

The National Nurturing Schools Programme
Assessment Report



Establishment name and address	Phoenix Community Primary School Belmont Road Kennington Ashford Kent TN249LS
Headteacher/Principal	Jen Dawes
NNSP trained staff	Rachel Leavey/White & Dena Bebell
Assessment date	16/01/26
Assessor	Dr Suus-anna Harskamp
Trainer	Sarah Norwood
Review date	January 2029

STANDARDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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).			X

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>Phoenix Community Primary School is a one-form-entry primary school, with 190 pupils, serving a diverse and transient community in Ashford, Kent.</p> <p>The school website sets out the aim to develop individuals who are <i>respectful, aspirational, resilient, kind, and curious</i>. The most recent Ofsted report highlighted a strong commitment to inclusion within this <i>caring and friendly community school</i>, noting that <i>pupils are happy to attend and enjoy their learning</i>. These values and experiences were consistently echoed throughout conversations held during the assessment</p> <p>This assessment was unusual in that an original staff member involved in the programme was on leave, and a new leadership structure has been established since completion of the evidence documents. However, Sarah Jansen (Deputy Head), along with Ali Marsh, has been consistent for the staff, children and families, and this was acknowledged and praised by parents/carers.</p>	

Examples of excellent practice include:

Leadership, Staff, and Culture

Staff wellbeing and teamwork are strong features of the school culture. Despite leadership changes, the school is supported by a committed and collaborative staff team with a strong sense of collective responsibility and shared vision.

Recruitment of staff is approached carefully, with leaders placing equal emphasis on personal qualities such as warmth, resilience, and empathy, alongside professional skills and experience. Staff described the team as feeling like a “work family,” where colleagues support one another, and no one feels isolated when managing challenges. All staff are part of the wellbeing focus for children, with both the site manager and a member of the kitchen staff having their relationships with certain children highlighted.

Staff wellbeing is highly valued and demonstrated through personal check-ins, access to external wellbeing support, and a strong open-door culture. Leaders work alongside staff to model relational practice, support de-escalation, and ensure consistency. This collaborative way of working was reflected by the staff feedback and the interactions evident - staff shared they enjoyed learning from each other and felt safe to say if they were struggling with something.

Parents consistently praised the school. They described it as warm, welcoming, and highly supportive, with individual needs recognised and responded to quickly. Communication was viewed as clear, regular, and accessible through newsletters, daily messages, the school app, and direct contact with staff.

The role of the Family Liaison Officer was highlighted as a strength by parents and carers. Initiatives such as bagels in the morning, breakfast provision, anxiety workshops, and informal family support have strengthened relationships and increased engagement. Parents felt supported not only academically, but also emotionally and practically during challenging times. Staff visibility and accessibility were emphasised, and the term *‘they go above and beyond’* was used repeatedly.

Staff also shared that for them, being visible and accessible, particularly at the school gate, was crucial for building trust, breaking down barriers, and gaining insight into children’s lives. Staff highlighted the value of working flexibly and equitably, ensuring that the most appropriate adult supports each child, including non-teaching staff where strong relationships exist.

Although the new Head (Mrs Dawes) only joined in September 2025 and was not involved with the National Nurturing Schools Programme initially, nurturing provision and pupil wellbeing clearly remain a core priority. Her passion and commitment to continuing this, and the value and praise she placed on the staff team, were notable.

Nurturing Ethos and Environment

The environment, both physical and relational, enables children to feel settled and ready to learn.

Taking a nurturing approach at Phoenix is not viewed as a separate initiative or intervention, but as the basis for how the school works. There is a shared belief that children's wellbeing must be a priority before learning can take place, and this principle underpins practice and relationships across the school. One pupil said, "We can be ourselves, and there's always someone waiting to help if we need it."

The Six Principles of Nurture are evident in daily practice, even if not always explicitly named. Staff adapt provision to children's needs, creating safe and predictable environments. Staff emphasised that nurture is about knowing each child well, noticing changes, and putting support in place before issues escalate. One child highlighted the positive impact 'Talking and drawing' had on them.

The principles are felt throughout the school culture and recognised by pupils, parents, and staff. Strong relationships are the thread that runs through all aspects of school life, described by leaders as "holding, hosting, and valuing" children, families, and colleagues.

Transitions are a strength. Pupils described opportunities to meet new teachers, visit classrooms in advance, and experience consistent environments as helping to reduce worry. Children feel prepared, reassured, and supported through change. One child reflected, "They let us meet new teachers and see our classrooms before moving up. It helps us feel ready." Strong links with nurseries and building relationships with families also support smooth transitions into school (Reception).

Assessment tools, including the Boxall Profile, were viewed positively as a way to better understand children's needs, particularly when supported by training and collaborative use with the SENCo. There is a recognition that the Boxall Profile could be embedded more consistently and that continued work is needed to strengthen shared understanding and staff confidence (particularly new members of staff).

The school provides a well-organised, welcoming and considered environment that supports children's social, emotional, and academic development. A range of spaces are available to pupils, including a sensory room, music room, library, quiet outdoor areas, and access to forest school for nurture groups. These spaces are used flexibly to support regulation, reflection, creativity, and engagement. Children highlighted how they could use these spaces to support their wellbeing.

Classrooms are consistent and familiar and designed to feel safe, welcoming, and predictable with clear routines that support a sense of safety and belonging. Inclusive strategies such as visual timetables, calm areas, fidget tools, book corners, and access to quiet spaces are embedded across the school and available to all pupils.

Sensory circuits, along with other interventions built on knowing the children, are used proactively to support emotional readiness and self-regulation, with staff focusing on preventing escalation rather than responding reactively. One member of staff explained, “We catch it before it escalates.”

Nurture practices draw on a range of evidence-informed approaches, implemented flexibly and responsively to meet individual needs. The notion of individualised, child-led approaches was a strong, recurring theme. The Zones of Regulation and emotion coaching are embedded across the school, supporting children to identify, understand, and manage their feelings. Behaviour is consistently viewed as communication, with relational approaches prioritised and supported through the new behaviour policy.

As a result, children report feeling safe, supported, and understood. They value having trusted adults available, predictable routines, and access to calming spaces when needed. Pupils spoke positively about wellbeing supports such as physical activity, breakfast provision, sensory resources, opportunities to reflect, and encouragement when learning feels challenging.

Quotes from the assessment day:

“We champion the child. It does not matter what the challenge is or what they are bringing to school; are they getting the very best we can give?” (Head)

“Staff are passionate and know it works, so will continue to take this work forward. Holding, hosting and valuing relationships is the starting point and thread through any successful learning, family relationships, staff relationships”. (staff)

“We notice the child, understand their needs, and make sure they get the very best we can – no matter what challenges they bring.” (staff)

“Nurture is getting the best out of something by putting your best into it ” (staff)

“Her needs were recognised straight away, and she thrives with the support. She wouldn’t have managed without the school.” (parent)

“... very child-centred. They even consider what’s happening at home and support families. It feels like a community, not just a school.” (parent)

“The school goes above and beyond. Staff are very approachable and understanding of what families need.” (parent)

When asked for one word to describe school, the children included: *encouraging, welcoming, happy, helpful, and amazing.*

Recommendation
<p>We recommend Phoenix Community Primary School for the National Nurturing Schools Award</p>

Areas for development	Timescale
<p>The Boxall Profile. Continue to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a whole school tool to identify need and support where required ● In specific cases, as a tool for those needing additional external social or emotional support, for groups of pupils where necessary ● On a case-by-case basis, considering the pupil's individual profile. 	Ongoing
<p>Nurture Principles. Continue to familiarise your families and community with the Six Principles, for example, mention them in reports, 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. Even though these may now align with your school values, the evidence relates to the impact of the Six Principles, so the explicit links are important</p>	Ongoing
<p>Continue to monitor and evaluate the provision within your setting, completing the National Nurturing Schools self-assessment on an annual basis.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Engage with the re-accreditation process for the National Nurturing Schools Programme.</p>	2029