

Nurturing Schools

We are a nurturing school.

We believe that positive relationships are central to learning and wellbeing.

Everyone at St Christopher's works to improve the health and well-being of our children and eliminate barriers to learning through nurture.

These are the 6 Principles of Nurture as set out by NurtureUK and they underpin all we attempt to do at St Christopher's:

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally.
2. The classroom offers a safe base.
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing.
4. Language is a vital means of communication.
5. All behaviour is communication.
6. The importance of transition in children's lives.

What does this mean at St Christopher's?

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally.

All children develop differently. Some children walk early and talk later. We recognise when children are ready to learn and move on. This may be through observational play-based learning in the nursery and reception or ongoing formative assessment of children, guiding the teaching across the school.

2. The classroom offers a safe base.

All children need to feel safe and secure in order to learn. We work hard to ensure that the whole school is a safe space. There are designated safe areas for children who may need to take themselves away from a situation. We have a learning mentor who monitors a 'worry box' for individual concerns. The classroom is somewhere safe for children to make mistakes. Without mistakes, we cannot learn.

3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing.

Wellbeing can be defined as: 'the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy'. If a child is uncomfortable or with poor physical or mental health, then they are unable to learn and progress. We nurture our children to develop their wellbeing through listening, recognising children's emotional states (i.e. are they angry, sad? etc) and responding in a supportive manner. We endeavour to raise children's self-esteem by encouragement and focussed praise – highlighting specifically how children have been successful.

4. Language is a vital means of communication.

We need to communicate our wants and needs to others. The language we use to communicate can have a major impact on how the listener responds. We endeavour to ensure that our children have the language and vocabulary to communicate with a variety of people. We are learning sign language in whole school assemblies to help

children who struggle with spoken language or have hearing needs, to communicate, and be communicated with, by their peers.

5. All behaviour is communication.

More than half of human communication is non-verbal. We are constantly communicating through our behaviour e.g. glancing at watch when someone talks to us and we're in a hurry. We might do it without knowing, but we are communicating that to the person who is talking to us. Children rely heavily on non-verbal communication, particularly as toddlers e.g. tantrums, hitting, screaming. This behaviour is showing their frustration that they cannot communicate their needs or cannot understand a situation. It is not "being naughty".

We understand that all challenging behaviour demonstrated by the children e.g. shouting, refusing to complete work or hitting out is the child trying to communicate a need. We will work to meet that need and decrease the behaviour.

6. The importance of transition in children's lives.

Change is scary for everyone. Moving to a new house is one of the most stressful experiences for adults. Transition for children can equally raise a lot of anxiety. This can range in extreme from moving to a different lesson in the hustle and bustle of the classroom environment, to preparing to transfer to secondary school, to moving from one foster carer to another. We will put in place as much support as every individual needs to ensure successful transition for children which enables them to feel safe and secure.

How is Nurture embedded across our school?

The Nurturing ethos is embedded throughout the curriculum at all levels. Before pupils start in our nursery, we try to meet our families at home. This means we can build close relationships with families from the start.

In Early Years we focus on developing communication and feelings of safety and confidence. We recognise that starting school has probably been the child's first big transition and make every effort to minimise the effects of this.

Throughout the school we provide safe space for children and, as the child develops, we teach about feelings, self-awareness, friendships, relationships and how to cope when things go wrong.

All pupils are encouraged to express themselves and learn that their voice will be listened to. Opportunities for this could be in School council, lunchtime clubs, forest school, etc.

How can parents and carers be involved in this area?

Our Home School Link Workers support families in a wide variety of areas. We encourage families to communicate with us on a regular basis to keep us updated on any issues that might be impacting on the children.

We would encourage any parents/carers who are worried/struggling in any area to let us know so that we can help.