

Considered Canonbie Connections

During the summer term of 2023 we arranged to provide Froebelian parent and toddler sessions for local families to attend. Families who planned to attend our nursery were initially invited however we opened the invitation to all local families through our local toddler group. Six Parents with children ranging in age between 8 months and 3 years attended for four sessions. Seeing the benefit of these sessions we decided to extend the reach of our project. In the primary school, Froebelian themed nurture sessions were provided for children in Primaries 3-7 over a period of ten weeks.

Canonbie is a small Scottish village situated just a few miles from the border with England. The population is made up of predominantly aging residents and families who have grown up there themselves. Almost all of the families attending the primary school and nursery have a strong link to agriculture.

Two educators within the school were involved in planning and delivering the sessions, with 6 pre-nursery children attending the singing sessions and all children from nursery and primary 3-7 accessing a Froebelian themed nurture session.



Primary 7 children making natural dream catchers

"Froebel's influence shouldn't stop when the children leave nursery"
Class Teacher



Continuing using finger rhymes at home



Using instruments to supplement singing sessions

Our project supported a Froebelian approach to early childhood education through sharing music and songs for early literacy development. We saw relationships deepen and educators and families' knowledge of Froebel increased. The principles of unity and symbolic play were explored throughout the whole project.

Within the primary school we explored four Froebelian occupations with older children through a nurture group context. These sessions included woodwork, connecting with nature, clay and cooking.



Working with clay in a nurture session



Preparing for transition with new friends

"Visiting where my baby will hopefully go to nursery was really special"
Parent

"I really liked spending time with different friends and being outside"
Primary Five child



Learning about how things connect



Baking bread to take home and share

During the course of the project, the most important differences our project made to everyone involved were noted as the following:

Increased knowledge and understanding about Froebelian practice for all of our educators children and families

Using Froebel's principles and occupations as the inspiration for our sessions has educated all stakeholders in who Froebel was, and his theories. We were able to demonstrate these and share them beyond our nursery through delivering this project. Teachers in the primary school now have a professional interest, with some considering studying the 'Froebel in Childhood Practice course'. It has given our families clarity on our ethos and the children now have a basic knowledge about who Froebel was and how he is influencing their education within the nursery and school.

Much Improved Relationships between

Our school, nursery and families	Parents and their children	Peer groups within the school
We saw parents physically relax being able to access our space with their children. Current nursery children joined in with the session which introduced them to the younger children. Spending time with staff has improved future relationships.	Learning about Froebel and the respect he had for the relationship between mothers and children, we were able to empower our families and boost their confidence in their roles as their child's first educator.	Attending the Froebel occupation sessions in small groups allowed children to prepare for transitions and build on new friendships in preparation for the new school year. They were working together in a safe and nurturing environment.

Early literacy support for future families attending our nursery

Post COVID we have seen a remarkable increase in children attending our nursery who have a speech and language delay or issue. We hope that inviting families into nursery to learn about the role that singing and finger rhymes play in early literacy will help to reduce this impact in future cohorts. We hope to continue to offer this support through visiting our local Mother and Toddlers group. Sharing Froebel's principles has also shown how we are preparing our children for reading and writing through songs and rhymes. Without this project we wouldn't have been able to reach out to our future attending families as easily.

Having the opportunity to provide the current and future children and families at Canonbie Primary with true Froebelian experiences has been a privilege. On reflection, those considering to plan a similar project should give thought to how their project may expand. We learned quickly that we could be flexible and adapt the content to suit the needs of our families and children.