Over a 12-year period Pegasus School in Blackbird Leys, Oxford, went from Special Measures to a Grade 2 (Good) Ofsted rating with a Grade 1 (outstanding) rating in eight areas.

In 2010 Ofsted described Pegasus as a place “where pupils flourish and develop a belief that anything is possible if you work.” This positive turnaround is due to Jill Hudson who took over the headship in 1998. She and her fantastic team became early pioneers of Family Links Schools Nurturing Programme.

Francis Murphy, Deputy Head Teacher

We continue to invest in the Nurturing Programme, because quite simply it works. We want children to leave school reading and writing and with basic number skills, ready for secondary school. Family Links gives them the opportunities, self-belief and confidence to do that. It creates an arena where it’s safe to learn.

Some of our children come from challenging backgrounds but they know here they’re safe and secure. When we had our Ofsted earlier this year, they didn’t believe that we had the challenging behaviour we were talking about, because it was so well-managed. We have a very good record for exclusions; only one in two years.

That’s just the behaviour and Family Links is so much more than that. It’s about nurturing the staff, nurturing the community, wanting the best for them. That’s why Family Links is different to any other programme; it focuses on the adult as well as the child. It makes teachers realise you’ve got to be in a good place within yourself if you’re going to try and get the best out of children.

Every school has to have a behaviour policy. We have a relationships policy, which is 100% Family Links, because it is based on relationships and how to relate to people. As part of that policy we say learning is the most important thing, so if a child has taken time out, we encourage the child to get back to class and then we’ll discuss the problem later if need be. We now have children that leave Pegasus who see going to university as an option.

Stephanie McCullough, Year 5 Teacher

I think the Nurturing Programme gives the children clear boundaries about their behaviour, which they need and some don’t necessarily get at home. It also gives them choices through personal power; it puts them in charge of their own feelings and behaviour, so they are responsible for their actions and the consequence that comes with that. I think it’s really good that we put them in charge of themselves.

Family Links is not just in the classroom during PSHCE, it’s also in lessons like Maths, English and Science, and it’s in the corridor, when children go to the toilet, in the playground and in the lunch hall.

At other schools I’ve observed the punitive approach and I think the positive approach works better. Family Links’s slogan “What we pay attention to is what we get more of” is absolutely true in my class and the school. If I pay attention to those children who are sitting nicely, getting on with the work, learning and behaving well, then everyone else does it too.