



Building a brighter future

A guide to our ethos



**Guildford Nursery School
and Family Centre**

Why Froebel for me?



Since January 2017 I have had the absolute honour and privilege to be the headteacher of Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre.

An honour and privilege that comes with a huge responsibility that I take very seriously.

A responsibility to the children, their families, our staff and the local community.

Who better then to guide my work than Friedrich Froebel? A man who argued that the most important part of education was the child's first seven years. Someone who had ultimate respect for each child and their family. Someone who understood the true value of childhood and that through play the greatest learning takes place.

Froebel argued that we must view each child within the context of their family and wider community; I believe that we need to build positive relationships based on trust and respect with children, families and educators. We all need to feel we belong and that we are valued for who we are, just as we are. I truly believe that without significant relationships there can be no significant learning. Throughout my career I have strived to build relationships to ensure that we can all be the best we can be.

I committed myself to Froebelian principles and pedagogy when I did my MA (1998-2000) with Professor Tina Bruce as course director. I will always be indebted to Tina for her ongoing support, guidance and encouragement.

Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre has committed to be a Froebelian organisation and I am so grateful to and proud of all the staff for their continued enthusiasm, reflective practice and sheer hard work.

Autumn 2021 saw the start of an extremely exciting opportunity. Thanks to the generosity of funding from the Froebel Trust, Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre, the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC) and Ama Education Aotearoa (New Zealand), have created The Froebel Partnership. Over the next few years we will be exemplifying, documenting and disseminating the benefits and impact of a Froebelian approach.

I'm very excited to be part of this project, and I hope that everyone involved with the Nursery School and Family Centre will see, hear and feel the benefits too.

Sally Cave, Headteacher.

www.thefroebelpartnership.co.uk





Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre has a Froebelian ethos. This means that our principles and our approach are based on the work and ideas of Friedrich Froebel. In this brochure, we'll introduce you to Froebel and show how we are using his principles to guide our learning, development and support.

Who was Froebel?

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) was a German educator who created the 'kindergarten'. He is arguably the most significant pioneer of early years education and care.

Froebel's kindergarten was a place where children could grow and develop at their own pace, nurtured by knowledgeable and supportive adults. Froebel saw children as active, curious, creative learners who learn best through activity, play, talk, and self-reflection. They thrive when they are emotionally secure and in close relationships with others, including the family and wider community. Froebel rejected the age-old tradition of an education system which views children as passive learners, and believed in education through activity and enquiry. These ideas and their practical applications in the kindergarten were radical concepts at the time.

Froebel wanted to **'educate people to be free, to think, to take action for themselves'**.¹



Froebel at Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre

We share Froebel's view that children learn best through play, self-activity and talk – and that every child should be able to develop at their own pace. During a 12-month period, and with the support of documentation from Helen Tovey and the Froebel Trust², we have reflected on how Froebel's principles guide our work across the Nursery School and Family Centre.

Building a brighter future

OUR AIMS	To inspire our children, parents, community and staff to be the best they can be.	To enable all children, parents and staff to love learning.	To empower all children, parents and staff to make progress and achieve.
OUR VISION	<p>To inspire children, parents and staff to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Adaptable ✔ Determined ✔ Confident ✔ Curious ✔ Well-mannered ✔ Collaborative ✔ Independent and interdependent ✔ Resilient ✔ Open-minded ✔ Responsible ✔ Compassionate ✔ Courageous 	<p>To provide a curriculum that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Exciting ✔ Innovative ✔ Challenging ✔ Inclusive ✔ Creative ✔ Provocative ✔ Motivating ✔ To be the nursery school and family centre of choice for families and staff. ✔ To ensure that all our children, families and staff feel that they belong in Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre. 	<p>To provide support that ensures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ All children and families will have success and feel successful in their learning and development and will be ready for the next stage in their life. ✔ Families will be able to lead safe, fulfilling and healthy lives. ✔ Staff will work in a culture that engenders enquiry, reflection, self-awareness and resilience.
OUR COMMITMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ We work together with consent and respect. ✔ We put the child at the centre of everything, understanding that a child belongs to a family within the wider community. ✔ We communicate with everyone in ways that are respectful, reciprocal and mutually appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ We invest in staff training and development so that all are knowledgeable and nurturing. ✔ We provide opportunities for all to learn through self-activity and reflection. ✔ We recognise the central importance of learning through play and creativity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ We start where the learner is. ✔ We offer help, support and guidance early. ✔ We strive constantly to improve continuously. ✔ We seek ways to empower others so as to increase resilience. ✔ We recognise, welcome and respect diversity and difference. ✔ We challenge prejudice and bias.
OUR OFFER	<p>We value connectedness and belonging so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Every child is assigned a qualified key person. For more information, see 'key person approach' on our website. ✔ Every family being supported is assigned a qualified family support worker. ✔ Every member of staff has comprehensive performance management support. ✔ We seek to work in close partnership with members and groups within the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Everyone is given freedom with guidance. This means that there are choices from a range of options and support and help are provided to ensure progress. ✔ Everyone is encouraged and enabled to engage with nature. ✔ We provide resources that are provocative and challenging. ✔ We give learners time to gain proficiency. ✔ We provide exciting experiences and opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ We support others to think for themselves, listening to and respecting their ideas. ✔ We provide each learner with what they need now. ✔ We support others to develop self-discipline. ✔ We provide guidance to enable each child and adult to pursue and achieve their intentions, offering help when it is needed.



How we use Froebel's principles in our work

We have thought carefully about how these principles can work in everyday life at the Nursery School and Family Centre. We have applied them to all areas of our work, and also to our staff, students and volunteers, so that everyone understands what we are working towards, and why it is important for our children, our families and ourselves



Froebel in action at Guildford Nursery School



Freedom with guidance:

"Allowing uniqueness and individuality to flourish within a strong, supportive community." Balanced by: "Freedom can only operate within a framework of responsibility and respect for others, the resources and the natural environment."³

- Children can move freely indoors and outdoors and between the two.
- Children are helped to do challenging things for themselves such as using real tools in woodwork, lighting a fire at Forest School, and climbing trees.
- Children are able to make their own choices from a range of options.
- Easily accessible and available resources are predominantly open-ended, made from natural materials, reusable and recycled, and always developmentally appropriate.
- Adults listen to, respect and respond appropriately to children's ideas and thoughts.
- Adults support children to consider and understand the consequences of their actions and the feelings of others.





Unity, connectedness and community:

“Learning should be connected to children’s own lives and experienced as a meaningful whole so that children can connect new ideas to what they already know. ‘Start where the child is’ is a Froebelian maxim, which means begin with the child’s own interests, experiences and understandings and build on these.”³

- Adults seek to build strong relationships in order for deep learning to happen.
- Adults make connections for children between what is known and what is new.
- Adults help children to see the connection between opposites.
- We support and respect the relationship of every child with parents, family and their wider community.
- We actively seek to better know and understand each family and their individual context.
- We ensure that children experience the different aspects of learning as a meaningful whole.
- Every interaction is the opportunity to connect.



Engaging with nature:

“The child should experience nature ‘in all its aspects – form, energy, substance, sound and colour’.”¹

- Adults support children to observe nature closely, marvelling in its beauty.
- Adults demonstrate a joyful and curious approach to nature.
- Children have opportunities to care for, observe and learn about the life cycles of ducks, chicks, caterpillars and more.
- Children participate in gardening and know about the food cycle from seed to harvest to cooking and eating.
- Children are allowed and encouraged to climb trees, build dens, explore water, sand, mud, clay and more.
- Children have frequent opportunities to visit the forest school area or woodland areas in the local area.

Learning through self-activity and reflection:

*"To learn a thing in life and through doing is much more developing, cultivating and strengthening than to learn it merely through the verbal communication of ideas."*⁴

- Children have regular opportunities to engage in cooking, weaving, sewing, woodworking, using clay, gardening, block play and construction.
- Adults allow children time so that they become proficient with materials.
- Children are able to revisit activities.
- Adults help children to reflect on their activity by putting actions into words, asking a 'wondering' question, making a connection with a previous experience, narrating their play, working together to overcome challenges and finding solutions.
- Children deepen their learning through repetition, practice and struggle which is supported by adults.

The central importance of play:

*"Play is the highest level of child development. It is the spontaneous expression of thought and feeling. ...It... constitutes the source of all that can benefit the child... At this age play is never trivial; it is serious and deeply significant."*¹

- Staff provide exciting experiences which extend children's interests and open up new possibilities.
- Children are given plenty of time and space to play.
- Children are offered resources that are predominantly open-ended, made from natural materials, reusable and recycled; they are always developmentally appropriate and beautifully presented.
- Adults enrich the potential of play by being sensitive co-players.
- Parents are encouraged to value their children's play and to recognise its importance in their children's learning and development.





Creativity and the power of symbols:

*"A Froebelian approach to creativity is about children representing their own ideas in their own way. As children gain experience and understanding of the symbolic potential of materials, ideas can be explored with increasing complexity. It is not about copying and assembling adult-designed artefacts or filling-in pre-drawn outlines."*³

- ✔ We offer many first-hand sensory experiences so children want to talk and represent.
- ✔ Children have daily access to workshop areas to create and make, including paint, clay and woodwork.
- ✔ Children have the opportunity to play, to imagine, to take risks.
- ✔ We provide opportunities for children to make their inner worlds outer, to tell their stories.
- ✔ Children have the freedom to make and create but with a growing understanding of the possibilities and limitations of materials.
- ✔ Adults support and encourage offering guidance when needed.



Knowledgeable and nurturing educators:

*"Educators should nurture and support children's growing potential as autonomous, thinking, feeling, creative learners. Relationships with children should be warm, respectful, interactive and intellectually engaging, not interfering or dominating. Educators should share in the joy and delight of finding out about the world."*³

- ✔ Staff facilitate and guide children's learning and development.
- ✔ Staff understand and teach the skills and knowledge children need.
- ✔ We recognise the inherent good in each child.
- ✔ Staff observe children carefully and respond to their interests.
- ✔ We start where each child is at that moment.
- ✔ We celebrate each child's achievements from their own individual starting points at the time of personal success.
- ✔ Staff commit to reflective practice and further study.



Froebel in action at Guildford Family Centre



Freedom with guidance:

*"Freedom is not just about removing barriers, it requires opportunity and encouragement. The role of the adult is therefore essential in ensuring that all children's freedoms are protected."*³

- Parents are encouraged and empowered to ensure their children are able to make choices from a range of options.
- Staff listen to, respect and respond appropriately to children's ideas and thoughts.
- Staff support parents through the use of coaching skills to consider and understand the consequences of their actions and the feelings of others.
- Staff provide families with the right help at the right time in the right way.

Unity, connectedness and community:

Froebel placed great emphasis and importance on the role of the community and individuals being connected to the community.

- Staff build respectful partnerships with parents.
- Parents are supported to find connections within their community.
- Staff engage the community in the Early Help offer.
- When supporting parents, staff begin where the family is, such as by involving parents directly in assessments like Outcome star.
- Every interaction is the opportunity to connect.



Engaging with nature:

"Froebel saw the garden as a spiritual place of beauty, wonder and harmony where humans could be 'at one' with nature."³

- Staff support parents to spend time in nature both for themselves and for their children.
- The Early Help offer utilises the outdoor space.
- Parenting courses emphasise the benefits of engaging with nature for children's learning and development.
- The Froebel-inspired community garden enables the community to engage with and in nature.

Learning through self-activity and reflection:

Froebel believed that we should become more aware of our own learning so that we can know something in a deeper, more reflective way.³

- Staff support parents to reflect on their actions, to consider the consequences of their actions.
- Staff empower parents to wonder, to try out new ways of doing things.
- Staff help parents to see connections with previous experiences.





The central importance of play:

"For Froebel play was part of being human and of being fully alive."³

- Parents are encouraged to value their children's play and to recognise its importance in their children's learning and development.
- Staff help parents to understand what the children might be showing through their play.
- Parents are supported to give their children first hand experiences such as cooking, going shopping, visiting the park together.
- Parents are shown how to play with their children and to know the benefits of playing together.

Creativity and the power of symbols:

Creativity enables humans to connect their inner world of feelings and ideas with their outer world of things and experiences and to reflect on them both.³

- Staff ensure that parents and children have opportunities to represent their thoughts, feelings, concerns in their own ways.
- Staff support parents to understand their child's emotions and to help their children name their emotions.
- Staff support parents to understand their own wellbeing and emotional responses so parents are able to better understand their children.



Knowledgeable and nurturing educators:

Froebel believed that “through studying children, adults could gain a deeper understanding of their own lives as well as those of their children.”³

- Staff facilitate and guide parents' understanding of their children.
- We recognise the inherent good in each parent and use this as a starting point in building relationships.
- Staff listen carefully to parents and respond to their concerns.
- We start where each family is at that moment.
- We celebrate each family's achievements from their own individual starting points at the time of personal success.
- Staff commit to reflective practice and further study.



Froebel in action for staff

Freedom with guidance:

*"Freedom is not about just removing barriers, it requires opportunity and encouragement."*³

- We all have some autonomy within our roles, with guidance given where and when required.
- We are supported through the use of coaching skills to consider and understand the consequences of our actions and the feelings of others.

Unity, connectedness and community:

*"The community is enriched by the diversity and uniqueness of individuals."*³

- We listen with respect and genuine interest.
- Every interaction is the opportunity to connect.
- We recognise and honour differences.
- We challenge prejudice and bias.

Engaging with nature:

*"Experience of nature is central to Froebelian practice."*³

- We observe nature closely, marvelling in its beauty.
- We demonstrate a joyful and curious approach to nature.
- We seek ways to ensure Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre can become more ecologically sustainable.





Learning through self-activity and reflection:

"A seed of understanding if nourished with rich experience will grow over time."³

- We wonder and ponder and reflect.
- We discuss and debate.
- We see mistakes as opportunities to learn.

The central importance of play:

"For Froebel play was part of being human and of being fully alive."³

- We play.
- We try out new ideas.
- We adapt to meet the needs of others.

Creativity and the power of symbols:

Creativity allows humans to connect their inner worlds of feelings and ideas and their outer world of things and experiences and to reflect on them both.³

- We are supported to take responsibility for and understand our own wellbeing.
- We express our feelings and ideas in appropriate ways.

Knowledgeable and nurturing educators:

"I wanted to educate people to be free, to think, to take action for themselves."¹

- We start from where the learner is at that moment.
- We recognise the inherent good in each other and use this as a starting point in building relationships.
- We celebrate each other's achievements.
- We commit to reflective practice and further study.



References:

- ¹ Lilley, I. (1967) *Friedrich Froebel A selection from his writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- ² Froebel Trust pamphlet *Froebel's Principles and Practice Today*.
- ³ Tovey, H. (2020) *Froebel's Principles and Practice Today*. London: Froebel Trust.
- ⁴ Froebel, F (1885) *The Education of Man*, translated by J. Jarvis. New York: A. Lovell & Co.



If you would like to know more about us please get in touch. We welcome visitors. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram via our websites:

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