Froebel did not support the idea of ‘Froebel schools’. However, he embraced the idea of staff in schools setting out on a Froebelian journey into how best to educate children and to enhance family and community life. The examples which follow demonstrate this approach according to what is appropriate in their physical and cultural settings.

Franciska Bayliss, head of the Froebel Demonstration School, Ibstock Place

Franciska Bayliss was appointed as the head teacher of Ibstock Place School in 1984, which until her retirement in 2000 continued its proud tradition of being influenced by Froebelian principles. Since then the school has been independent of its Froebelian past. She succeeded Kay Davies who was the deeply respected Principal of Wall Hall College and was Chair of the National Froebel Foundation (NFF) until 2012 when it amalgamated with the Froebel Trust and is a Trustee of the Froebel Trust.

Since retiring from the school she has worked as an educational advisor for a group with twenty independent schools and colleges mainly in London. She also runs MTC, an educational consultancy assisting children moving from maintained state schools to access business and scholarships in the private and independent sector. She is an ISI inspector of private schools in England and abroad.

Chris Athey, research fellow of the Froebel Nursery Research School

The school was the vision of the Principal Molly Brearley (see Chapter 31) and Dame Joyce Bishop, Chair of the Froebel College Governing Body. They were committed to the restoration of a free school attached to the College, which had been achieved for a short period when Esther Lawrence was Principal. Chris Athey was appointed Research Fellow in 1972 and Tina Bruce as Head in 1974. Students from the College did their teaching practice in the school. Two strands were explored arising from the findings of the Head Start studies. Having a philosophically coherent philosophy and programme was important, and so was partnership with
parents. Children ranged from 2 to 5 years, and baby siblings were invited too with their parents attending. The children scored low on a barrage of tests, but by the age of primary school entry (5 years and a term) their performance had become impressive in the gains made. Positive links were made with the receiving schools. Chris Athey pioneered work on schemas, requiring observations of children and action in the light of these on the part of practitioners and parents (Athey, 1990). The work became embedded in government documents in England and is used by practitioners in different countries (e.g. New Zealand, India, South Africa). There is now a Chris Athey Collection in the Froebel Archive (see Chapter 3).

Lynne Bartholomew, Redford House Workplace Nursery

In 1989, FEI-trained Lynne Bartholomew was appointed Head of the workplace nursery shared between the four colleges of the Roehampton Institute of Higher Education and the Queen Mary Hospital (QMH). Based in the old stable grounds of the Froebel College, it was named Redford House after the Principal who worked with great commitment with Tina Bruce and Wendy Rockhill (QMH) to establish it for the children of staff and students.

Lynne lectured one day a week, teaching students specialising in early childhood studies. She published with colleagues (Bartholomew, 1985, 1996; Bartholomew and Bruce, 1994,) while fully participating in her lecturing commitments.

The work that Lynne pioneered at Redford House will be placed in the Froebel Archives. The nursery became central in disseminating the schema work of Chris Athey. The Redford House children were part of the BBC film and accompanying book, *Tuning into Children*, written by Tina Bruce. The work achieved international recognition (Bartholomew and Gustafsson, 1997) with regular visitors sent by the British Council. Vivian Gussin Paley spent a day working with the children because she enjoyed being there so much.

Lynne deeply valued her staff, promoting June Byne to be her deputy. As part of staff development a book was written on education-orientated record-keeping, something not easily practised in daycare contexts. Tina Bruce acted as scribe for the staff, resulting in a book published in 1994.

Anne Louise de Buriané, Langford School

Anne Louise de Buriané trained at the Froebel Educational Institute and taught in both state and private sectors and overseas. She joined the Langford Primary school in London as an experienced head in 2002. There were no permanent teachers. Over 65% children were on Free School Meals. Many had special needs, including a high percentage who were on the social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) spectrum. The school building was dilapidated and rundown with six classrooms full of broken furniture.

From 2003–2007 a Froebelian approach was introduced. Some staff left because they were not enthusiastic about this. Improved results were recognised by Ofsted inspectors and HMI requested to undertake an orientation inspection to support their work in assessing the way good behaviour and school ethos is approached. The children in this school showed an exemplary approach, without the use of extrinsic rewards, and using the Froebelian traditions of encouraging autonomy and intrinsic motivation as key elements. Linked into the Froebelian ethos was the identification of children and families in difficulty and the appointment of a part time systemic family therapist who began working at Langford weekly. Alongside this a member of staff was appointed full time to be the family and child liaison person.
From 2003 Langford became a Full Service Extended School providing adult education; creche facilities; before-school and after-school care; activities for parents such as cooking, first aid, EFL; plus regular targeted parent and carer courses such as ‘how to play with your child’ and ‘how to read with your child’.

In 2007 Anne Louise de Buriane was approached by the local authority to take over the designated school in the borough for children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). She led the plan, part of which was to be in a position to integrate when possible those children who had been permanently excluded, or via their statement of special educational needs, barred from mixing with mainstream children. The result was the ‘Courtyard’ building which won an architectural award. Ten support staff worked with children in mainstream schools across the Borough based at Langford.

Until she retired in August 2012, she and her by then committed staff continued to work to further develop the Froebelian approach for all the children at Langford, including their families.

Annan The Froebel School, by Mark Hunter and Debby Hunter

The opening statement in the school prospectus (2017) is ‘Our Froebelian ethos is fundamental to everything we do at Annan’. Key elements are the encouragement of intrinsic motivation, so the school does ‘not use extrinsic rewards which are external to the child’. Outdoor learning and Forest School are ‘an integral part of school life for every child at Annan and these along with gardening and other activities develop children’s spirituality through regular opportunities for awe and wonder’. Froebel’s Gifts and Occupations are used in kindergarten and key stages 1 and 2. Partnership with parents has a central place. Children are recognised as individuals and staff use:

informed observation of children to support effective development, learning and teaching. Froebel said “at every stage be that stage” . . . An understanding that a child should be allowed to grow at his own pace and should never be rushed or hurried in his development.

(Annan School Prospectus, 2017)

Everything is based on unity, strives towards and comes back to unity.

(Froebel, 1827 in Lilley, 1967: 35)

Annan the Froebel School is a small independent school founded in 2001 by Mark and Debby Hunter in East Sussex. It has a Froebelian-inspired pedagogy which draws on the concept of unity, where everything is connected and part of the whole. There is the whole child and there is whole experience. The school was established initially as a kindergarten for 3- to 8-year-olds and developed quickly into an all-through primary school for 3- to 11-year-olds.

Froebel’s philosophy of learning underpins the pedagogy at Annan School and we place great importance on active learning and self-activity. Active learning engages and challenges children’s thinking using real-life or imaginary situations. Our Froebelian pedagogy encourages the learner to take initiative, leading the learning with their questions. The teacher’s role is to follow the child’s interests and provide authentic experiences and resources. Quality active learning builds on children’s previous experiences and provides differentiation and challenge. It allows for different learning styles and children’s independence but is supported by teachers who structure the environment and intervene sensitively to extend children’s learning. We refer to this as learning through self-activity. Froebel described self-activity as when children take responsibility for making choices, are respected as central to and active in the learning process.
in which they are engaged, make connections and are involved in self-evaluating and in their
learning. Learning opportunities are therefore meaningful and motivating to children.

Learning is a continuum and everything in a child’s learning is connected. In our Froebelian
setting there are opportunities for first-hand experiences, open-ended play and symbolic repre-
sentation. Children are supported in making connections between different materials, between
ideas and ways of representing them.

Linking different experiences and making sense of the new in relation to what they already
know allows children to deepen their understanding and develop connections in the brain
which in turn enhances their cognitive development.

Annan School uses a topic-based approach to learning. This thematic approach encour-
ages children to see learning experiences as different parts of the whole, to make links and see
connectivity. The topic is planned with the children and follows their interests. It is a dynamic
process which responds to children’s investigations and research as well as giving room for flex-
ibility as the topic develops. Topics last for a whole term (three per year) and this longer dura-
tion creates a community atmosphere, giving children an emotional investment. This linking of
relationships with learning is another vital Froebelian principle. Children learn best when they
are intrinsically motivated and have a high quality relationship with the teacher and other chil-
dren they work with. Following Froebelian philosophy, the school draws upon beliefs about the
interconnectedness, which Froebel termed the Forms of life, beauty and knowledge. These three
Forms run through our provision, bringing in elements of sensory first-hand experience, nature,
music, the arts and all areas of the curriculum. We have developed our own staged approach to
its curriculum pedagogy which is cyclical and sees learning as passing through four stages and
coming back to the whole. This is our way of developing a Froebelian approach to the curricu-
lum, which makes links and connections with different areas of learning through visits, expert
visitors, books, pictures, stories and music ensuring that all links are authentic and not overly
contrived to fit the topic.

Each stage of a topic links to the others, opening up deeper understanding of the whole, offer-
ing a unified experience. We have called the stages Inspire, Discover, Create and Communicate.

Each is a self-contained whole, a seed from which manifold new developments may spring
to cohere in further unity.

(Fromel in Lilley, 1967: 98)

The Inspire Stage ignites the child’s curiosity and imagination with inspirational first-hand
experiences and resources. Children might have the experience of watching a shadow puppet
show, maybe inspiring them to produce shadows and shine light through different materials,
making their own puppets and use light tables to investigate colour through their own ideas. Real
life experiences open up many possibilities for children. Exposing children to the ‘real thing’, to
experts in their field, adults with a deep understanding of the arts, science or who have specific
skills and interests helps children to benefit from a rich, broad and deep education. These deep
creative experiences develop the child’s imagination, and Froebel believed that the imagination,
physical body and emotional mind were all interconnected as part of the whole. The learning
starts where the learner is and takes them forward to see possibilities in the world around them
and in their learning environment.

Children need the right help at the right stage in their learning. ‘That which follows is always
conditioned upon that which goes before’ (Froebel, 1887). The Discover stage is full of ques-
tions children want to find the answers to. ‘The child’s joy in exploration and discovery must
dominate his activity.’ (Froebel in Lilley, 1967: 129). Teachers look in detail at what the children
Schools with a strong Froebelian influence have shown interest in. This will come through observation and making time to hear what children are saying. Then they can be truly in the moment with children and better able to support and challenge a child spontaneously to extend their thinking. This builds on the strengths of the child in the minds of teachers, children and parents. Froebel commented that through the observation of children he discovered so much about the way children learn.


*(Froebel in Lilley, 1967: 125)*

Children need the chance to explore, to try out their ideas, test theories and use their imagination, to play with ideas.

> Play is the highest level of child development. It is the spontaneous expression of thought and feeling – an express which his inner life requires’

*(Froebel in Lilley, 1967: 83)*

Children are valued as competent learners, able to seek out obstacles and overcome them and adults delight with them in their achievements. As Liebschner (1992: 66) points out, ‘Froebel wanted children to have freedom to participate, to choose, to act, to observe, to play and above all be allowed time to absorb new knowledge at their own speed of learning’. Children are offered ‘Freedom with Guidance’ giving a chance to try things out, make mistakes and learn new skills with a more competent child or adult. Freedom with Guidance is crucial for children to truly discover the answers to their questions.

> The child’s aim is to enlarge their range of vision stage by stage . . . To seek out and find the undiscovered, see and know the unseen.

*(Froebel in Lilley, 1967: 126–7)*

Freedom to make choices and work independently also expects a level of responsibility for returning things to the right place, for clearing up any mess made and for returning to order from chaos. Thus, at the end of an activity, children are encouraged to leave it ready for the next person rather than tidy up. This is an important distinction.

> The third stage ‘Create’ is an opportunity to put skills learnt into practice.

Let it alone, he will cry as his father goes to take a log out of his way “I’ll get over it”. When he gets over it by himself, however difficult it may be, he is encouraged by the success and goes back to climb it again; soon he is jumping over it as if there were nothing in his way.

*(Froebel in Lilley, 1967: 125)*

This is where children begin to put to use their knowledge and discoveries, to construct, build, make, design and represent their knowledge. In their work children are representing the three forms of life, beauty and knowledge. Children may be creating using the creative arts, drama, music, making books, writing stories or creating models. There can be imaginative uses of IT for example using photography and animation.

In a recent topic, *Lights, Camera, Action*, children became engrossed in making animations, rising to challenges, solving problems and thinking outside the box. Kindergarten children were inspired by animations older children had made and wanted to create their own using materials.
How do we make it move? How can we make the fairy fly? Bruce (1996) describes creative development as a process which involves making use of experiences stored in the imagination, gathering them together and ‘incubating’ them before they hatch. She says, ‘creative ideas are about being original, and innovative, and rearranging things so that they are different from the ways they were before and making new connections’.

Helping children to grow in self-confidence and in autonomy so that they can develop intellectually is key to the Froebelian model. Through a curriculum based on children’s interests, teachers and children become excited about what they are doing often taking on things which are big and wonderful or rather ambitious arising from small learning encounters or conversations.

The final stage of the pedagogy is to ‘Communicate’ what has been learnt. Children’s work and creations are valued and need to be shared with everyone involved in the learning process; children, teachers, parents. Their work is displayed. Children can be called upon as experts to talk about it, children ‘publish’ their books, show their films and perform in plays. It is an opportunity to present work to parents and others, it allows children to feel that they are experts and answer questions which can help them consolidate their learning. When children’s work is displayed they gain a sense of pride, a sense of connection. It also gives a purpose to the learning.

Whilst recognising that every child is unique we also understand that each child gains from the feeling of being part of a community which values their contribution and which they feel they are a strong part of. Celebrating work together underpins the significance of each child, allowing them to feel listened to, considered, connected, valued and nurtured. The end-of-topic documentation and displays have value – they tell the entire story of the topic. They illustrate the learning of individuals and, more importantly, the learning of the group.

Finally presenting work in the Communicate stage also allows a time for reflection. It allows teachers and children to think about what has been learnt and where this might lead.

The first and weightiest point of education is to lead children early to reflect.

*(Froebel in Herford, 1916: 45)*

This form of metacognition or thinking about your own learning is an important way to conclude the term’s work and allows children to take skills learnt in one topic forward into new learning experiences.