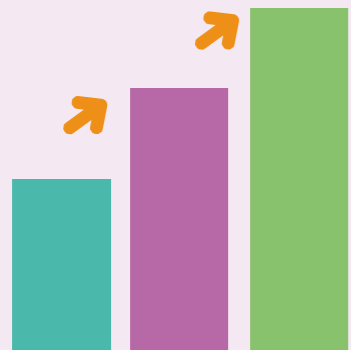


# Case study: Forest Academy

A participant on nurtureuk's whole-school approach programme





## Positive impact

**100%**

decrease in fixed-term suspensions

**83%**

of pupils in KS2 meeting or exceeding expectations in reading, writing and maths, 22% above the national average

**+100%**

teacher retention in the past two years

**+20%**

improvement in staff wellbeing scores

Forest Academy, a primary school in Croydon, serves an area of high deprivation with almost 70% of pupils eligible for free school meals. The majority of children come from the local estate where an active gang is known to operate. 36% of pupils use English as an Additional Language (EAL) and 66% are eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Many of the children are exposed to adverse childhood experiences and for some families there is a historic suspicion of education. Safeguarding children has been a key focus for the school due to a rise in domestic abuse cases in the area.

Despite these challenges, Forest Academy has seen significant change since introducing a whole-school approach to nurture. The school now boasts strong pupil outcomes. **Academic achievements are above national and local authority average and attendance rates are strong** – they are a Department for Education attendance hub, sharing best practice to help improve school attendance nationally and supporting 65 other schools.

**Over the past two academic years, since working with nurtureuk, the school has managed to cut suspensions to zero, down from a peak of seven in the 2021/22 academic year.**

Pupils are more engaged in lessons with improved behaviour and significantly fewer classroom disruptions. This was also

reflected in academic outcomes last year with **83%** of pupils in KS2 meeting or exceeding expectations in reading, writing, and maths - that's 22% above the national average.

The school boasts strong teacher retention — **100%** in the past two years — and a recent survey shows a **20%** improvement in staff wellbeing scores.

Forest Academy joined the Inclusive and Nurturing Schools Programme, funded by London's Violence Reduction Unit, in 2022, accessing staff training on whole-school nurturing approaches, dedicated nurtureuk consultant support, and subscription to the Boxall Profile® Online

to help identify and address students' social and emotional needs. Staff have worked hard to embed nurture throughout the school, building on their existing inclusive practices as a flagship Inclusion Quality Mark School.

**“We believe that children learn best when they feel safe, understood, valued and have a strong sense of belonging. The Six Principles of Nurture shape every decision we make — from classroom layout to interactions with pupils, parents, and staff.”**

— Swabra Lloyd, Headteacher



## Nurture practice has had a transformative effect on individual pupils.

Here are just two examples.



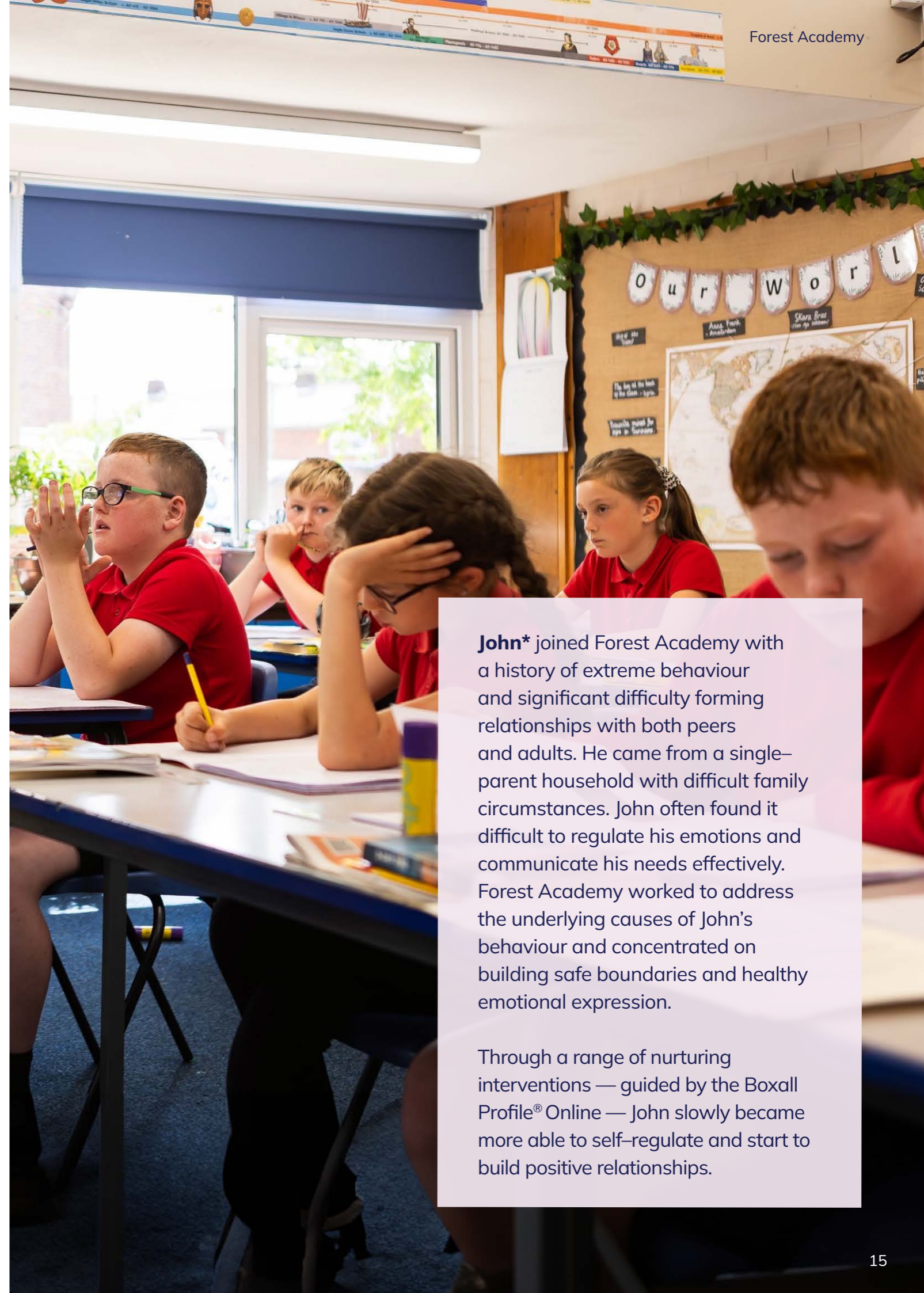
**Beth\***, a year 5 pupil, joined Forest Academy via a managed move, on the brink of permanent exclusion at her previous school. On arrival, she showed **high levels of anxiety which manifested in defiant behaviour.**

Through consistent use of the nurture principles — particularly understanding that all behaviour is communication — staff worked closely with Beth and her mother, providing daily check-ins and access to a safe space when she felt overwhelmed.

Teachers focused on positive reinforcement and building a strong, trusting relationship, rather than resorting to punitive measures.

In year 6, Beth achieved age-related expectations and left primary school **a confident and engaged learner.** Her mum shared that this was the first time she felt hopeful about her daughter's future.

\* Name changed and all photos representational only



**John\*** joined Forest Academy with a history of extreme behaviour and significant difficulty forming relationships with both peers and adults. He came from a single-parent household with difficult family circumstances. John often found it difficult to regulate his emotions and communicate his needs effectively. Forest Academy worked to address the underlying causes of John's behaviour and concentrated on building safe boundaries and healthy emotional expression.

Through a range of nurturing interventions — guided by the Boxall Profile® Online — John slowly became more able to self-regulate and start to build positive relationships.



“I finally feel like someone sees my child for who they are, not just for their behaviour.”

— Parent

## Forest Academy has implemented a holistic, nurturing approach focused on student wellbeing.

Inclusion is front of mind in all aspects of school life at Forest Academy. The students' Junior Leadership Team (JLT) collaborated with the headteacher to define what each nurturing principle meant to them. Through weekly activities, assemblies, and lunchtime surgeries, the JLT are defining the principles and supporting their peers to embed them.

The school has proactively improved the management of student transitions — **practical support tools like a breakfast club for a calm start and a lunchtime club for a quieter alternative help create predictable routines.**



**Inside the classroom, staff have intentionally shifted to using more supportive and relational language to soothe rather than trigger a child's emotional response.** Strategies like Zones of Regulation and a “chance to chat” system also help children identify and manage their emotions, while a dedicated sensory room and an engaging outdoor environment provide spaces for regulation and play.



**Forest Academy has worked hard to build community links and positive relationships with families.** Parents are true partners in the process and the school aims to meet them where they are, understanding that many have had their own negative experiences of education systems. The school's outreach work includes regular parent workshops, coffee mornings, and consistent communication channels to help build trust in the school.

At Forest Academy, inclusion is not just an initiative, it's embedded in the school ethos and the daily practice of its staff.

Pupils engage with their learning and perform well academically, but as Headteacher Swabra Lloyd explains: “Equally importantly they are leaving us as confident, well-rounded individuals, equipped for the next stage of their education.”