**Letter from Lead Teacher**

I trained as a primary school teacher in Argentina, and my training and early practice years were spent looking into and developing a philosophy of teaching, considering why educate, why not just teach. It was a bit of a shock when I moved to the UK, about 30 years ago, and realised that things were rather different here!

It was at that time that I decided to specialise in Early Years education and care, and I have been very fortunate to have experienced a great change in the reasoning behind teaching and educating in Early Years. But even with the advent of the Early Years Foundation Stage (2008) and the various regenerations since, the latest update implemented since 2021, it is quite a challenge to find what lays at the heart of teaching and caring for children in their Early Years in the UK.

A few years ago, I found the answer to my query. It came in the shape of a three-year-old from Nigeria, who arrived at pre-school with very little English but a lot of education. Having spent the first three years of her life being taught how to do things, this young child was very well prepared for school: she was able to sit and listen, she was very respectful and she willing to receive education. The problem was that she would not try to do anything independently without being shown first by the teacher.  When I invited her to paint, I would get the answer, "I don't know how; you show me". I would get the same reply when working on any creative activity. But when it came to writing, counting and recognising numbers, this child knew a lot! Things became clear one sunny morning when I sat down with a group of children who were painting in the meadow, joining in as they created arches out of different colours. I did not realise I was being carefully watched, but as soon as I finished, this child took my painting, copied it exactly and then spent the rest of the session showing the other children "the right way to paint a rainbow, teacher did it! This is the right way".

The facts took me by surprise. While for me, educating in Early Years is about offering children opportunities to experiment and see what happens, giving them time and space to try, fail and try again, ask questions and try out answers and develop a sense of curiosity and wonder, for this child education was having the right answer... and as she could not risk failure by not knowing the answer, it was just better to wait until someone told her what it was!

So, what is it that we do at St Paul's? Well, we offer children the time, space, support and resources to explore the world around them in safety, and, in the words of the American anthropologist Margaret Mead, we work hard to, "teach children *how* to think, not *what* to think".