

A photograph of four children playing outdoors in the rain. A boy in a black raincoat is in the center with his arms outstretched. To his left, a girl in a red raincoat is also playing. To his right, another child in a red raincoat is seen from the back. On the far right, a boy in a blue raincoat stands looking towards the camera. They are in a grassy area with trees and a blue wooden structure in the background.

Froebel Trust Policy Brief

The greatest expansion in England’s early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector is underway. More skilled educators are urgently needed to ensure young children’s development and learning are supported and nurtured.

The Froebel Trust is working to address this problem - offering high quality Froebelian training, practical courses and free resources to educators working in schools and early years settings.

Children need knowledgeable, nurturing educators in their early years settings

Private group based ECEC providers experienced a turnover of 19% of their staff in 2023 (with 38% of those reporting that they were leaving the education and childcare sector altogether).¹

Low pay levels are undoubtedly a major cause of this turnover and loss of staff from the ECEC sector - but educators and early years leaders also tell us that they struggle to retain staff when staff lack a “sense of belonging”, few opportunities for career progression or little access to meaningful training and support.

“...with all the schemes of work, with all the expectations on teachers, with the workload, you forget the reason why you’ve come into education - you forget why you’re here...”

Jessica Holme, Reception and Nursery Teacher

Froebel training gives educators purpose, greater understanding and renews their commitment to early childhood education. It motivates and empowers educators to stay in the profession.

¹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/childcare-and-early-years-provider-survey>

High quality training helps retain educators

Access to high quality training for early years educators is too often limited due to lack of time and training budgets in schools and settings. However, investment in training can be cost-effective when it effectively reduces staff turnover.

“After Froebel training, the feedback I had from some of my most experienced teachers was, ‘This was life-changing for me in terms of professional understanding and professional practice.’ It’s been by far the best training they’ve ever been on...”

Sam Jones, Headteacher, Tremorfa Nursery School

We need educators to want to stay in their jobs

The Froebel Trust Short Courses are led by Dr Stella Louis (Trainer of the Year at the Nursery World Awards 2023). The courses were developed by Professor Tina Bruce, world leading Froebelian educator.

These courses are for everyone who works with babies and young children – regardless of their level of experience or prior qualification. ²

The Froebel Trust is seeing a growing number of educators from across the UK self-funding their training in the evenings, after working hours. These educators are actively seeking development and are drawn to a Froebelian approach to give meaning and value to their work with children.

Sally Cave is Headteacher at Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre in Surrey. Over the last 3 years she has supported all her staff to complete the series of Froebel Trust Short Courses. The nursery has gone on to adopt a Froebelian approach in all aspects of their work with children and families.

Since beginning the Froebelian training programme at the nursery school, there have been no staff absences due to work-related stress.



Learning and experimenting through play needs to be kept at the heart of early childhood education

Children need inclusive schools which allow them to learn through play – and educators who know how to observe and effectively support young children’s play.

Research by Professor Kate Hoskins ³ (Brunel University) in 2018 found that educators reported the following reasons for the declining amount of play in their schools and settings:

- Lack of time and space for play
- Policy context that marginalises play
- ‘Schoolification’ of early years education (too much emphasis on testing and targets)
- Differences in parental understanding of the value of play for young children and babies.

“Only 52.7% of Ofsted reports mention play in the section on quality of teaching, learning and assessment.”

Data from “What makes an outstanding nursery?” 2023 research by Dr Susana Castro-Kemp ⁴ (UCL)

² Watch a Froebel Trust short film and see the courses in action at froebel.org.uk/training-and-resources/short-courses

³ froebel.org.uk/research-library/enacting-froebelian-principles-in-practice

⁴ froebel.org.uk/research-library/froebel-meets-ofsted-what-makes-an-outstanding-nursery

Educators need training which focuses on the power of play in early learning

Over 96% of educators who complete Froebel Trust Short Courses report that the training improves their knowledge, understanding and/or ability to observe, support and extend learning through play.

“Play is an integrating mechanism which brings together everything the child has been learning, knows and understands. It is rooted in real experience that it processes and explores ..”

Professor Tina Bruce

In Wales, the new Curriculum for Wales aligns closely with a Froebelian approach ⁵ which has resulted in government grants for educators to complete Froebelian training. The team of educators at Ely and Caerau Children's Centre (Cardiff's only Integrated Children's Centre) used a local authority grant to start the Froebel Trust Short Courses in 2023.

The centre is located in an area which is listed within the 10% most deprived in terms of Income, Education and Community Safety. Watch a short film about the difference Froebelian practice has made to educators at the centre and to the children and families they work with:

froebel.org.uk/case-studies/becoming-a-froebelian-setting



Educators' training needs are not being sufficiently supported in the current ECEC system

The Froebel Trust has provided over 1,500 training places for educators in just the past year and given out over £150,000 in early years training bursaries in the UK.

Demand from early years settings and schools is increasing.

“The Froebel courses have further strengthened my belief in the importance of early childhood and how to support the child's educational development and more...”

Educator, self-funded participant on the Froebel Online Course 2023

“The Froebel Trust Short Courses have improved our practice, shaped our environment and our staff teams. They have inspired us to learn more, know more and do more!”

Holli Williams, Head of Schools, Linden Tree Nursery Schools

⁵ froebel.org.uk/research-library/exploring-froebelian-principles-as-a-vehicle-for-curriculum-reform

Recommendations for policy makers and sector leaders

- Too many educators working in the early years feel undervalued and unsupported. This is not just about pay levels. Access to high quality training helps to retain and motivate staff in early years settings.
- Primary school, Reception and KS1 teachers need training specifically in early childhood education; to improve their confidence in and understanding of the value of learning through play in school settings.
- Educators need access to both in-person and online training. It is crucial that any online training is 'live' and interactive for it to be effective and worthwhile.
- Small training groups help to create (and sustain) local grassroots networks of educators. These local or regional networks of educators further develop and share knowledge about early childhood education across settings and local areas.

What the Froebel Trust can offer

Reach: The Froebel Trust has a network of over 5,000 educators working in early years settings across the UK. This is an engaged, informed and active group of educators. Our free Continuing Professional Development (CPD) evening webinars and Saturday conferences regularly attract over 2,000 educators.

Expertise: The Froebel Trust access to and connections with school/ setting leaders, professors, academics and researchers specialising in a Froebelian approach to early childhood education – all working in settings/ schools/ universities or are involved in Early years educator training across the UK now.

Resources: The Froebel Trust produces a diverse range of free resources, guides, podcasts and films for educators seeking free CPD materials and information. These are all free to download and share at froebel.org.uk

Training: The Froebel Trust Short Courses have been running for over 7 years. They can be delivered in any setting or school – or online. The Trust has 27 Travelling Tutors, led by Dr Stella Louis, supporting educators across the UK.

The Froebel Trust is a grant making charity which funds research into children's learning from birth to eight years and supports high quality early childhood education.

Find out more about our work at froebel.org.uk

Dr Sacha Powell, CEO of the Froebel Trust and Dr Stella Louis, Lead Tutor of the Froebel Trust Short Courses would be delighted to meet with you and expand on this policy brief. Email: office@froebeltrust.org.uk



What is a Froebelian approach?

Froebel was the inventor of kindergarten. A Froebelian approach to early childhood education has a focus on play, children's connections with the natural world, respectful pedagogy, nurturing relationships and the role of knowledgeable, skilled educators.

- A Froebelian approach is already at the heart of the best of mainstream practice in early years settings.
- Educators use a Froebelian approach to provide inspiring learning experiences for young children, supporting all national curriculum frameworks.
- It's an inclusive approach which recognises the unique child (no matter their starting point).
- Any educator – whatever their age, experience or level of qualifications – can access and benefit from Froebelian training.

Find out more at froebel.org.uk