The National Nurturing Schools Programme

Assessment Report

Establishment name and address	High Down Infant and Junior School Down Road Portishead Bristol BS20 6DY
Headteacher/Principal	Andreya Cowan
NNSP trained staff	Andreya Cowan and Rachel Hayward
Assessment date	16th September 2025
Assessor	Nicola McAllister
Trainer	Adele Wilkinson
Review date	September 2028

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STANDARDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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).			✔

Assessors Summary

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.

Examples of excellent practice include:

Nurture is at the heart of the school.
High Down Infant and Junior School has always been a value led school. Nurture reflects who they are as a community and runs through the way children, staff and families are supported. Taking part in the National Nurturing School Programme was neither the beginning or a bolt-on for them, it gave structure and a framework to what was already deeply valued and in place. Headteacher Andrea Cowan commented, “It ticked the boxes of what we were already doing. It gave us the research, allowed us to reflect and self-reflect on what we could do better. It just made sense.”

What stood out during the assessment day was the very deliberate and systematic way the National Nurturing Schools Programme had been approached. Although Andreya

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and her Assistant Head Teacher, Rachel Hayward, led and facilitated the programme, all staff were involved, and there is a clear sense that nurture is everyone's responsibility.

The Six Principles of Nurture audit was used thoughtfully and efficiently, not as a tick-box exercise but as a genuine tool for reflection. It helped the school see clearly where they were on their nurturing journey, and the areas that they wanted to develop.

One of the first steps of the journey was to work with pupils to translate The Six Principles of Nurture into language that was understood and meaningful. Through conversations with staff and pupils on assessment day, it was clear how well The Six Principles of Nurture are now embedded. Although they are on display and part of the School Improvement Plan, they are also the bedrock of daily practice. They underpin interventions, shape conversations, and they guide responses. That shared language and shared understanding means children experience consistency, and adults feel confident in how they support and respond.

High Down Infant and Junior School demonstrates that nurture goes way beyond education. As Mathew Welsh, Deputy Head Teacher reflected," Because of our nurturing approach, children feel much safer than they ever have in their lives, it's a collective effort, it's something we should be really proud of."

Understanding and meeting the needs of pupils.

It was apparent from the evidence provided and conversations on the assessment day how well staff know their children and how carefully they shape provision to meet individual needs. Relationships are at the heart of this, with a clear emphasis on creating safety both emotionally and physically. The role of the Learning Mentors plays a vital role in this. They provide support not only for children but also for families and staff, ensuring that wellbeing is consistently prioritised. Examples of this can be seen in the "soft start" offered to children who find it difficult to come into school, and in the lunchtime club that provides a calm and structured alternative for those who struggle with the playground environment.

This relational approach is underpinned by a revised and simplified behaviour policy. The policy reflects a positive, consistent way of responding to children, and staff spoke of how helpful it has been to have clarity and alignment across the whole school. Alongside this, the school has drawn on external expertise through the appointment of a SENDCo and Engagement Lead, who not only provides additional layers of support but also runs targeted groups for children who need it most.

Staff development is taken seriously. Teachers and support staff have engaged in a wide range of training opportunities, particularly around Autism and Childhood Trauma, which has deepened their understanding and confidence in meeting children's 'complex behavioural needs'.

The school also creates opportunities for children to take responsibility and contribute positively to their community. Roles such as Wellbeing Ambassadors give children a voice and a chance to make a difference, they have introduced several new initiatives

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within the school. Andreya believes, “If we have a group who has responsibilities, we need to make sure that they really have responsibilities.” The school also offers a variety of clubs that meet a diverse range of interests. A pupil commented, “There is something for everyone.”

All teachers are trained to assess children using the Boxall Profile. For those children identified as vulnerable, dedicated time is allocated for this across year groups, which reflects the value placed on understanding children developmentally. Mathew explained that the Boxall Profile provides a “clear and unified means of meeting children’s needs.” The information is also used to support transition from one year group to the next.

The Importance of Transitions

One of the key outcomes of the Six Principles of Nurture audit was a recognition that transition processes needed to be strengthened, and this has since become a real area of focus for the school. Staff began by looking at the small, day-to-day transitions that can so easily be overlooked but which often hold the greatest weight for children. Clear, predictable routines and visual timetables are now used to provide reassurance and reduce anxiety, helping children feel safe as they move between tasks and parts of the school day.

Transitions between year groups, in particular from Year 2 to Year 3, have also been significantly developed. Staff meetings provide space for teachers to share information from the Boxall Profile and to discuss the needs of their new classes in detail. Children are supported with several visits to their new classroom and opportunities to meet their new teacher, while the most vulnerable pupils are offered an enhanced transition process tailored to their needs. This includes the creation of individual passports which capture the child’s voice. This robust approach also benefits staff, Rachel commented, “Staff go into the summer holidays with confidence, knowing what they will do with their pupils when they return”.

Parents are invited to be part of the process too, meeting the new teacher, seeing the new classroom, and being introduced to the topics that will be covered in the year ahead. This helps to build confidence for both the children and their families and strengthens the partnership between home and school. One member of staff commented, “Transitions are a crucial part of our summer term to ensure that children feel safe, know the adults around them, and to help them know that we understand that everyone behaves and learns differently.”

Staff feel valued and supported.

It was clear on assessment day that staff at High Down Infant and Junior School feel valued and supported in their roles. Conversations with different members of the team highlighted a culture where relationships are prioritised and where people genuinely look out for one another. The senior leadership team operates with an open-door policy, making themselves accessible and approachable, and this has fostered an atmosphere of trust. One member of staff summed it up by saying, “We heavily support each other. We have relationships as colleagues and friends. We’ve got each other’s back.”

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A range of initiatives have been put in place to support staff wellbeing. SLT are consistently looking at ways to reduce workload pressures. The last meeting of every term is set aside as a social gathering, where staff can relax and connect over tea and cakes. A shout-out board in the staffroom allows colleagues to leave messages of thanks, building a culture of appreciation. Wellbeing group activities, including staff nights out, help strengthen bonds out with school.

Flexibility is also offered when it is required. Staff can complete their PPA time off-site, and they are given time away from school if they need to attend important family events such as a child's sports day or performance. In addition, an employer helpline is available for staff who may need further support. As one member of staff reflected, "It's an emotionally demanding job. We make sure that our wellbeing is okay by looking out for each other."

A very low turnover in staffing and the fact that staff come here and retire, then come back after retirement to support the work of the school is testimony to the level of commitment and connection that staff feel towards the High Down.

Strong community connections.
High Down Infant and Junior School embraces its local community. It welcomes families and local organisations into its life, while also reaching out to support those around it. As Matthew explained, "High Down's big strength is that it is a genuine community school, the open-door policy, the focus on building strong relationships with families, and the commitment to creating a safe and welcoming space are all clear to see."

The school's Governors play an active role in this. They collaborate closely with the school, attending all School Improvement Plan visits and meeting regularly with a range of staff. Governors commented on how valuable they found the school's outline of how the Six Principles of Nurture are embedded. This perspective has given them confidence in their decision-making and directly influenced the choice to continue funding Learning Mentors to support nurture across the school.

Links with the wider community are strong and varied. The longstanding Paint Pals project, now in its 11th year, connects children with residents of a local care home through arts and crafts, fostering meaningful communication across generations. The Mini Police initiative brings pupils into collaboration with Police HQ, offering opportunities to learn about responsibility and community safety. The school also maintains links with the local church, contributes to the local food bank during harvest time, and supports Martha's Meals and uniform swaps. Children regularly take part in singing, artwork, and a variety of community events that deepen these bonds.

Partnerships with parents.
Strong partnerships with parents and carers are a defining feature of High Down Infant and Junior School. Feedback gathered from parent questionnaires and conversations on assessment day made it clear that families feel welcomed, listened to, and well supported. One parent summed it up simply: "Everyone cares. They are all there to help."

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The school's open-door policy breaks down barriers. Members of staff are present in the playground each morning to greet parents and children, creating a sense of connection from the very start of the day and being on hand if any information needs to be shared. At the end of the school day, staff make an intentional effort to approach parents with positive feedback about their child, strengthening relationships and ensuring communication is not only reactive but celebratory. As a member of staff reflected, "Everything we do is based on building relationships, relationships with parents is paramount."

Parental involvement in the life of the school is strong. The school welcomes a large number of parents helpers, while many others come in to share their skills or to teach children about cultural and religious events. Stay and play sessions are consistently well attended, and the PSA is very active, raising funds and providing community events that bring families together.

For parents of children who require additional support, the sense of care goes even further. Families described the school as going "above and beyond" to support not only their child but also themselves as parents. Regular concerts, newsletters and emails keep families up to date with what is happening, while reports are sent twice a year. Parents of vulnerable children are additionally offered six carer sessions across the academic year to discuss progress and needs. Importantly, there is always a member of staff available to listen and talk through any concerns.

Quotes from the assessment day:

- "We've always been a value led school, we care deeply about nurturing our children." (Head Teacher voice)
- "Without taking risks children are not able to challenge themselves with learning and without feeling safe, they are not able to take risks." (Head Teacher voice)
- "Nurture runs hand in hand with achievement, it's about supporting children where they currently are to where they can get to, there is no glass ceiling." (Head Teacher voice)
- "The practice and ethos behind The Six Principals of Nurture are general everyday practice for our children." (Nurture Lead and AHT voice)
- "We spend a lot of time getting to know our children and our families." (staff voice)
- "Learning mentor knowledge across both schools is incredibly strong." (staff voice)
- "Nurture is a massive part of the role in building relationships with our children and parents." (staff voice)
- "Equal respect is modelled by adults." (staff voice)
- "I feel really proud to be a member of staff, it's a wonderful place to work." (staff voice)
- "I feel appreciated in the school and community." (staff voice)

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- "Staff strive to meet the needs of all of our children, staff relationships, shared values and visions are crucial." (staff voice)
- "I feel proud to be part of this team." (staff voice)
- "The SLT tries to balance workload, I feel looked after." (staff voice)
- "It's about ensuring that vulnerable children get the same opportunity as everyone else." (staff voice)
- "It's about noticing and appreciating different strengths." (staff voice)
- "There's an area for everyone in the playground to feel safe and comfortable." (staff voice)
- "It's about treating every child as an individual." (staff voice)
- "Nurture is spreading like branches." (staff voice)
- "I don't know how I would have coped without the level of support." (parent voice)
- "I think they are utterly wonderful, they do the best that they can." (parent voice)
- "They've made our life so much better." (parent voice)
- "The Learning Mentors are in school to help children if they need it." (pupil voice)
- "I like the freedom at break time, there are lots of things to do." (pupil voice)
- "The clubs are really good because it gives you the opportunity to do different things." (pupil voice)
- "It's great fun." (pupil voice)
- "It's a chance to meet other people and make new friends." (pupil voice)
- "The lessons are quite good." (pupil voice)

Recommendation
We recommend High Down Junior and Infant School for the National Nurturing Schools Award

Areas for development	Timescale
The Boxall Profile. • Continue to assess identified pupils who require additional support within areas of social and emotional development. • Continue to work collegiately when assessing and planning • Explore ways of using the Boxall Profile to assess groups of children as a means to implementing whole class approaches and interventions • Continue to train new staff in using the Boxall Profile Online Assessment Tool • Access Boxall Profile online website to keep informed about updates and new features	Ongoing

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Areas for development	Timescale
Nurture Principles. ● Revisit the nurture principles regularly as a staff to ensure that they continue to shape practice. ● Continue to familiarise your families and community with the Six Principles, for example, mention them in reports, on 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.	Ongoing
Continue to promote collaboration between both schools listening to and responding to staff voice.	Ongoing
Continue to monitor and evaluate the provision within your setting completing the National Nurturing Schools self-assessment on an annual basis.	Ongoing
Engage with the re-accreditation process for the National Nurturing Schools Programme.	September 2028

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