

SHORT FROEBEL COURSES – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The courses are developed and endorsed by The Froebel Trust and delivered in partnership with Early Education.

The short Froebel two day courses are structured in the following way:

- Mandatory 2 day introductory course (element 1)
- 4 optional follow through 2 day courses (elements 2-5)
- Possible maximum of 10 days (elements 1-5). Minimum 2 days (elements 1).

Each two day element is taught locally in settings by two endorsed Froebel tutors working together.

Read on to find out more.

WHY?

The endorsed Froebel travelling tutor short courses developed from requests by leading practitioners in early childhood education to offer short, practically focussed local courses supporting them in understanding, studying and implementing a Froebelian approach to their work in group settings (schools, daycare, playgroups, children centres etc.) and home settings (childminders, parents, grandparents etc.). Practitioners want courses which are locally taught, and they value becoming part of a community of practitioners linked to Froebelian Networks of practice. They do not always want courses which involve written assignments. They value short courses which are aimed at practical implementation of practice and want to understand the practice and place it in a Froebelian framework so that it has inner logic and consistency of approach without being rigid, and so that they know why they practise in particular ways. Practitioners, it was found in the pilot development of the courses, valued taking away ideas and practical tasks from day 1 and trying them out, and returning to revisit them on day 2. It helps to implement the practice with reflective practice.

In summary practitioners want:

- Short courses which help them to think but don't require written work or accreditation
- Practically orientated courses that are taught locally
- Having a chance to try things out and then return to share and discuss Froebelian practices
- To become part of a network of thoughtful practitioners

WHO?

The short Froebel courses integrate practice and thinking about what lies behind it in the Froebelian tradition. They are appropriate for:

- Practitioners (teachers, early childhood practitioners with a variety of qualifications, childminders),
- Interested academics and specialists in related fields (physiotherapy, health visiting, speech and language therapy, play therapy for example)
- Interested parents and grandparents, who might be childminding in the family, on governing bodies or trustees of early childhood organisations.

HOW?

The short courses offered are each of 2 days length, approximately one month apart, with a required practical assignment in between. Family is emphasised throughout each element of the course (elements 1-5) with tangible examples throughout.

- Day one – practical study of an Element
- During a month observing, reflecting and trying out a Froebelian element
- Day 2 – roughly after a month, revisiting with the same endorsed Froebel tutors, and sharing, discussing and pondering.

WHAT?

The short Froebel courses, for practitioners, childminders, parents and grandparents, are as follows:

Element 1

Introduction: Principles and Practices of the Froebelian approach to Early Childhood Education for practitioners, childminders, parents and grandparents

The course focusses on the importance of introducing Froebelian principles, and articulating these in relation to current practice. Each element of the Froebel short courses emphasises the importance of family. This will be throughout the course. The book lists included help to link Froebelian principles and practices to current early childhood contexts and to look at what is and is not Froebelian. Practical work during both days will enable participants to experience, learn about Froebelian principles and approaches to practice, and to articulate and discuss them:

- Who was Froebel? Explaining some of his terminology in modern language
- The Gifts and the wooden blocks,
- The Occupations and the workshop experiences,
- Film and examples of engaging with nature and physical outdoor learning
- Play and the Symbolic Life of the Child
- Mother songs and Movement Games with practical examples

Participants will take part in a practical day, and will be asked to carry out observations looking for what is Froebelian in their practice, returning on day 2 to revisit, discuss, share and try out ideas in practical workshops.

Element 2

The Gifts (and modern Wooden blocks) and the Occupations (workshop experiences) for practitioners, childminders, parents and grandparents

Element 1 will have provided a base for further detailed exploration of blockplay and a taster of the Occupations (workshop experiences).

Froebelian concepts will be introduced in relation to blockplay which illuminate practice and help practitioners to discuss and encourage blockplay so that children deepen their understandings of mathematics, science, time, space and patterns, play scenarios, storying and narratives and work comfortably with or alongside each other, while constructing their own or joint structures, safely and co-operatively.

The Occupations (workshop experiences) will be explored so that practitioners are confident about what and how to provide a range of educationally worthwhile experiences for children in well thought through ways as they deepen their understanding of Froebelian early childhood educational approaches. The use of low or non-cost materials has been valued throughout history and globally. Froebel pioneered the view that natural materials, found or recycled materials and connection with everyday life experiences and community have great educational value if carefully planned, presented and used with children. The role of the adult is huge in encouraging children to think and to be creative.

Element 3

The importance of engaging with nature and outdoor learning for practitioners, childminders, parents and grandparents

During the day Froebel's approach to the garden (rather than tarmac playground area) will be explored. The training venue for Element 3 will need to provide opportunity for participants to be outside so that practical learning takes place and reflection on learning through nature is considered with depth and implemented. Open ended, creative play and exploration will be emphasised through the Froebelian practice of making connection (using loose parts). Risk and adventure, problem solving with outings into nature and helping children to engage with it will also be explored.

The key role of the adult will be emphasised. Aspects highlighted when learning through, with and in nature are:

- Awe and wonder / spirituality (relationship with self, others and the universe)
- Mathematical concepts exemplified and observed with children in nature
- The importance of direct experience engaging with nature and the special sensory aspects it affords
- Its rich investigative potential
- Opportunities for supporting the development of observation skills
- Links to environmental concerns and responsibilities

Element 4

Play and the Symbolic life of the child for practitioners, childminders, parents and grandparents including play indoors and outdoors and representation in the sciences and the Expressive Arts

There are many approaches to play. The Froebelian focus will be explored with practical examples given so as to give tangible form to this most complex aspect of childhood development and learning. In this Element participants will be able to deepen their understanding of traditional provision such as blockplay, small world play, dressing up clothes, making dens, doll play and the narratives and characters that populate play scenarios.

Children are both symbol makers and symbol users according to the Froebelian approach, and the role of the adult is enormous in enabling children to be imaginative and creative as they have thoughts, ideas, feelings and make relationships. Painting, drawing, constructing (woodwork, found / recycled materials, clay and other malleable materials, construction kits, blockplay, sand, water) and a wealth of ways which Froebel used to encourage and develop these aspects of children's educational experiences. These are found in practice today, but are they used in Froebelian ways?

Element 5

Lullabies and family songs, finger plays, action songs, movement games, firm foundations for later literacy -Practitioners, childminders, parents and grandparents

The importance of singing to and with babies and young children will be explored. This will begin with the cross cultural features of the lullabies we sing to our babies everywhere in the world. Or do some cultural contexts encourage this more than others? Does it matter? Froebel thought it did. Modern research agrees with him.

Froebel developed the idea of Finger plays. During the day these will be explained and explored in practical ways. They contribute to later literacy in very enjoyable ways if carefully thought through and used.

Froebel developed action songs, on the spot and with travelling movements. These also give firm foundations through which literacy develops later. The enjoyment of action songs in a group is deep,

and encourages social sensitivity and a collaborative spirit of working together. Narratives, (storytelling) and characters emerge and nursery rhymes enhance the action songs

WHERE?

To be provided at the venue by the local organiser

Before participation in the Froebel short courses some important requirements need to be in place so as to ensure that the course can then be implemented and become embedded in practice by those participating.

- Attendance at the first day, fulfilment of the assignment and attendance at the second day is required. The same person must attend Day one, undertake the task and return for day two
- Group settings must provide a set of unit/mini blocks which fit the requirements of the original Froebel wooden blocks (size, relationship of the blocks to each other, weight, etc.)
- Ideally the same group of participants will attend the course together as this opens up opportunities for a community of Froebelian practice to become established locally
- The venue must be an appropriate size with good ventilation and light appropriate for showing slides etc. For the Element 3 there will need to be opportunities for practical experience in engaging with nature for part of the time.
- Those buying in the course will be responsible for providing an appropriate venue, refreshments (coffee, tea etc. and lunch) and of crucial importance, technical equipment with technical support throughout. The quality of the course will rely on having good technical support, essential in enabling stress free learning contexts for both participants and endorsed Froebel travelling tutors. PowerPoint and DVDs will be used. Early Education will link with the setting and venue prior to the course to ensure the equipment and link with the technical support member of staff who will be there on the day.
- Workshop materials need to be provided for each Element (e.g. clay, wooden sticks etc. for Elements 1 and 2). A list will be provided in advance so that these are available to use on the course and later can be used in implementing the course.

The 'send in advance' advance travelling tutors resource pack from the Froebel Trust/Early Education

A set of Gifts 1-6 (the original Froebel wooden blocks)

These will be loaned by the Froebel Trust to Early Education and used to demonstrate and give both the historic perspective and the journey into the modern presentations. These can be sent to the organiser in advance in readiness for the beginning of the course. The Gifts are critical in introducing course members to the Froebelian concepts and terminology, and in demonstrating how links and interconnections can be made across the whole Froebelian framework. There is no appetite for returning to the original practice as first explored which carries the danger of prescribed and inflexible over structuring. But the thinking around what the Gifts offer has been found very helpful as experienced during the pilot in developing the short Froebel course.

Resources to be provided by 'Early Education' during each Element of the Froebel short course and given out to participants on the day

A separate booklet for each Element will be handed out on day one. This will contain:

- Course outline for day
- Outline of the Practical assignment in between days 1 and 2.
- Booklist, DVDs, websites and networks relating to the appropriate element
- Froebel quote cards which the tutors will use which can be dotted around the venue next to the display materials for that element, which will include permissioned photos.
- Articles in the 'Early Education' journal about Froebelian Practice by a variety of authors.

- Six Posters from 'Nursery World' and 'Community Playthings'. And the 6 articles accompanying articles by Tina Bruce and Jane Dyke.
- Certificate of Attendance for the element at the end of the element when two days attendance is achieved and the intervening task completed
- Certificate for the whole course if all 5 Elements have been completed (10 days and 5 tasks)

Background to the development of the course

Tina Bruce led the pilot work developing the Froebel short courses with the support of The Froebel Trust.

The Trust gratefully acknowledges those who gave generously of their time as volunteers in developing this Froebelian work and during the pilot work: Jane Dyke, Paula Philips, Helen Tovey and Jane Whinnett. Thanks also to Jane Read, Sally Howe and Lucy Parker Ball for their support and encouragement with expertise from the accredited Froebel Certificate Course at the University of Roehampton and to Lynn McNair for sharing expertise from the accredited Froebel Certificate Course at the University of Edinburgh. Thanks to the Kolkata team for their support and discussions of implementation of quality Froebelian practice: Sara Holroyd, Jill Leyburg and Kate Razzell.

The endorsement to teach the short Froebel courses is from the Froebel Trust. The courses are administered by Early Education. Those who will tutor the short Froebel courses during the first wave are:

Sally Cave
Stephanie Harding
Debby Hunter
Mark Hunter
Tricia Johnson
Stella Louis
Thelma Miller
Kathryn Solly
Felicity Thomas

The tutors will work in pairs, and the same pair will teach an element. All the endorsed Froebel tutors have successfully undertaken training in tutoring the Froebelian approach to early childhood education through the Froebel Trust.

Please see contact details below for further information and for bookings:

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