

## South Thames Early Education Partnership

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- Six like-minded London Nursery Schools and Children's Centres sharing principles of practice, but unique in identity.
- Gaining strength from each other and our shared understanding of pedagogy and principles guiding our early years practice with children and their families.
- Drawn together by Goldsmiths to form a partnership to co-construct a teacher training program to specialise in the teaching of children early years of their education.



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## Shared beliefs

We are all committed members of **Early Education** - The British Association for Early Childhood Education (BAECE), and believe every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfill their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its' own right, and provides the foundation for children to make the most of their own abilities and talents as they grow up.

[www.early-education.org.uk/about-us/ethics](http://www.early-education.org.uk/about-us/ethics)

Our settings are proud of their secure and established Early Years specialism, and the high level of expertise and experience amongst our staff, teachers, nursery nurses, and support staff. We share a passion for the importance of putting the needs of the children first and ensuring high quality early education for all our children.

We know from experience that children thrive and achieve when the staff who work with them are specialist early years practitioners, who are well qualified in this field and have high levels of expertise, a robust understanding of the development of young children, a knowledge of how young children learn most effectively, and a tireless commitment to put the needs of the child and family, at the heart of their work.

As such we welcomed and celebrate the recent findings of Cathy Nutbrown in her review of Early Education and Childcare Qualifications and agree with her statement that

**'there cannot be a compromise on quality and we must be relentless in our desire to improve experiences for young children.'**

Since 2011 STEEP has worked together with Goldsmiths to achieve this aim, forming an Early Years training school partnership, which specialises in the delivery of high quality teacher training in the field of Early Years Education. We draw on our long history of high quality Early Years provision and excellent outcomes for children in the design and delivery of our PGCE pathway. Through this partnership we seek to ensure effective succession planning in the training of the expert Early Years teachers of the future.

The principles and commitments of the Early Years Foundation Stage 2008, and the subsequent review in 2012, clearly articulate to a wide audience, the principles by which our settings, BAECE, and many other nursery schools across the country, have worked for our long history working with children and families. **Each of the settings within STEEP have unique qualities and identity, but we share core beliefs and principles**, which will be common to other nursery school settings:

- We pride ourselves in valuing each child as a unique individual whose strengths, interests and passions should be at the heart of their own personalised curriculum.
- The curriculum that we provide is broad and balanced and is responsive to each child's development, focusing on them as a whole and meeting the physical,

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emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, linguistic, cultural and cognitive needs of each and every child.

- We recognise the significance of strong personal and caring relationships, in children's development and learning. To support us in this we work closely with the children themselves through our work on children's voice and in close partnership with our families and wider community. We see the role of the Key Person in this work as invaluable.
- We know how important the physical and emotional environment is to a child's well-being and motivation to learn. We plan with this in mind when we develop exciting, dynamic spaces and places inside and out, considering the learning styles and needs of our children in order to make the experiences we offer irresistible.
- We are rooted in the 'open air' philosophy, where children are able to access the outdoors fully throughout their early years learning and development.

**'Children want space at all ages. But from the age of one to seven, space, is almost as much wanted as food and air. To move, to run, to find things out by new movement, to 'feel one's life in every limb', that is the life of early childhood'**

Margaret McMillan, The Nursery School (1919) (1930)

- We know that the outdoor environment provides opportunities for learning that cannot be experienced inside and we are committed to giving children the opportunity to explore on a large physical scale, and with freedom of movement. We plan for the children's learning outside with the same rigor and with the same commitment to personalisation that we give to our inside environment.

### STEEP achievements to date:

- Establishing the South Thames Early Education Partnership to work with Goldsmiths in developing a PGCE programme to produce high quality Early Years teachers "...specialist early years practitioners, who are well qualified in this field, have high levels of expertise, a robust understanding of the development of young children and a knowledge of how young children learn most effectively."
- Goldsmiths has described our STEEP programme as 'a highly successful partnership model that trains Goldsmiths student teachers in outstanding early years education providers'.
- Enhancing our PGCE teacher education programme with our own setting-based taught programme sharing the practice and strengths of our individual settings
- Successfully recruiting 3 cohorts of STEEP students committed to the course
- 100% pass rate for STEEP PGCE students and 100% recruitment for those seeking employment in their specialist age phase
- Successfully bidding for School Direct places for 2015/16 – we have been awarded 22 places for 2015/16

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## Beyond our PGCE work...

- Successfully applying for designated Teaching School Status 2014 - STEEP Teaching School Alliance
- Three annual STEEP conferences for the staff of all settings and this year 2014, our first commercial conference
- Collaboration and shared practice at leadership level; Heads and Deputies
- School visits to share practice as a CPD opportunity for staff

## What are we working on now?

- **Initial Teacher Education** – Managing the transfer from our current PGCE to the new School Direct model, recruiting our 22 student teachers for September 2015-16. And engaging partner schools to host placements in nursery reception and KS1.
- **Professional development and training** - Developing our own STEEP CPD programme for Early Years professionals; an NQT Induction Programme; Working with Lewisham LA to take over Early Years and Childminder CPD.
- **Peer support and collaboration** - Our six leadership teams have found strength in the peer support that STEEP has brought us. We want to build on this for our staff and post holders sharing and developing practice across our settings through collaboration and working together.
- **Identifying talent** – We are seeking out those in our settings who are talented, expert in their field and are keen to develop the skills to share this expertise with others.
- **Developing leadership** - we recognise that at the earliest stages our teachers work with a range of skilled and experienced early years educators leading them in a team approach to supporting children's learning. How can we support these people in becoming leaders in Primary schools taking an understanding of early years practice and ethos into all phases of primary schooling?
- **Sharing practice and innovation** - seeking opportunities for STEEP staff to share practice across settings and find ways of sharing their practice and passion for early childhood education in accessible and inspiring ways for others.
- **Research based practice** - We aim to encourage action research based teaching and learning where the staff in STEEP settings have the opportunity with their teams to delve deeper into areas that fascinate them researching to how children learn most effectively.