

Hearing Every Voice

How the PACE model is shaping nurturing schools

There is increasing recognition across education that **children's emotional wellbeing is fundamental to their ability to learn and thrive**. In response, many schools are moving beyond isolated interventions and developing whole-school nurturing cultures. My Master's dissertation explored how the PACE model (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) can support this shift, capturing the perspectives of both staff and pupils within a primary school.

The research found that **relationships sit at the heart of effective nurture**. Both staff and children identified strong, trusting relationships as central to helping children feel safe, supported and ready to learn. Staff described PACE as a framework that encourages responses to behaviour rooted in curiosity and empathy, while **pupils valued having trusted adults and consistent emotional support within school**.

The findings highlighted that **PACE is most effective when embedded as a whole-school culture** rather than used as an isolated intervention. Consistent implementation across staff promotes the **sense of safety and predictability children need to thrive**. The relational principles of PACE have informed both universal and targeted provision, including ELSA support, learning mentor interventions and alternative provision, benefiting children with more complex social, emotional and mental health needs.

These findings are particularly significant for Children We Care For, many of whom have experienced disrupted attachments and adverse childhood experiences. The attachment-informed nature of **PACE prioritises relational safety, attunement and co-regulation, supporting pupils to develop trust, belonging and confidence in seeking support**.

A key outcome of the research has been the development of a formal nurture policy within our school. The findings suggest that **nurturing practice must be embedded within policy, leadership and school systems** to be sustainable and effective. By aligning PACE with whole-school expectations, targeted provision and staff development, schools are better placed to promote inclusion, safeguarding and emotional wellbeing.

Overall, the research suggests that **the PACE model can play a powerful role in shaping nurturing school environments**. When embedded effectively, it strengthens relationships, supports emotional wellbeing and creates coherent systems of support that promote stability, belonging and engagement in learning.

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