

A circular inset image showing a dirt road winding through a forest. The trees are covered in autumn foliage, with warm sunlight filtering through the canopy, creating a hazy, golden atmosphere. The road is unpaved and leads into the distance.

Tirk

Froebel Family

holistic exploring well-being woodwork baking culture protection sharing learning clay development independence outdoors beauty connected knowledge potential development

unity growth gifts sharing class songs unity creativity pedagogy nature holistic falkirk central woodwork creativity clay independence real experiences gardening gifts unity nature songs discover independent garden pedagogical work explor cent

life skills unity sharing baking growth gifts sharing class songs unity creativity pedagogy nature holistic falkirk central woodwork creativity clay independence real experiences gardening gifts unity nature songs discover independent garden pedagogical work explor cent

learning block play discovering falkirk freobelians creativity unity independence clay nature songs falkirk unity nature songs discover independent garden pedagogical work explor cent

mother songs holistic pedagogy block play discovering falkirk freobelians creativity unity independence clay nature songs falkirk unity nature songs discover independent garden pedagogical work explor cent

Peak Early Years Pedagogy

The word cloud features the following terms:

- Top Peak:** Innovate
- Left Slope:** Learn, Quality, Teamwork, Innovation, Inspire, Impact, Contribution, Learning, Improve, Engage, Change, Unique, Children, Families, Equity and Excellence, Impact, Innovation, Inspire, Impact, Contribution, Learning, Improve, Engage, Change, Unique, Children, Families, Equity and Excellence
- Right Slope:** Impact, Innovation, Inspire, Impact, Contribution, Learning, Improve, Engage, Change, Unique, Children, Families, Equity and Excellence
- Base:** Families, Children, Equity and Excellence

Who's involved:

Donna Green: Froebelian Lead: Overall project Lead



Alison Clark: Researcher: Workshops – Advisory Role



Settings Leading project in ELC setting

Sam Hill and Sarah Finlay



Children, Staff team and families



Pre Summer 2021

This was our children's experiences of nature at this time.

Children only able to access one outdoor space due to bubbles

Nature visits not allowed due to Covid restrictions

Previous outdoor visits were for half a day

Children's autonomy restricted as they had to return to nursery for lunch

Children could access nature in front garden, but only one bubble could access this.

Children in front garden were not able to engage in slow experiences due to staffing and numbers etc.

Our Slow Pedagogy Journey Begins

In August 2021 at in-service training , the staff team watched the following webinar and read the following Chapter.

Chapter 9 'Towards a listening ECEC system' pp.134-150 in *Transforming Early Childhood in England*, edited by Claire Cameron and Peter Moss.

<https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/128464>

Froebel Trust Conference: Webinar 2021: Growing through play (06.03.2021)

Slow Knowledge and the Unhurried Child: Time for Slow Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education.

Speaker: Alison Clark (University of South-East Norway)

<https://www.froebel.org.uk/training-and-resources/webinars-and-short-films>

Our Slow pedagogy shared vision

We created a shared statement:

Slow Pedagogy is the practice of understanding children's need to engross themselves in their individual interests, without the constraints of time and space. This is the way in which practitioners do not unnecessarily interrupt a child's exploration with their own agenda and attempt to rush a learning experience. Instead, we must observe and be present with the child in the moment, understanding that through deep engagement, a child is able to develop and accomplish their learning needs, at a pace which is individual to them. We can assist with this by providing open ended materials, with which the child can choose to support their play and we must listen to the child intensively. Froebel recognised the need for children to have freedom to explore the world around them and so too must we trust the agency of the child to unravel their aspirations and needs in their own way and in their own time.



As we commenced our journey, we considered what slow pedagogy meant for us and composed a shared statement.

We Consulted with our Parents to connect with our families

Parental consultation - Nature questionnaire

"The child who has cared for another living thing is easily led to care for his own life. The care of plants will also satisfy his desire to watch living creatures, for he will see birds and butterflies and beetles coming nearby" (Froebel).

Dear parents, we extremely value our nursery families and your knowledge of your children and local community. As a Nursery, we adopt a Froebelian approach and therefore we value the importance of nature within the lives of our little people. We are looking to gather some information to further support our delivery of nature opportunities and hope that you will be able to answer some questions to help us understand our nursery children's pre-existing experiences. We would very much appreciate any information or advice that you are able to give.

1. Please tell us your child's name:

2. How often does your child access the outdoors?

☐ rarely

☐ once a week

☐ more than a once week

☐ Most days

3. Where would you recommend locally as a good outdoor natural environment to visit?

1/10/2022

4. What do you think being in nature means for your child? (Do they enjoy being outdoors? How do you think they feel?)

5. Do you have access to a garden at home?

☐ Yes

☐ No

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Microsoft Forms

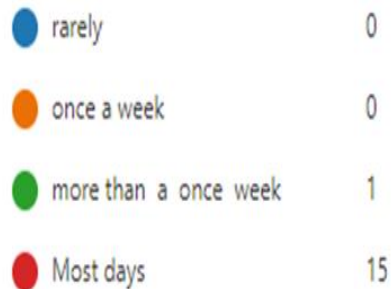
This helped us to begin planning the project. We considered our children's existing experiences of nature and which nature community locations were important to them.

What did our families tell us: Children's experiences of outdoor space and nature

2. How often does your child access the outdoors?

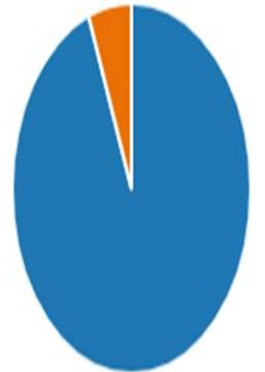
[More Details](#)

 Insights



5. Do you have access to a garden at home?

[More Details](#)



Families told us where they like to visit in their community



A word cloud of community locations. The word 'Park' is the largest and most central. Other words are arranged around it in various sizes and orientations. The words include: House woods, camelon, bantaskin Estate, public Park, Callendar Park, Sommerford Woods, Dollar park, Park & Helix muiravonside park, Callander Park, children, bowling club, Summerford, canal, woods, summford park, walled garden, dollar/ Callander, and Park/House.

House woods camelon bantaskin Estate
public Park Callendar Park Park & Helix muiravonside park
Sommerford Woods Dollar park **Park** Callander Park children
bowling club Summerford canal woods summford park
walled garden dollar/ Callander Park/House

We asked the ELC families "What do you think being in nature means for your child?"

He loves it and I think it's really important to be in touch with nature

They feel most happy when outdoors

Yeah, Sophie loves being outdoors , happy

Happy and excited, she loves to do a nature treasure hunt and explore her surroundings and finding animals

Loves being outdoors. Exploring, finding new things, helps her speech and language

E loves being outdoors, I think she feels happy and relaxed

We asked the ELC families "what do you think being in nature means for your child?"

It's extremely important, it gives her an understanding of the world around her, gives her the freedom to take risks and be independent and provides so much learning. Elsie must prefer being outside when possible.

Learning the outdoors makes them more aware and understanding of wildlife habitats and how to play or engage with all types of surroundings. I think they enjoy the outdoors.

Being outdoors definitely reduces stress. We visit country parks at least one per week (Muiravonside, Beecraigs or Plean usually) and head to the beach whenever we have a dry day at the weekend. B enjoys helping in the garden, pulling weeds and watering our plants and vegetables

D loves being outside, she loves exploring new places and searching for bugs and plants. I think the outdoors makes her feel calm

Through the Froebelian lens....

"The plants light, warmth, soil, moisture, dew, rain, climate and seasons, are the child's spiritual and intellectual atmosphere, life, philosophy, and actions of his environment"

(Froebel as cited in Liebschner, 1992, p39).

We commenced our slow pedagogy project with Froebelian ethos as our guide to children's experience of nature





Froebel advocates for strong community links for our children. We began by building links with our school gardener.

Our wonderful gardener within the Primary School. Margaret has helped us to learn about what to plant and when and is a wealth of knowledge for our children and staff members within our nursery community. She has been essential to our implementation of Slow Pedagogy within nature and has been an invaluable community link

Cyrenians

This is a charity based at Dollar Park who are responsible for the maintenance of the garden. The children have made connections and links and planted some flowers in the garden.

Our families told us that Dollar Park was important to them. Prior to our first full day in Dollar Park, we made connections to nature personnel there.





Dollar Park: Our first full day... we organised packed lunches for our children, ensured access to toilet facilities and commenced our journey without a set agenda!

Our Children's perceptions: children's reflections from our first full day at Dollar Park.

"I Love
Dollar Park"
L



"I can't believe
we are having
lunch here" J



"Can we ask Laura
(Cyrians
employee) what
these jaggies are?
They are green!" E



Dollar Park
"This tree feels funny,
smooth and lumpy. "look,
look, this branch
has wee green bits on
the back. There are so many
of them. Are they seeds? F



Look how high
the tree is – if
we go to the top
we will see my
grandpa. He is in
the sky now" S



As Practitioners, we were beginning to understand how these experiences of slow pedagogy in nature linked to Froebelian Principles. We drew upon our observations from Dollar Park and took time to reflect and make connections how these link to our Froebelian Principles. The Poster from the Froebel Trust enabled great descriptors to support.



Froebelian principles

Unity and connectedness

Everything in the universe is connected. The more one is aware of this unity, the deeper the understanding of oneself, others, nature and the wider world. Children are whole beings whose thoughts, feelings and actions are interrelated. Young children learn in a holistic way and learning should never be compartmentalised for everything links.



Autonomous learners

Each child is unique and what children can do rather than what they cannot, is the starting point for a child's learning. Children learn best by doing things for themselves and from becoming more aware of their own learning. Froebelian educators respect children for who they are and value them for their efforts. Helping children to reflect is a key feature of a Froebelian education.

The value of childhood in its own right

Childhood is not merely a preparation for the next stage in learning. Learning begins at birth and continues throughout life.

Relationships matter

The relationships of every child with themselves, their parents, carers, family and wider community are valued. Relationships are of central importance in a child's life.

froebel.org.uk

Creativity and the power of symbols

Creativity is about children representing their own ideas in their own way, supported by a nurturing environment and people. As children begin to use and make symbols they express their inner thoughts and ideas and make meaning. Over time, literal reflections of everyday life, community and culture become more abstract and nuanced.

The central importance of play

Play is part of being human and helps children to relate their inner worlds of feelings, ideas and lived experiences taking them to new levels of thinking, feeling, imagining and creating and is a resource for the future. Children have ownership of their play. Froebelian education values the contribution of adults offering 'freedom with guidance' to enrich play as a learning context.

Engaging with nature

Experience and understanding of nature and our place in it, is an essential aspect of Froebelian practice. Through real life experiences, children learn about the interrelationship of all living things. This helps them to think about the bigger questions of the environment, sustainability and climate change.

Knowledgeable, nurturing educators

Early childhood educators who engage in their own learning and believe in principled and reflective practice are a key aspect of a Froebelian approach. Froebelian educators facilitate and guide, rather than instruct. They provide rich real life experiences and observe children carefully, supporting and extending their interests through 'freedom with guidance'.





We began to connect policies and guidance to our experiences and learning.

“Leisure, play and culture) Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities”. (UNCRC, 1989, article 31).



My World Outdoors tells us "Being outdoors has risks. The diversity of outdoor environments and the risks that come with them offer excitement and challenge for children and young people". (Care Inspectorate, 2016, p16)



Out to Play tells us
“Outdoor settings offer
an important provision in
today's culture enabling
children to explore the
natural environment,
climbing trees, building
dens and engaging with
natural materials”.
(Scottish Government,
2020, section 6).

“We know how important it is for children to be given time to play throughout the day to follow their own line of enquiry or individual interest” (Realising the Ambition, 2020, p44).

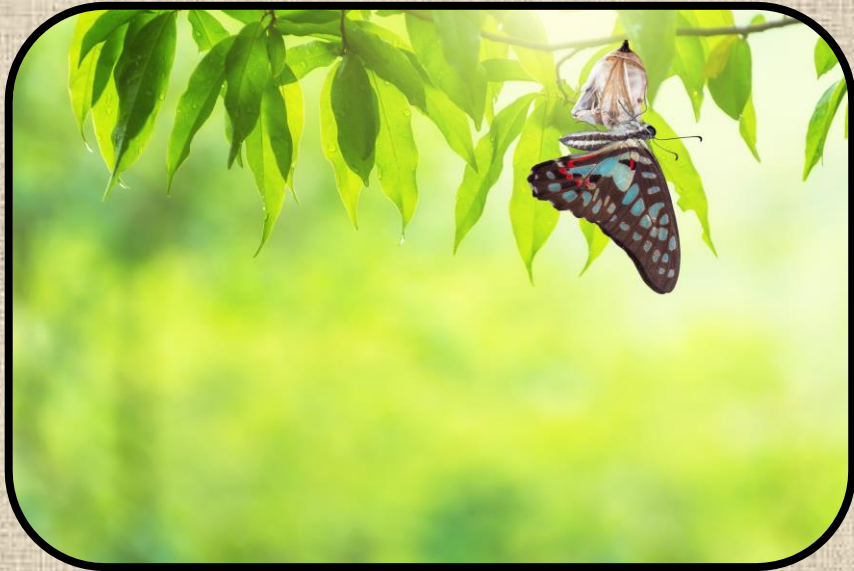


Time is not
“filled” but is
freed from all
unnecessary
interruptions”
(Tovey, 2017,p42)



Our time at
Dollar Park
showed us just
how much
children
benefit to have
the freedom to
explore at
their own
pace!

Practitioner Reflections from Dollar Park



In this instance, both attending practitioners felt more relaxed and attuned without the restriction of 'time'. One practitioner commented that she no longer felt the need to go through a list of activities, including snack, within a short time scale. Another observation was that we felt more able to go into breakout groups where some children were able to remain at our tree swing, whilst others requested to look at the 'big trees'. Another initial observation was that the children required time to explore, then to return to this exploration numerous times throughout the day. An example of this was the trees in the park. The children initially noted their size, their differences, the 'big jaggies' that fell from them etc. With the entire day there, the children could explore this natural aspect in its entirety, following different lines of enquiry along the way. This perhaps illustrated the depth of exploration that the children were able to achieve in this unhurried experience.

The Falkirk Wheel

Next steps...

Our Families told us that the Falkirk Wheel was important to them. This was the next step in our slow pedagogy journey. As we had never been there before, one of our practitioners was able to plan our initial adventure to this local landmark!





As we began to make more connections how the children's experiences linked with the Froebelian Principles, our observations gained greater depth and meaning. Here we have captured a detailed observations of a child's day at the Falkirk Wheel to inform us what matters to individual children in nature.



What
matters
to me



Dear C,

Today we went to the Falkirk Wheel. We changed the days we normally go for our full day outing as you told me you would really like to come and had "never been there before". As we walked along the canal you pointed to a canal boat and stated, "pirate ship" and your friend suggested that there might be hidden treasure on the boat. As we walked further along, I learned that you already know the names of lots of different birds. "Look there are three magpies!" you were right C, you correctly counted the number of magpies and we then marked this up on our bird watch sheet. You were able to ask me for the binoculars to gain a deeper knowledge of the birds, "they are black, blue and white!". At the wheel we went into the woods to explore what was there. "Can I run around?" you asked.

We discussed how to keep safe and that it was important for the ladies to be able to see you and for you to see the ladies in order to make sure we could look after each other. You began to explore and pointed out that there might be buried treasure in the woods. You used a large stick to look for treasure and found "a bit of silver" screw and a "golden" Christmas decoration. We decided that we should take these back to nursery to show our friends. It was lovely to spend the day with you C and to explore on our adventure together.

Love from x

ENGAGING WITH NATURE

"Experience and understanding of nature and our place in it, is an essential aspect of Froebelian practice. Through real life experiences, children learn about the interrelationship of all living things. This helps them to think about the bigger questions of the environment, sustainability and climate change" (Froebel Trust Principles: npn).



C, you engaged with the natural world around you through your exploration of the birds in our environment. You deepened your own knowledge and built upon your existing knowledge.

Theorists aNgata and Liehr put forward that humans have an unconditional love and "affinity with l natural space called biophilia" (Nagata, Liehr, 2021, p174) and that this begins in childhood.

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

"Relationships of every child with themselves, their parents, carers, family, educators and wider community are valued. Relationships are of central importance in a child's life" (Froebel Trust Principles: npn).



C, it was lovely to spend the day together! We were able to connect over your love of birds, discuss how we could search for hidden treasure and consider how we can stay safe and look after each other in the woodland environment. Afterwards, you approached me in nursery to cuddle up and discuss our day together further.

Rantala and Punaka (2020) discuss the reciprocal relationship children have with nature as they alter each other in some way. If we consider how children interact with nature, we can begin to view this in actuality.

Dear S, today you helped to plan our day to the Falkirk Wheel. We looked at pictures of the places we could visit today, and you selected the Falkirk Wheel as you wanted to "see all the boats". You walked along the canal and exclaimed "waterfall!!". We discussed how this was lock and a way for the boats to travel from one level to another. Next, you spotted "loads of swans!". You immediately connected these to our stick man story S and we began to re-tell the story using a real stick you collected from the canal side. You were able to tell me that the Stick Man goes into the swans nest. Later, we watched the canal boats going on the wheel and turning round and you asked if we could walk up higher to see where the boat was going. Once we returned to nursery you wanted to read the Stick Man story and you shared this with your friends, telling them that we had seen "real swans" along the way. Thanks for such a lovely day together S 😊



We know how important it is for children to be given time to play throughout the day to follow their own line of enquiry or individual interest (Realising the Ambition, 2020, p44)

UNITY & CONNECTEDNESS

“Everything in the universe is connected. The more one is aware of this unity, the deeper the understanding of oneself, others, nature and the wider world. Children are whole beings whose thoughts, feelings and actions are interrelated. Young children learn in a holistic way and learning should never be compartmentalised for everything links” (Froebel Trust Principles: npn).

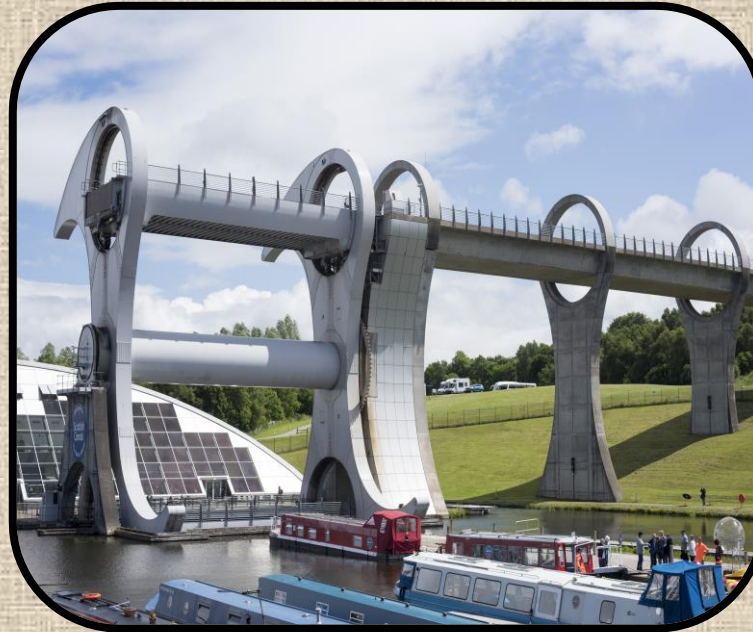


S, you showed me how you were able to connect the real-life swans to the narratives we had been exploring within the nursery. You were able to use your connections to inform your friends in the nursery about our day and shared this through your love of the stick man story.

Children have their own private relationship with nature (Herdyke, Dalude and Schem, 2015).

KNOWLEDGEABLE AND NURTURING EDUCATORS

“Early childhood educators who engage in their own learning and believe in principled and reflective practice are a key aspect of a Froebelian approach. Froebelian educators facilitate and guide, rather than instruct. They provide rich real-life experiences and observe children carefully, supporting and extending their interests through ‘freedom with guidance’ (Froebel Trust Principles: npn) .



S, you were interested in the water and the boats on the canal. We were able to discuss how the boats move from one level of the canal to another. We thought about how the engineering of the Falkirk Wheel works in actuality.

Expanding
experiences

Summerford Woods



Our families told us that Summerford woods was important to them and their children's experiences of nature. This location is also very close to the nursery, which was beneficial for introducing new children to our nature visits and found this to be beneficial to many children and inclusive.



Dear K,

Today we visited Summerford Woods together. This was your first time at the woods with the nursery and I felt that you enjoyed visiting the woods with us K, you also choose to spend time outdoors when you are at nursery.

To help us understand how you are feeling K we were careful to choose an area which was close by which meant we could come back to nursery if you were unsure. However, you showed us that you loved being in the woodland area! You smiled, laughed and cheered as you ran through the leaves and jumped over logs. You were interested in the natural items around us. You brought me a leaf to look at. I named this as "brown leaf" you repeated the word "leaf" back to me K and I was so proud of you. You were also very keen to explore the trees around us and climbed these shouting "jump" as you came down. I can't wait to go back to the woods with you very soon K, thanks for sharing your joy with me.

Love from Mrs Hill.

THE VALUE OF CHILDHOOD IN ITS OWN RIGHT

“Childhood is not merely a preparation for the next stage in learning. Learning begins at birth and continues throughout life” (Froebel Trust Principles: npn).

Realising the Ambition states that through play a child “develops their cognitive, social, emotional and physical capacities” (Scottish Government , 2020, p44).



How you were able to exert full autonomy in the woods and explore the natural world at a pace which was right for you. You were able to revisit your interests through this unhurried experience.

THE CENTRAL IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

“Play is part of being human and helps children to relate their inner worlds of feelings, ideas and lived experiences taking them to new levels of thinking, feeling, imagining and creating and is a resource for the future. Children have ownership of their play. Froebelian education values the contribution of adults offering ‘freedom with guidance’ to enrich play as a learning context” (Froebel Trust Principles; npn).



Today in the woods, you were able to wallow in your play K. You followed your own agenda and revisited your interests in the trees and natural items around you. You were able to explore the full range of your physicality as you ran and jumped through woods.



How did we
record and
share our
experiences?

We have begun to introduce a slow pedagogy in nursery which basically means a slower approach where we're not rushing our learners and setting their agenda. Learners are being offered much more choice and fuller days when we're out visiting the community. Our main focus for this initiative is for the children to spend full days on their visits to places such as the Falkirk Wheel, Dollar Park and Summerford Woods which has already proved very beneficial to staff and children.

Children are being granted more time to slow down and explore their full interests further as they have the time and space to do so as they immerse themselves in nature. Children are connecting their learning outdoors to their experiences back in nursery or in their home lives. One child compared the swan on the canal to the one in the Stickman story. Some children have been going along the canal singing 'We're going on a bear hunt' - bringing the story alive.

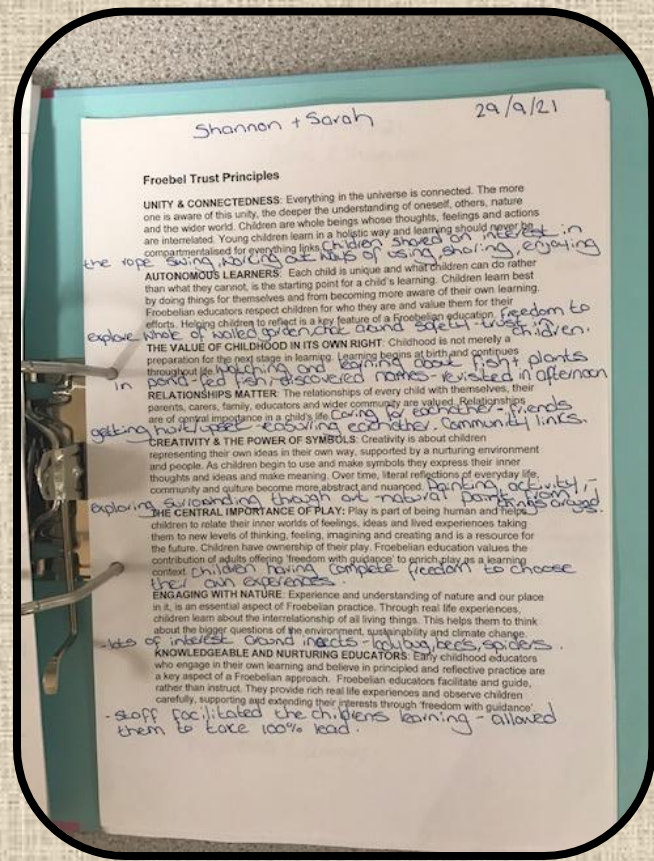
Connecting with parents

We updated and informed parents through our newsletter. This helped to explain our slow pedagogical approach and how this had impacted our nursery community.

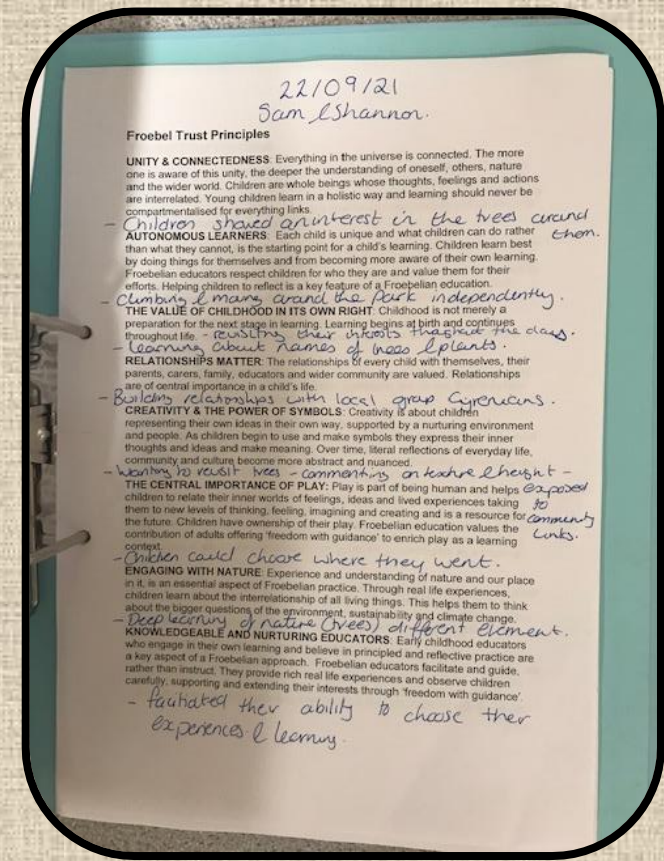
Getting it Right for every child states "it is about children, young people, parents, and the services they need working together in a coordinated way to meet the specific needs and improve their wellbeing" (Scottish Government, 2006).



Our display wall – practitioner and children's findings: Making our Project Visible



We used Froebelian Principles to guide our post outing reflections and observations.



Reflective thought – connecting with Froebel



As the project progressed, practitioner reflected on the remaining three key research questions.

Question 2: Our understanding of what slow pedagogy practice looks like, through nature at Bantaskin ELC

Practitioner reflections:

- Freedom to return to and revisit their prior learning.
- Children are able to direct their own learning through exploration and personal space.
- Children use their senses to explore the natural world and are able to create their own wonder and curiosity.
- Adult's presence is enhanced, without themselves feeling rushed.
- Children are given time and space to explore at their own pace.

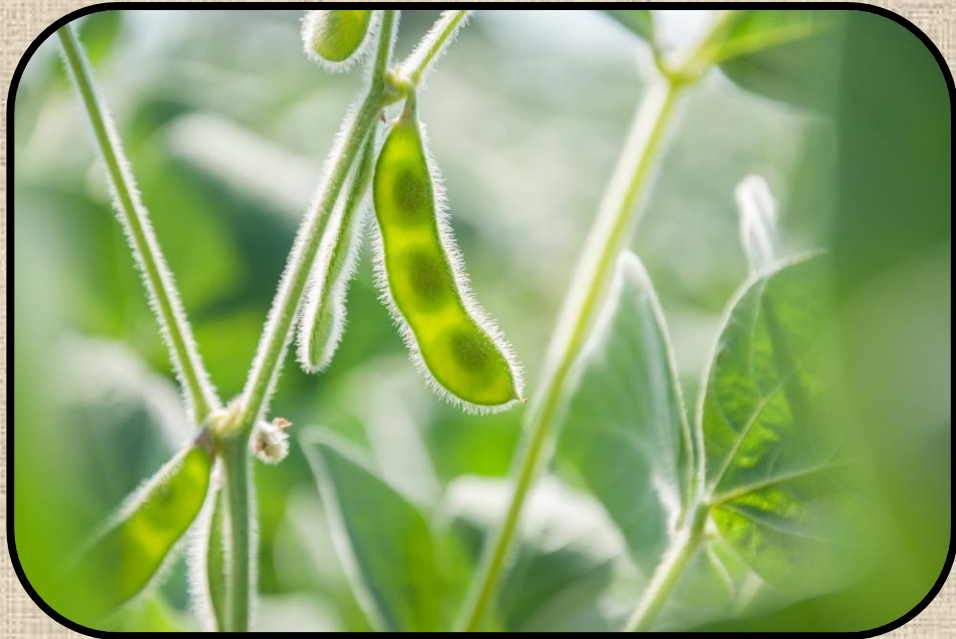
Q3. In what ways do children in your setting have the freedom to decide how, where and when to spend their time?

Practitioner's reflections:

- The nursery is free flow and children can choose whether to be indoors or outdoors at all times.
- Children can choose to have lunch either indoors or outdoors.
- Children can choose which of the three options they would like for out full day outings.
- The children's interests are focused on as part of the slow pedagogy implementation.



Q4. From observing and reflecting on your Froebelian principled practice, in what way does this connect to slow pedagogy?



Practitioner's reflections:

This is directly related to slow pedagogy as they both recognise children's agency. Both attune to the child to make their "inner outer".

Both allow children to experience the world at their own pace.

In both practices, the role of the adult is to not interfere.

In both we acknowledge the importance of nature.

Slow Pedagogy and The therapeutic space of nature

We deepened our understanding of nature immersion

Theorists Nagata and Liehr put forward that humans have an unconditional love and “affinity with natural space called biophilia” (Nagata, Liehr, 2021, p174) and that this begins in childhood.

Children can release difficult emotions in nature – physically verbally and even internally. These emotions are contained safely here (Hordyke, Dulude and Shem, 2015).



Rantala and Punaka (2020), discuss the reciprocal relationship children have with nature as they alter each other in some way. If we consider how children interact with nature, we can begin to view this in actuality.



Nature holds a therapeutic space for difficult emotions. A “healing space” (Bruce, 2012, p63)

Nature has no expectations. It is a space where children can “release themselves physically and emotionally to the hold of the natural world”

(Herdyke, Dalude and Shem, 2015, p572).

Children have their own private relationship with nature.

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Kaltura+Capture+recording+-+March+3rd+2021%2C+7A30A14+pm/1_aopheuqu

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