



Parent Feedback on Nurture Rooms and Resourced Provisions

SEND Board Briefing

Prepared by: Waltham Forest Parent Forum

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This briefing summarises parent feedback on the use of nurture rooms and resourced provisions in mainstream schools. It brings together lived experiences shared by parents and highlights common themes, strengths and areas of concern at a system level. The paper is intended to support shared understanding, transparency and improvement across the local SEND system.

Summary

Why this briefing was produced

The Forum had heard a number of concerning accounts from parents about non-inclusive practice linked to the use of a nurture room in one school. This prompted wider questions about how nurture rooms and resourced provisions are being used in practice across schools. A short survey was therefore carried out to understand what use is being made of these provisions and how this is experienced by families.

Scope of the feedback

The number of parents who responded to the survey was relatively small. However, the issues raised closely mirror what the Forum regularly hears through face-to-face conversations with parents, ongoing support work with families, and discussions on social media platforms. The consistency between the survey feedback and wider parent voice suggests these are established concerns rather than isolated views.

What parents say works

Parents recognise that nurture rooms can provide short-term emotional safety, helping children to calm and regulate during periods of distress.

Key concerns raised by parents

- lack of clarity about the purpose and intended use of nurture rooms
- frequent or prolonged use, with limited review or exit planning
- reduced access to learning and peer relationships
- drift from short-term support into long-term separation from class

- concerns about staffing, training and oversight
- limited inclusion in practice within some resourced provisions

What parents are asking for

Parents are asking for greater clarity, consistency and transparency, alongside clear oversight, review points and accountability at a system level.

Purpose of this briefing

This paper brings together parent feedback on the use of nurture rooms and resourced provisions in mainstream schools. It reflects lived experiences shared by parents across a range of settings and aims to highlight common themes, what feels helpful, and where there are concerns at a system level.

The survey was carried out after the Forum heard a number of concerning accounts from parents about non-inclusive practice linked to the use of a nurture room in one school. This raised wider questions about how nurture rooms are being used in practice and whether those experiences were isolated or part of a broader pattern. The survey was therefore intended to understand what use is being made of nurture rooms and resourced provisions across schools, and how this is experienced by families.

The intention of this work is not to focus on individual schools, but to support shared understanding, transparency and improvement across the system.

What parents understand nurture rooms to be for

Parents generally understand nurture rooms to be intended as short-term emotional support, offering children a calm space to regulate when they are overwhelmed or distressed. However, a recurring theme is a lack of clarity. Many parents report that the purpose of the nurture room, how it should be used, and what it is meant to achieve are not clearly explained.

Some parents were unaware that their child's school had a nurture room until their child was already using it.

"I am not too clear what happens in the nurture room."

What parents say works

Where parents are positive, they most often describe short-term emotional benefits. Children may feel calmer, safer, or less distressed in the moment, particularly during periods of dysregulation. In some cases, parents also describe positive relationships with individual staff members.

“Usually my child gets better there, and is relaxed.”

These benefits are usually described as partial and time-limited, rather than addressing learning or inclusion on their own.

Main concern: overuse and lack of clear purpose

A strong and consistent concern is that nurture rooms are used too frequently and without clear criteria. Parents describe children being sent to nurture rooms regularly, sometimes daily, with limited clarity about plans, review points or exit strategies.

“There’s little focus on moving things forward. Children spend far too much time in it (over 50%).”

Impact on learning and inclusion

Parents consistently raise concerns about the impact of extended nurture room use on learning and inclusion. Many describe children missing significant amounts of classroom learning and becoming increasingly separated from peers.

“He didn’t have many friends because he was in that small room most of the time.”

“Academically it didn’t help him improve.”

Drift into long-term separation

For some families, nurture room use becomes long-term rather than temporary. Parents describe children spending months or longer largely outside the classroom, often without clear review or escalation.

“This became permanent and he has now been out of class for a year. He has lost his confidence to return to any bigger groups.”

Staffing, training and quality

Parents frequently question whether nurture rooms are staffed and resourced appropriately. There is concern about limited specialist training, reliance on unqualified or unsupported staff, and lack of oversight.

“It feels like the children who need it the most are working with the least qualified members of staff.”

Resourced provisions – parent feedback

Although fewer parents commented specifically on resourced provisions, feedback is consistent. Parents describe limited mainstream inclusion in practice, with some children educated separately for most or all of the school day.

“Not inclusive. Kids are in there full time.”

Questions for Local Authority response

1. How does the LA define the purpose of nurture rooms across the borough, and how is this communicated consistently to schools and families?
2. What oversight does the LA have of how frequently and how long children are placed in nurture rooms, particularly where use becomes regular or long-term?
3. How does the LA assure itself that children using nurture rooms continue to access appropriate learning and inclusive peer experiences?
4. What expectations does the LA place on schools regarding planning, review points and exit strategies for nurture room use?
5. How does the LA ensure parents are informed and involved when nurture room use increases or becomes a regular feature of a child’s school experience?
6. What guidance does the LA provide on staffing, training and quality assurance within nurture rooms?
7. How does the LA monitor inclusion in resourced provisions in practice, particularly where children are educated separately for most or all of the school day?
8. How does the LA ensure nurture rooms and resourced provisions are not being used to compensate for gaps in specialist provision?