groups: Preliminary research findings. *British Journal of Special Education*. 28 (4), 160–166. **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in the UK.**

Cooper, P. & Whitebread, D. (2007) The effectiveness of nurture groups on student progress: Evidence from a national research study. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*. 12 (3), 171–190. **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in the UK.**

Gerrard, B. (2006) City of Glasgow nurture group pilot scheme evaluation. **Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**. 10 (4), 245–253. **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in the UK.**



O'Connor, T. & Colwell, J. (2002) Research Section: The effectiveness and rationale of the 'nurture group' approach to helping children with emotional and behavioural difficulties remain within mainstream education. *British Journal of Special Education*. 29 (2), 96–100. **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in the UK.**

Sanders, T. (2007) Helping children thrive at school: The effectiveness of nurture groups. *Educational Psychology in Practice*. 23 (1), 45–61. **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in the UK.**

Seth-Smith, F., Levi, N., Pratt, R., Fonagy, P. & Jaffey, D. (2010) Do nurture groups improve the social, emotional and behavioural functioning of at risk children? *Educational and Child Psychology*. 27 (1), 21–34. **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in the UK.**

Sloan, S., Winter, K., Lynn, F., Gildea, A. & Connolly, P. (2016) *The impact and cost effectiveness of Nurture Groups in primary schools in Northern Ireland*. Centre for Effective Education, Queen's University Belfast. **This reference refers to a quasi-experimental design, conducted in the UK.**

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Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to Foundations' terms of reference (or the Early Intervention Foundation's terms of reference), and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.

