

**The National Nurturing Schools Programme
Assessment Report**



Establishment name and address	St Alphege CE Infant School Oxford Street Whitstable Kent CT51DA
Headteacher/Principal	Jacqui Spinks (Head of School) Liz Thomas-Friend (Executive Headteacher)
NNSP trained staff	Jacqui Spinks and Becky Strike
Assessment date	18 th April 2024
Assessor	Carrie Thorne
Trainer	Jenni Moore
Review date	April 2027

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.			✓

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.			✓

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.			✓

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 the school every day. A comprehensive evidence folder and related documents have been provided as part of the assessment process by the school. This includes attendance and exclusion data. Case Studies for Partnership, Community and The Boxall Profile® were also submitted. The community case study, 'Intergenerational Project with local Care Home' demonstrated an excellent example of how the school works within the community to spread joy. Also submitted with the application was the Principles into Practice report which showed a clear understanding of The Six Principles of Nurture.

St Alphege CE Infant School is a single form entry school with a nursery, catering for approximately 200 pupils and 48 staff. The school is situated on Oxford Street in the heart of Whitstable town centre. Head of School Jacqui Spinks explained,

“We see ourselves as central to the local community, our role is to serve the community and our aim is to be highly visible to the whole town.”

Their vision: **“Loved, Inspired, Shining”** ensures that every member of the school is welcomed and loved, is inspired to reach their full potential and that St Alphege ‘shines like a beacon within their community’. It was very clear on the assessment visit how important this is to the school. Staff recognise and nurture individual, spiritual and moral strengths through an extra layer of support that being a church school and a nurturing school brings. As such every family is welcomed and accepted for who they are. They are helped to develop the necessary skills and confidence to enjoy growing and learning together. It was very clear the school works in close partnership with all stakeholders to help their children learn, develop socially and encourage them to help others. St Alphege’s values of **‘Koinonia, Forgiveness, Trust, Kindness, Love and Joy** are rooted in the gospel and teachings of Christ and are interwoven with The Six Principles of Nurture which staff explained, “have become the golden thread woven throughout the school.”

The programme has been expertly led by head of school Jacqui Spinks and Inclusion Lead Becky Strike –but it was very clearly a whole team effort, which has thus ensured its ultimate success.

Examples of excellent practice include:

Community

This is a real strength of the school and I am very impressed with the commitment that the school demonstrates in their drive to ensure that all their children, not only know what their community has to offer but actually experience first-hand all that is available for them. As such they visit the museum, library, theatre, high street shops and local places of worship, often on foot but on occasion using public transport to ensure a richer experience.

“Creating the WOW moments is what is important and will stay with the children forever.” Head of school

“We have done a lot of enrichment and cultural capital. For example, all our children leave school having watched a live orchestra and having been on a train.” Becky Strike

Furthermore, their desire to ensure the school is ‘the beating heart of the community’ is truly inspirational. Jacqui explained,

“We should bring joy out of the school and be a beacon of hope to our community but also enrich the lives of our children.”

The link with the local care home, showcased in the case study and discussed at the assessment visit, is a wonderful example of how the school truly delivers in this area but also highlights the benefits to all involved. The intergenerational links are priceless. One of the school’s straplines and values is, ‘the school shines in the community.’ However, the word community is not enough for this school, so they have taught the children the word koinonia (building a strong and supportive Community); a word which reflects the deeper connection with community that the school has and reflects their dedication to

servicing it. The staff explained how this will develop and continue to flourish spreading into other care homes. It is rare to find this area showcased so well. I think this is both bold and valiant in a post pandemic world, one in which our children, whose world became so insular, need this level of exposure more than ever. This is an excellent example of nurture in action and one in which the school should be deeply proud.

Language is a vital means of communication

As a nursery and infant school the staff recognise the importance of language acquisition. They strive to ensure children develop a wide vocabulary enriched with emotional literacy. Two shining examples of this is are, Koinonia and the Hebrew word – Simhah (gladness/joy) These words, amongst many others are taught to the children and showcase the schools desire to provide a varied vocabulary for their pupils, but also perfectly sum up the drive they have for their pupils to know their place within the community. Such importance is placed on this principle that CPD is annually delivered to ensure all adults understand the impact of body language and the spoken language.

Staff are trained in the importance of body posture and positioning to the child to enable a calm resolution and to deliberately speak slower, lower and more quietly. A consistent approach is adopted across the school. This is underpinned by the school's relationships policy. All adults explicitly model language and behaviours and recognise when the children are displaying these. Staff are skilled in recognising signs of anxiety and children are taught to recognise this in themselves using the five-point scale to support their emotional growth. Children are given the tools to enable them to express their thoughts and feelings through language rather than behaviour. The school successfully used the story – 'The Colour Monster' to help children understand this.

Staff explained, "There is a daily wellbeing check in after the register to explore children's feelings and develop emotional literacy. Children also have the ability to place their name/face into one of the colour monster pots throughout the day and staff take the time to check in with them to explore this further."

Excellent examples of this were provided and the pupils talked about this in their interview, "The Colour Monster helps us to show how we feel." Pupil Voice

All staff consistently verbally validate children's feelings using explicit language acknowledging if there is a problem without allocating blame and bestowing authentic praise at every opportunity.

Self-Efficacy

Pupil voice is very strong within the school and the well-established 'TED Teams' (the school's version of school council) are very active. The acronym stands for 'Together Everyone Decides' and wonderfully showcases the school's approach to this strand. The pupils take their role very seriously. Through these groups the children have a chance to

share their views and opinions, regularly meeting with a staff member to develop and influence curriculum delivery and wider community outreach. Impressively, each year the children write their own version of the school development plan in collaboration with their classes. TED team members regularly present to SLT, Governors and parents about the impact of their work.

At St Alphege the children are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and choices, reflecting on their own and others behaviours. They have been taught co-regulation so that they can now self-regulate. A variety of options and resources are available to them so they can decide what helps them. This is very impressive in such young children. Staff explained, “When children struggle it is managed with kindness and understanding and used as a teaching opportunity to help the children learn from their mistakes.”

Supporting Parents and Carers.

Jacqui Spinks shared that parental participation was difficult, especially since the pandemic. “Covid put barriers in place and we are still removing them but for some it is based on their own difficult experiences of school.”

As such the school has thought hard about parental engagement. After surveys and consultations with parents they have reflected and then revisited several times, constantly adopting their approach because this is an area they are determined to get right. Improving communication is their priority.

All parents / carers and children are met and welcomed into the school each day by the head teacher and her staff. It has also encouraged the school to offer parents and carers positive school experiences to remove possible barriers. An excellent example of this is how the staff dress up on the last day of every term greeting the families outside at the gates. Both staff and parent interviews expressed the sheer joy this spreads.

The parent I spoke to on assessment day expressed a strong feeling of being “included” and “welcomed”. “My favourite thing about the school is how much laughter there is in the school. They do crazy things that get everyone involved. They dress up on the last day of term.” Parent voice.

The school has adopted the approach of ‘Botheredness’. Staff explained, “This is basically being bothered enough to notice and ask how people are. It shows how as a school they invest in forming relationships, believing ‘being bothered about each other’ should be at the core of every interaction.’

Social and Emotional Needs of Staff Are Carefully Considered

Jacqui explained, “Every year more is asked of education and educators.” Therefore, staff wellbeing is a focus for SLT and the school is constantly considering different ways to

support and invest in their staff. Opportunities for supervision are offered to all staff. They recognise the most important way to support staff wellbeing is time. Staff explained deep appreciation of the flexible working arrangements which allowed for parents to attend their children's important events and individuals to attend important health appointments.

Staff surveys indicated high levels of wellbeing across the school. SLT operates an open-door policy and invests heavily in the staff team. Staff have access to ongoing CPD which is offered both internally and externally. Full refurbishment of the staff room space has created a safe, calm and relaxing environment for staff to take their breaks. Café style tables have replaced larger seating areas helping to create a more welcoming environment.

Transitions

The importance of transitions, both big and small, have been carefully considered. As an infant school they are aware of the impact and importance of transitions. Combined with the awareness that their time at the school is short, transition is something they carefully consider. There are robust transition plans for children joining the school and strong links have been forged with feeder nursery settings. Parents are also heavily involved in the process and are recognised as a vital part of their child's learning journey. As such all families receive a home visit and nursery visits are undertaken prior to the child's transition programme into school. The school has strong links with their feeder junior schools. It was lovely to hear how transition takes account of both academic progress and social, emotional and mental health.

Equally as important is how the school also actively supports daily transitions between activities and places around the school. A variety of strategies are used such as: now/next boards, transitional objects, visual timetables, early warnings including musical countdowns and tidy up music are all used. The school is highly sensitive to the fact that some children require additional support to separate from parents or need a 'softer landing' into school.

Staff explained, "The wellbeing team delivers sensory circuits each morning and we have a breakfast club for some children who need a quieter drop off. Some parents and children find the busyness of the morning drop off a challenge and so we offer special arrangements. The office staff are really kind and welcoming, especially in a morning which can be a struggle."

Pupils.

A real highlight of the assessment visit was the session with the pupils. The pupils were well behaved, very excited and demonstrated a good understanding of nurture. They spoke about their work, friendships, staff and especially about the school environment. They were confident and articulate, keen to engage in conversation with me directly and

have their voice heard. They reflected on their school and what nurture means. They shared,

“Nurture means kindness.”

“Nurture means keeping the school safe.”

“Nurture is about joy and everyone being happy.”

“Nurture is about helping people.”

“Nurture is Koinonia”

Words used by the pupils to describe their school: ‘big, safe, loved, joyful, looked after, fun and playful.’ The pupils explained the best things about St Alphege are: the playground, lunchtime hall, inside the classrooms, friends and the staff.”

It was a privilege to meet the group and it was evident they were used to having the opportunity to talk and share because their maturity in behaviour and thoughtful responses surpassed their young years. I would like to thank the pupils for their energy and enthusiasm.

Three words were used repeatedly by all stakeholders to describe their school (and I think they summarise and capture the school perfectly): *Joyful, relationships and Wow.*

I would like to thank the NNSP lead staff for their detailed application, reflective self-assessment document and preparation for the visit, congratulate Mrs Spinks and her staff on their well-deserved award and wish them much success in future endeavours. She explained at the start of the assessment visit that the school should be joyful and I would like to confirm that I certainly found it to be so.

Quotes from the assessment day:

“You give permission for them to go as far as their imagination / creativity allows” Staff voice

“The school is lush.” Staff Voice

“Communication is high, there are no barriers. All staff are highly accessible.” Parent Voice

“We serve the Whitstable community.” Staff Voice

“There is a lot of laughter here.” Staff Voice

“The Six Principles of Nurture have been shared with us.” Parent Voice

“Our staff room is gorgeous, it’s a place for us to be together. It’s a sign of how much we are valued.” Staff Voice

“We invest in relationships; we take the time with people so they know we care.” Staff Voice

“I am very proud of my staff; they give so much.” Head teacher voice

“St Alphege is very inclusive, they take a personalised approach to all children.” Staff Voice

“You feel cared about and respected. I have never worked in a place so supportive.” Staff Voice

“I feel joyful and loved at school; staff and pupils say nice things which make me happy.” Pupil voice

Recommendation
I recommend St Alphege CE Infant School for the National Nurturing Schools Award

Areas for development	Timescale
The Boxall Profile. Continue to develop and use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In specific cases as a tool for those needing additional external social or emotional support; ● For groups of pupils needing additional external social or emotional support; ● Consider assessing whole year groups, especially where there are difficulties, to inform and support transitions which in turn could help inform policy and development plans. 	Ongoing
Continue to embed The Six Principles of Nurture and embed children's explicit knowledge of them. Link this with the platinum art work programme to create a unique piece of work.	Ongoing
Continue to develop partnership working with parents.	Ongoing
Engage with the re-accreditation process for the National Nurturing Schools Programme and therefore continue to monitor and evaluate the provision within your setting completing the National Nurturing Schools self-assessment on an annual basis..	2027

