

# Internal alternative provision

Internal AP provision has been used to great success in Birmingham and Manchester as well as internationally. It is also THE biggest contributing factor to reducing the rate of exclusion in Scotland to 0.0004 from 0.1 in 2014.

The majority of schools utilising this approach use on onsite space to support young people with gaining the necessary skills to access mainstream lessons. Some schools however have an offsite provision, this is the case where schools from the same multi academy trust have close geographical proximity.

Young people that attend these provisions focus on both SEMH interventions and also mainstream classwork. Pupils may attend the provision full time indefinitely or for just a short period of time each week for a term.

Many schools have chosen to use the 6 principles of nurture as the basis for their provision.

The six principles are:

- Children's learning is understood developmentally
- The classroom offers a safe base
- The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
- Language is a vital means of communication
- All behaviour is communication
- The importance of transitions in children's lives



Schools often take a graduated approach to supporting young people with severe SEMH needs increasing the level of support and intervention when required. The process outlined below decreases the need for permanent exclusion, keeping the young person within their community and improving their sense of belonging and relationships with staff.

#### The Boxall Profile

Early identification of potential social, emotional, behavioural and/or mental health concerns

#### Whole school nurture approach

Boxall Profile for all children and young people and nurture principles are embedded

#### Nurturing interventions

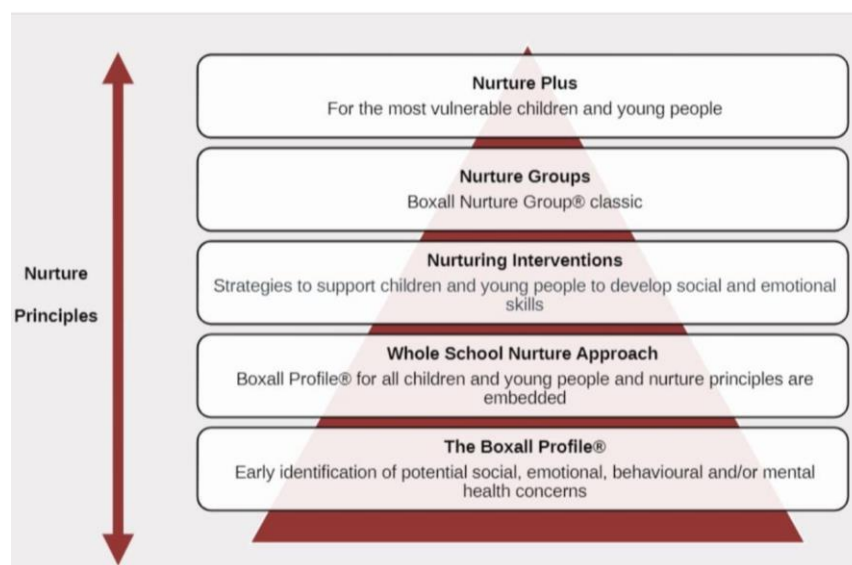
Strategies to support children and young people to develop social and emotional skills

#### Nurture groups

Boxall Nurture Groups classic

#### Nurture Plus

For the most vulnerable children and young people



### Setting up internal Alternative Provision (AP)

The following information should not be viewed as a tick list of support to provide pupils but rather a menu of ideas that schools may wish to choose from or trial when setting up an internal alternative provision.

- Pick the right staff to run the Alternative provision. Invest in training for them. Allow them to spend time in thriving alternative provision schools. Internal AP hinges on the adult's ability to form professional caring relationships with pupils.

- The aim of mainstream based internal alternative provision is to give young people the skills they require to go back to mainstream lessons and thrive. The placement/use of AP should be time limited, young people will need this explained to them.
- If a pupil is accessing internal AP support they should be included on the schools SEND register and the school should be recording and reviewing regularly the assess, plan, do, review cycles. Schools will need to place an emphasis on using the time the young person spends in internal AP to gather information that may be helpful if an application for needs assessment is required.
- As with all school settings getting the curriculum right for each young person is vital. Understanding pupil voice and the young person's aspirations is key in achieving this. If the curriculum does not target the young person's aspirations, it is likely to fail. Some schools use the acronym "WIIFM" What's In It For Me. Teachers start the lesson by explaining how the learning will benefit the young person and how it will help them move towards their aspirational goals.
- Train staff in trauma informed practice, ACES and attachment awareness. It may also help to train pupils on the neuroscience of trauma informed practice. This will need to be done sensitively to prevent pupils being re-traumatised and also prevent highlighting particular pupils as having experienced trauma. Often this can help pupils to make sense of why they are feeling and behaving the way they do.
- The pupils accessing the AP will likely have disorganised attachment perhaps alongside other SEND. If staff are aware of the 4 main types of attachment it helps to explain why the "normal" behaviour system won't necessarily work for pupils with disorganised attachment but may work for those with pupils with secure, ambivalent and avoidant attachment. For pupils with disorganised attachment no amount of detention, isolation, exclusions will have any impact in bringing about positive behaviour. The first step is developing a trusting relationship with another person. Sometimes the only way to achieve this is to not focus on academic work. If a behaviourist approach is taken with this small minority of pupils, it will be very difficult to build a positive relationship.
- The success of the AP will hinge on mainstream staff coming to the AP and developing relationships with the pupils. Extra-curricular clubs/trips and activities/Learning Outside the Classroom might be good opportunities for this. In extreme cases some Alternative provision (AP) schools start with developing a 1-1 relationship and then this extends to support triangles and so on, so pupils gradually experience relationships with wider numbers of staff.
- Pupil voice in the behaviour system in AP's is very important. The aim being that pupils create the system and then the system holds them to account

rather than the adult holding them to account resulting in the relationship remaining intact.

- A major challenge for the staff working in mainstream alternative provision is the difference between how pupils need to be treated in the AP and how pupils in their mainstream classes need to be treated. If the teacher is teaching the same pupil in a mainstream lesson as they do in the skills centre good practice would be to train the pupil in the differences they can expect from the teacher prior to the lesson in the different settings.
- In most AP's the staffing ratio is often 2:4. This allows positive modelling of behaviours between adults but also allows pupils to leave the teaching room with a member of staff to continue their learning elsewhere if needed. The aim of any internal AP is offering layers of support to ensure pupils have access to learning for as long as possible.
- On any official documentation in AP where a pupil's behaviour has meant they have needed to move away from class mates the terminology that should be used is "their support was increased" rather than they were isolated or removed etc. It's useful for staff to use similar language with the pupil at the time of incident.
- Sensibly scripted restorative conversations can work. Some schools use phrases like "the behaviour you chose to exhibit was....." This should be avoided as for some pupils their behaviour wasn't chosen but was as a result of trauma response or complete lack of understanding of social norms. Strategies for ASC pupils work equally well here in these situations e.g "I can see you are...can you tell me...maybe we could...could you help me with etc etc."
- Some schools timetable mainstream staff to come and do paired teaching with the AP base leader. This allows pupils to access subject specialist teachers whilst the mainstream teacher learns strategies that are utilised by the AP base leader.
- Most AP's dedicate periods of time each day for listening to pupil voice 1-1. Often days end with a "framing" period to ensure pupils wherever possible can leave in a positive mood.
- It may be a good idea to run AP pupil only assemblies or rewards sessions (for appropriate pupils)
- Sometimes allowing non AP based pupils into the AP to learn aids pupils learning positive learning skills and positive social interaction.
- Teaching in internal AP often happens in a primary school fashion. Quite project based. Some schools have utilised primary teachers to run secondary internal AP units as they have been trained in teaching in a "nurturing style" and are highly trained in developing pupils literacy using phonic based

interventions. The percentage of pupils in AP with literacy needs is very high. SEMH and Literacy needs will need to be targeted together.

- Share as much information about pupils with teaching staff as you feel comfortable with. Staff can only be truly trauma informed if they are informed of the trauma.
- Track pupils starting point on entry to the skills centre and at regular intervals. It may or may not be appropriate to set targets based on KS2 APS or progress 8 projections. (Sometimes these targets place unwanted pressure on staff and pupils as they may not be attainable due to changing life circumstances of the pupil).
- Entry level and Functional skill maths and English can often give pupils a confidence boost. Many schools and AP providers use AQA unit awards to gain the pupils interest and show them they are able to achieve academically.
- Getting the correct mixture of pupils in the AP base at any one time is vital. As staffing will be tight online interventions can work well so the lead teacher can lead sessions for a group of pupils, but others can work independently on interventions.
- Suggested Interventions could be but are not limited to Boxall, Beyond the Boxall, Nurture UK, Thrive, ELSA, Talkabout, Zones of Regulation, mindfulness, CBT, Social stories or consequence mapping. Lexia powerup and RWI freshstart have been used successfully with pupils with SEMH and also underlying literacy needs.
- Young people in AP setting require high-quality careers advice.
- High quality personalised targets administered through a “personal best” report is a great way to show young people how well they are doing.
- Strategies for pupils with ASC, ODD, ADHD or PDA are useful in using in an alternative provision setting.
- Some schools have found that there is the potential for pupils to take part in mainstream lessons through a laptop whilst in the AP base (very helpful for reducing strain on staffing within the AP base)
- Eat and drink together wherever possible. Take on roles with regards to cleaning and getting food.
- Low stimulation environment tends to work well in AP settings. It is always worth taking into account the sensory needs of any pupils attending a skills base. Sometimes pupils are given their own workstation using an approach similar to the TEACCH program for pupils with ASD.
- Show pupils the investment the school are making in them. Explain to young people how much they are valued by the school.

- Sometimes pupils can only cope with very short periods of working. This feels very alien to mainstream secondary schools but in AP is sometimes necessary. The trick is finding the right learning activity to fill the other time. Board games, music, sport and cooking are therapeutic activities which support pupils well in AP. The very best AP setting find ways to administer specific SEMH interventions in the down time between academic tasks.
- Reintegration transition back into the mainstream classroom is vital and should be supported by one of the members of staff from the pupil's support triangle.