



“If the child is unable to adjust to the needs of the school, then the school must adjust to meet the needs of the child.” M Boxall

Nurturing in the Primary Phase

Policy Document for 2019/2020

Introduction to the School and its ethos and practice

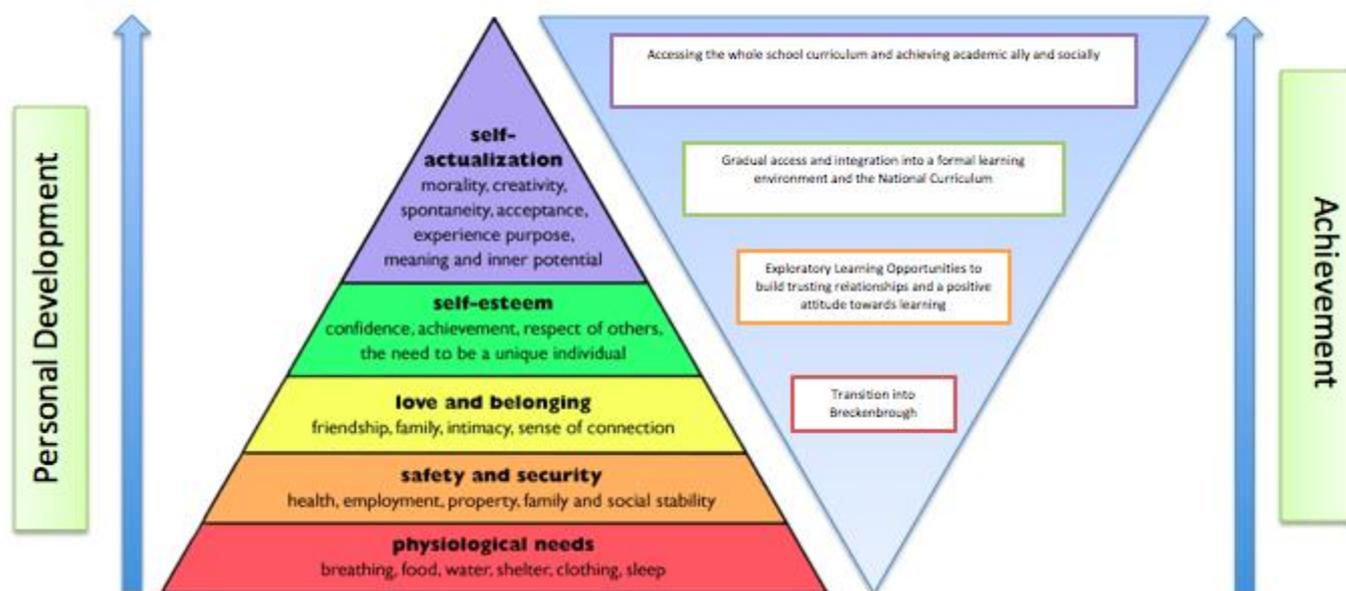
Breckenbrough is a Non-Maintained Special School (NMSS) approved by the Secretary of State. We offer day and residential placements for boys with a range of complex needs, including Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), Asperger's Syndrome (AS), Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), Tourette's Syndrome (TS) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder ADHD).

Like our students, Breckenbrough is unique; offering a bespoke, special school approach in delivering the national curriculum. We pride ourselves in being a 'specialist' school, providing a nurturing, supportive and low stress environment to help our students learn to manage their behaviours and make social and academic progress.

We aim to support our students to achieve two key goals during their time here:

1. To be themselves, aspire and be successful.
2. To develop strategies and coping mechanisms to move towards a level of self-actualisation in order to thrive in the neurotypical world.

Following the model of Maslow's Hierarchy of Need, every student arrives at Breckenbrough seeking a safe, nurturing environment where they can be accepted and learn. Due to their adverse experiences in prior settings, our first goal is to reduce anxiety levels and for every student to feel safe and secure in the school environment. It is unreasonable to expect any academic progress until this has been achieved. Every student progresses through the school seeking to achieve what Maslow terms as self-actualisation, which is essential in achieving the second key goal. As a student progresses upwards through the levels of Maslow, there is a parallel increase in engagement, learning and academic progress.



Our Quaker ethos underpins all we aspire to build in our students: respect, tolerance, equality, understanding and forgiveness. We deliberately avoid punishment and forced discipline, believing that resolution of conflict can come about through behaviour modelling and restorative justice. We and the eight other Quaker schools operate using a similar ethos and come together through the [Friends School Council](#).

Our students are well supported by our experienced and committed team. Each student works alongside a core group of professionals, which includes an academic mentor and a keyworker whose responsibility is to ensure that the students' needs are met, their development is planned and monitored and their outcomes are celebrated and reported to parents and professionals. In addition, we have a full-time psychologist and an Occupational Therapist onsite who form part of the core group. These core groups are instrumental in supporting students in working towards achieving the two key goals during their time at Breckenbrough

Our Nurture Setting within the Primary Hub

Usually, nurture groups are small, structured teaching groups for children showing signs of behavioural, social or emotional difficulties, particularly those who are experiencing disruption or distress outside school. There are now more than 1,500 schools with nurture provision in the UK, offering opportunities to experience the early nurturing experiences that some children have not had. Nurture groups are developed around six principles:

- Learning is understood developmentally.
- The classroom offers a safe base.
- Nurture is important for the development of wellbeing.
- Language is a vital means of communication.
- All behaviour is communication.
- The importance of transition in the lives of children and young people.

At Breckenbrough, good practice begins at our primary phase.

Offering children opportunities to revisit early learning skills to support their social and emotional development and move forwards successfully as lifelong learners is the overall and primary goal.

Our Primary provision is growing and our support network needs to adapt and support students with high levels of anxiety and sensory processing needs, as well as having high expectations for academic achievement. As with Maslow's, we recognise that the latter aspiration cannot be achieved unless we address the individual student's cognitive and emotional need.

At the end of 2018/19, following a range of concerns in relation to behaviour, attitudes to learning and low self-esteem – as well as adverse experiences in previous settings, staff and children had reached crisis point. The leadership team determined that prompt action should be taken to research and establish the school's nurture provision, which will ultimately include:

- Establishing a steering group to conduct research into nurture provision and plan the way forward.
- Completing visits to other schools to observe best practice.
- Writing a rationale for the provision which was shared with all staff.
- Appointing suitably qualified staff to key roles, who will ultimately attend training provided by Nurture Group Network. This will enable staff to write key policies for the provision.
- Setting up the nurture provision in a hub separate from the main building to better address issues surrounding anxiety and learning environment.
- Ensuring that the six principles above underpin daily practice.

- Providing detailed information about the provision on the school website as a means of communicating with the school community.
- Enabling children to form positive attachments with the group staff and positive relationships with peers.
- Involving parents in the provision, through regular invitations to events and occasions.
- Adapting the Boxall profile (and utilising the Maslow Hierarchy of need) for measuring social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, which can also be used for early identification of children who would benefit from the nurture group and designing reintegration checklists (please see our policies for our Transition and Induction Groups).
- Organising observations of the provision by governors and the Primary Phase school improvement partner.

Nurture provision experience

The objectives of the provision were clear from the outset:

- To increase children's confidence, self-esteem, attainment, and love for learning and school.
- To achieve stability with behaviour and attitudes to learning in the year 5/6 cohorts.
- To address children's lack of progress academically, emotionally and socially.
- To significantly reduce the impact of key learners' behaviour on others within the school and beyond (family life).
- To significantly reduce the number of serious incidents and exclusions.
- To improve attendance and engagement.

A day in the life of our nurture provision

Our Primary Phase is staffed by two Primary teachers and a dedicated number of Learning Support Assistants. It offers focused intervention which addresses barriers to learning as a result of ASC and related issues – such as social or emotional difficulties. Children remain within the hub and classes are fluid and address academic need or ability. For example, Student A may be in one group for Maths and another for English or phonics. This is to ensure that the student can access the class which will build on his achievement in order to grow his self-esteem and celebrate success.

Students learn in an environment where the furniture is a mixture of home and school, so the space is safe, consistent and predictable for the children. The day begins with a shared breakfast experience and staff sit with students and chat as a family, encouraging dialogue and shared experiences.

They are taught English, maths and phonics by qualified teachers. The rest of the day is structured to provide opportunities to address specific skills needed to become successful learners as they move to the next phase in their education.

Parental involvement is encouraged and experience in other provisions has shown that this has a positive impact. Parents will be invited in on a Thursday afternoon to meet staff and to share children's achievements and successes. We also hope to invite parents in to experience the provision with their child and share the lesson and part of the day.

Evidence of success

Our provision is in its early stages but we have already seen an improvement in engagement and shared space acceptance.

After breakfast the day begins with circle time and listening and speaking activities. It is also a time where students are able to set their goals for the day and discuss aspects they may find challenging so that these can be supported and solutions agreed beforehand. This session is led by an experienced practitioner who has completed training in SCERTS, focusing on how we address need and engender cooperation alongside emotional and educational growth.

Other impact measures include:

- Improved learning skills, including language and literacy.
- Improved behaviour and social skills.
- Positive change to social and emotional functioning at home.
- Positive attachments to the school and staff.
- Identification of issues that may require early intervention, for example by CAMHS or the school psychologist.
- Better self-esteem, confidence and self-worth.
- Improved attendance.
- Pupil progress demonstrated through curriculum planning and assessment, using the adapted Boxall Profile and national curriculum.
- Positive feedback from parents (through questionnaires and comments).

Importantly, the nurture group provision also allows Primary teachers to discuss academic provision while students are focussing on skills they will need to develop to further access the curriculum.

At Breckenbrough, we have determined that our success in this venture is non-negotiable and we will ensure the following takes place.

- Support from the school's leadership is essential: strategic direction in the early stages and a monitoring role once the provision is established.
- Positive relationships with parents must be established to support their child in the provision (e.g. invitations to special occasions, weekly "stay and play" sessions).
- Survey parents at the end of each cohort to find out about their experiences of their child's time in the nurture provision. This can be used to ensure that the provision is of the highest quality.
- Ensure clear communication with everyone about the provision. Student's complete success and achievement profiles at the end of each day and parents receive a copy of this.
- A dedicated space where the children feel safe is essential. The hub, as it currently stands, is a temporary structure and students will be provided with a dedicated space in the coming year.
- There will be times when a student needs dedicated 1:1 support and an alternate environment to calm or refocus.

- Ensure regular contact with the rest of the school community through various activities and short times for break.
- Investment in time to build measurable profiles for target-setting, assessment and engagement as well as monitoring our ASC care and provision for each child.
- Time with a qualified teacher and access to the national curriculum subjects is important, as is specialist teaching in nurture, PE and music.
- Provide high-quality training for key staff within and beyond the provision to ensure the principles are understood by everyone.
- It is important for children to form firm attachments with the staff in the provision – changes to personnel could cause disruption.

Our provision is in its initial phase and a 3 year development/improvement plan is beginning to take shape and will be shared across the staff team once it is completed. All stakeholders will have the opportunity to share ideas and thoughts and discuss any potential pitfalls or challenges.

September 2019