



# Froebelian Futures

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## Practitioner Inquiry Project Report

# Leadership opportunities & reflections

### Project title

Can Freedom be Guided?

### Subtitle (if applicable)

### Your name and role

Lee-Anne Harper, Depute Head Teacher

### 1. What are the implications of this research for:

- The team/setting as a whole
- Pedagogy
- Resourcing
- Policy
- The sector / your networks / management beyond your immediate setting.

(Please aim to write between 250 minimum and 500 words maximum, using the box below. Please do not disclose the identity of any individuals in your comments, as this form will be part of your colleague's public record of their project).

The implications of this research highlight that clear communication, perseverance and enthusiasm to keep on going through difficult times, where understanding and foresight to 'see' what the outcome will look like in practice may not be initially clear, pays off in the end. Comments from participating staff have progressively become more informed when planning and reflecting upon the learning and show more confidence in guiding the children through quality questioning and considered resourcing. Participant stated, "I couldn't see how this was going to work but I have noticed that the learning is connecting across the nursery, it is really coming together!"

Using provocations has allowed the children to lead their learning which is also evident when some children have transferred their learning to new situations or used loose parts more creatively in representative play. Children are visibly more engaged in their play, have ownership of their learning, are problem solving when a challenge comes their way, and their voices can be heard across our setting. This is evident in the responsive and intentional learning and in leading improvements, whether this be individually for a child, group or the nursery as a whole.

Staff are more confident to allow the children to lead and I have noticed the positive impact in staff morale, enthusiasm and passion for their role. I hear rich conversations about Froebel, learning and children's success along with pride in the children's achievements, themselves and in each other's practice. Peer observations have broken down barriers and allowed staff to take on board each other's views without feeling 'criticised'. I no longer see staff planning in isolation – I see a team working together to ensure the best outcomes for our children. Participant stated, "*I felt awkward about carrying out peer observations as I didn't want to hurt someone's feelings. Now that I have been observed as well as observing peers, the conversations that followed have made me think about how I set up experiences and allowed staff to offer suggestions on possible lines of development*".

Staff have developed from not interrupting play to becoming actively engaged in the children's learning. This has been achieved through staff training on what is freedom with guidance and how adults facilitate this. This research has influenced our improvement planning for next session, as staff are keen continue on their journey, and to further explore Froebel's other principles and practices.

From my observations, I realise that freedom with guidance must underpin how we, as a nursery, operate. Staff have the freedom to let the children lead whilst having the guidance to support them, as practitioners to fully embrace this principle and achieve curriculum benchmarks. Children have the freedom to choose, be inspired and fully explore their ideas. They are able to make decisions about their learning, environment and in keeping themselves safe when taking risks. The adaptations in how we now plan and reflect together, have actually resulted in more quality learning taking place, a deeper sense of achievement and provided a range of opportunities that inspire creativity and imagination for all.

## **2. What value do you place on practitioner-research – and what more can be done in your setting/locality to enable it to continue as part of routine practice going forward? (100 word approx.)**

Carrying out this project has shown the positive impact that practitioner-research can have on the ethos within a nursery by deepening relationships across all stakeholders. It allows a wider scope to gather information, which may otherwise go unknown, to lead, and guide how we plan and resource to contribute to our children's lived experiences. This process has strengthened the staff relationships where everyone's voice is heard, leading to shared pedagogical understanding that is influencing practice as well as informing nursery improvements.

**3. What have you learned as a leader through supporting this research / programme? (100 words approx.)**

Implementing change is a process that can be challenging at the start but by going through the process together, and not moving on until everyone has a shared understanding, has provided opportunities for staff to question, debate and reflect together.

For me personally, it has been a joy to see, and feel, the positive impact that this enquiry has had on our ethos, planning, recording and talking about learning. Most of all, our children are leading and making decisions about their learning, nursery improvements and staff are guiding their own, and the children's freedom with more knowledge, understanding and love.

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