

## **Companionship Effects for Children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.**

**Jillian Adie, Jonathan Delafield-Butt and Helen Marwick**

University of Strathclyde

Early Intervention; SEBD; Companionship; Attachment; Affect Attunement

Nurture Groups in primary schools provide an early intervention resource for children displaying social, emotional and behavioural difficulties at school entry, whose needs cannot be met in a mainstream class. The Groups are informed by attachment theory and are shown to have a positive effect on behaviour, social and emotional wellbeing (Mackay et al., 2010; Seth-Smith et al., 2010; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007) and academic attainment (Mackay et al., 2010) in children. Success is attributed to the theoretical underpinnings of the intervention, however little is understood about the psychological processes involved in the efficacy of the Groups. It is hypothesised that the Groups address a missing aspect of ‘affect attunement’ in children with SEBD by establishing relationships built on ‘Companionship’, which provide a forum for learning and development. This study aims to improve understanding of the means of affective attunement and efficacy of Companionship in Nurture Group intervention, to inform best practice in this and other domains. A longitudinal study using audio-video recording and observation methods is being carried out to examine the behavioural and relational patterns of children attending the Groups. The video data will be analysed for dimensions of attunement between the children and their peers and teachers. Behavioural and emotional patterns will be examined and narrative sequences of interaction quantified by measures of affective quality, rhythm and duration. Emotional and behavioural change over time will be measured to provide understanding of the patterns of behaviour, emotional attunement and intensity of intersubjective experience that assist children’s development.

Cooper, P.. & Whitebread, D. (2007) The Effectiveness of Nurture Groups on Student Progress: evidence from a national research study. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 12 (3), 171-190.

MacKay, T., Reynolds, S., & Kearney, M. (2010) From Attachment to Attainment: the impact of Nurture Groups on academic achievement. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 27 (3), 100-110.

Seth-Smith, F., Levi, N., Pratt, R., Fonagy, P., & Jaffey, D. (2010) Do Nurture Groups Improve the Social, Emotional and Behavioural Functioning of At Risk Children? *Educational and Child Psychology*, 27 (1), 21-34.