

The National Nurturing Schools Programme
 Assessment Report



Establishment name and address	Hildenborough Church of England Primary School Riding Lane Hildenborough TN11 9HY
Headteacher/Principal	Ruth Ardrey
NNSP trained staff	Rachel Forward, SENCo Caroline Stone, Inclusion Manager
Assessment date	1 st October 2025
Assessor	Nichala Johansen
Trainer	Carrie Thorne
Review date	October 2028

STANDARDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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).			X

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.

Hildenborough Church of England Primary School is a small, one-form-entry school in Kent. The school environment video captures its ethos perfectly, stating, “At Hildenborough we are one big family, and nurture is at the heart of everything we do.” The school’s core values of love, hope, honesty, courage, compassion, and endurance shine through in every aspect of school life.

Throughout the virtual assessment day, all stakeholders spoke passionately about how The Six Principles of Nurture and the school’s values underpin the warmth and sense of belonging you feel as soon as you enter the building. Parents described how their children were “scooped up” with care and spoke of a community where, “All the staff have the same approach; there is no hierarchy. The school is one large family.”

Examples of excellent practice include:

Children’s learning is understood developmentally

Staff at Hildenborough School recognise that children learn at different rates and in different ways. Teaching is carefully tailored to meet each pupil’s individual needs through a combination of personalised provision plans, whole-class provision maps and a consistent application of the ‘stage not age’ approach. The focus is always on each child’s current stage of learning and what they need to move forward.

During the assessment day, Rachel Forward, SENCo, described the ‘flexible adaptations’ made to the curriculum and explained how ‘learning through challenges’ has been central to the support offered in Key Stage 1. Across the school, resources such as Now & Next boards, visual timetables, vocabulary mats, and maths manipulatives are fully embedded into daily practice. These tools support understanding, ease transitions and promote independence. Teachers spoke about how this relaxed environment provides numerous opportunities for children to learn and progress. It was clear that staff work diligently to meet the developmental needs of every child.

The classroom offers a safe base

The development of safe spaces at Hildenborough School has been a key part of its nurture journey. Classrooms act as secure bases, empowering children to explore new ideas, take appropriate risks and grow both academically and personally. Staff understand that when children feel emotionally safe, they are better able to engage with

learning, build positive relationships and develop independence and resilience. Each classroom environment is intentionally designed and regularly reviewed to support the diverse learning needs of all pupils.

Rachel, SENCo, and Caroline, Inclusion Lead, spoke about how staff curiosity around behaviour has led to thoughtful adaptations such as flexible seating arrangements. These have been carefully planned to balance focus, collaboration and accessibility. Seating options including pairs, small groups, horseshoe layouts and individual workspaces are arranged based on class dynamics and individual pupil needs and are adapted throughout the year. This approach reflects the school's ongoing commitment to creating responsive, pupil-centred learning environments. As Caroline explained, "We are child-led; children have been naturally finding their safe spaces and we have followed their lead."

Every classroom includes a designated quiet area, such as a reading corner or comfortable chair, where children can regulate their emotions or take a short sensory break when needed. Each class also has a sensory toolkit filled with age-appropriate resources and staff are trained to help children choose and use these tools effectively. Both staff and pupils spoke about how they use the toolkits and how children have been supported to personalise their own kits based on what works best for them. This was a powerful reminder of the significant role safe spaces and resources play in supporting children's wellbeing and learning at Hildenborough.

The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing

During the assessment day, it was clear that at Hildenborough School, nurture is not something additional, it is who they are. It is the golden thread running through every interaction, routine and policy, forming the foundation of their inclusive, child-centred approach. The Six Principles of Nurture are deeply embedded within the school's vision, Christian values and daily practice. They shape how staff view behaviour, design learning, engage with families and care for one another as a team. Every pupil is recognised and valued as an individual and staff work tirelessly to ensure that each child feels seen, heard and supported. Throughout the day, all stakeholders spoke of "Ruth's deep care for the staff and children," reflecting a shared understanding that the school's approach is centred on doing "what's right for each child as an individual".

Hildenborough School recognises that children thrive when their families are supported too. Emotional wellbeing extends beyond the pupils to include the whole family unit. Support may take the form of informal check-ins, structured emotional support or help accessing food banks, local charities and external agencies such as CYPMHS or Early Help. Parents spoke warmly about the school's unwavering care, sharing that, "wellbeing comes first. Staff understand that if children are not nurtured, they will not learn," and praised how their "wellbeing is considered alongside that of their children". Families know that Hildenborough is a safe and trusted space to turn to.

The school's nurturing ethos also extends beyond the classroom through the Passport of Experiences, a thoughtfully planned programme ensuring all children have access to a broad range of cultural, outdoor and life-enriching opportunities. These moments of joy

and wellbeing are valued by children, parents and staff alike. Every stakeholder referenced them during the assessment day, showing just how firmly embedded they are in the school's approach.

Equally, the wellbeing of staff is given high priority. Leaders recognise that emotionally healthy, supported adults are best placed to nurture children. The staff team fosters a strong sense of collaboration and compassion, underpinned by an open-door culture where concerns can be raised honestly and met with understanding. Staff described how "it feels like home here," and this sentiment was echoed in every conversation throughout the assessment day. The warmth, trust, and care evident across the school community leaves no doubt that wellbeing for pupils, families, and staff sits firmly at the heart of Hildenborough School.

Language is a vital means of communication

Pupil voice is a real strength at Hildenborough School. Staff ensure that every child knows their voice is heard, respected and valued. Initiatives such as Pupil Voice and the School Council provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas across a range of topics. Their contributions are acted upon wherever possible and staff make sure children can see the impact of their input, strengthening their sense of agency, belonging and ownership within the school community.

This year, the school introduced OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) at lunchtimes. The School Council played a central role in its development, gathering suggestions from their peers about desired activities and resources. Wherever feasible, these ideas were incorporated, reflecting the school's commitment to listening to and empowering its pupils.

Academic, sporting and personal achievements are celebrated widely through awards, certificates and parent-submitted videos. Successes are recognised not only within classrooms, but also during weekly whole-school Celebration Worship and in newsletters, reinforcing that every child's voice and achievements matter to the wider community.

During the assessment day, pupils spoke with pride about their achievements and the many ways they are celebrated by staff, peers and families. "We have pride awards, hot chocolate with Mrs Ardrey, earn house points, and show our work in the newsletters," one pupil shared enthusiastically. They spoke confidently and with genuine joy about the praise, encouragement and support they receive across the school.

Children were particularly proud of the introduction of OPAL and the freedom it provides during playtimes. "I really like being able to eat outside," one pupil said, while others described the sense of choice, collaboration and fun it has brought to their school day. Their enthusiasm reflected a deep sense of pride in their school and a strong belief that their voices truly make a difference.

All behaviour is communication

Staff at Hildenborough School understand that their role as educators is to respond with curiosity rather than judgment, supporting children to understand and manage their feelings effectively. During the assessment day, a parent shared how staff quickly picked up on her son's needs, reflecting the school's attentive and responsive approach to behaviour as communication.

The school has invested in high-quality professional development focused on de-escalation strategies, emotional regulation and supporting children with complex needs. Training has emphasised evidence-based approaches to behaviour management, including positive reinforcement, co-regulation, restorative conversations and trauma-informed practice. These programmes have helped shift the school's mindset from managing behaviour to understanding and supporting behaviour, fully aligning with the school's values.

Rachel, SENCo, explained that understanding behaviour as communication, "is a big part of our culture". Staff acknowledged that, while initially challenging, this shift in mindset has been transformative, enabling the school to consistently do what is right for each child. This approach promotes calm, sensitive and consistent responses that prioritise active listening, validation of feelings and helping children reflect on the reasons behind their actions.

The school's Positive Relationships and Behaviour for Learning Policy, recently revised, reflects this commitment to relational and restorative practice. At its heart is the nurturing of strong, respectful relationships between staff and pupils, between peers and between school and home. Stakeholders spoke with pride about how this approach, which seeks to understand the "why" behind behaviour, is central to the school's ethos.

Hildenborough has also introduced the Zones of Regulation as a whole-school approach. This framework supports children's emotional literacy, helping them identify and understand their emotional states, recognising that all feelings, even difficult ones, are valid. Children are encouraged to use strategies such as breathing techniques, sensory activities or speaking with a trusted adult to regulate themselves and return to a calm state. Each classroom features a Zones of Regulation display with visual prompts to support self-reflection and emotional awareness, while staff wear lanyards with tools and prompts to ensure consistent modelling of regulation language across the school.

Ruth explained that the Zones of Regulation have brought a common language to the school, formalising routines and predictability, which in turn supports safety for all. Rachel highlighted how powerful the approach is in enabling staff to co-regulate with children, helping pupils develop their own strategies for self-regulation.

Transitions are important in the lives of children

To create a predictable and inclusive learning environment, Hildenborough School has embedded a range of whole-school transition routines and systems that help all children feel secure. Clear, consistent routines are followed in every classroom, from the start of the school day to home time. These routines are explicitly taught, reinforced and referred to daily. Visual timetables are prominently displayed in all classrooms and updated in

real time to reflect any adjustments. For pupils requiring additional support, personalised visual timetables or first-then boards are used to break the day into smaller, more manageable steps.

Parents spoke highly of the school's approach to transitions, praising how effectively these are managed. They particularly highlighted the use of the Green Room, which offers a 'soft start' through nurture provision. Children are welcomed into a calm and supportive environment, often with access to sensory tools, gentle activities, and a trusted adult. This approach helps reduce separation anxiety, supports emotional regulation, and enables a smoother transition into learning, a significant strength of the school's approach.

Throughout the assessment day, staff and pupils spoke about the effectiveness of check-ins in easing tricky transitions. Parents also shared how the school always follows up with a phone call or email when needed, helping to minimise any anxiety and providing reassurance. This consistent, predictable approach fosters trust and security in all relationships across the school, creating a stable foundation for learning and wellbeing.

Quotes from the assessment day:

- My children love coming to Hildenborough School. (parent)
- Any problem is listened to and taken on board; nothing is insignificant. (parent)
- The school is so good at keeping us updated with phone calls and emails. (parent)
- Nurture has always been at the heart of Hildenborough School. (Rachel, Senco)
- The Six Principles of Nurture have given us a whole school focus. (Rachel, Senco)
- We are a strong team and we communicate well with each other. (Caroline, Inclusion Lead)
- I love my playground duty; I love that the different year groups interact with each other. (Julie, Office staff)
- I get as much from my job as I give. (support staff)
- We have a shared understanding that we are in this together. (Ruth, Headteacher)
- School is a fun, safe place to be for all of us. (Ruth, Headteacher)
- The SLT are really supportive of staff development. We develop staff brilliantly here. (Teaching staff)
- The children recognise each other's success. We work to develop intrinsic motivation. (Teaching staff)
- We value personal development. We make sure we make time for these things (The Passport of Experience) to happen. (Teaching staff)
- I love the feeling of going outside and looking at nature. (child)
- We love OPAL, there are lots of things to choose from at playtime. The freedom is great and the opportunities are endless. (children)
- Our school is brilliant, compassionate, lovely, loving and amazing. (children)
- If we are worried, we can ask anyone really. (children)

Recommendation
<p>We recommend Hildenborough Church of England Primary School for the National Nurturing Schools Award</p>

Areas for development	Timescale
<p>The Boxall Profile.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look to use the Boxall Profile assessment tool for whole classes or large cohorts initially. • Expand the use of the Boxall Profile assessment tool across the school during the re-assessment cycle. • Ensure all staff have training and understand how to use the Boxall Profile for assessment and intervention. 	Ongoing
<p>The Six Principles of Nurture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote and embed The Six Principles of Nurture throughout the school for pupils and staff. • Continue to familiarise your families and community with The Six Principles of Nurture, 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
<p>Continue to monitor and evaluate the provision within your setting completing the National Nurturing Schools self-assessment on an annual basis.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Engage with the re-accreditation process for the National Nurturing Schools Programme.</p>	2028