

# THE EARLY YEARS TEACHER'S BOOK

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**THE LEONIE ABRAHAMSON**  
**EARLY YEARS**  
**TEACHER'S**  
**BOOK**  
**2<sup>ND</sup> EDITION**

**ACHIEVING  
EARLY YEARS  
TEACHER STATUS**





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To My Parents, Cathy, Vanessa and Bobby



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## *Praise for the first edition*

*The Early Years Teacher's Book: A Guidebook for Training* is a recommended text for my course and is flagged up to students as the main book to purchase to support their training year on all routes. The text maps on to my course and supports trainees in their knowledge and understanding of each of the standards detailing the evidence required. The text is written at the right level for my course and the feedback that I have received from my trainees is that the book is a useful tool to support their EYTS training.

**Julie Goodman, Senior Lecturer in Early Years, Edge Hill University**

My students find *The Early Years Teacher's Book: A Guidebook for Training* an easy book to use. The sections on the standards are continuously used during lead teaching sessions, advance reading action planning and seminar sessions on the 8th standard particularly. The students also find the book very helpful in their final assessment. The examples of practice are useful and the book really helps my students with their EYITT portfolio completion.

**Jane Joyce, Senior Lecturer in Early Years, Winchester University**



## About the author

**Leone Abrahamson** is an experienced educator and trainer who has worked in early years since 1990. Before becoming a lecturer, she was a nursery practitioner, play leader, tutor and teacher in a range of settings, including the Anna Freud Centre. She then established creche work, family learning and teaching assistant training programmes for, amongst others, Corams Parents' Centre and the Workers Educational Association and was tutor and accreditation assessor for the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

Since the introduction of EYPS and EYTS Leonie has taught and assessed Early Years Professionals and Teachers, and provided tutor and mentor training. She was a course leader for Initial Teacher Training (Early Years), delivering the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Early Childhood) at London Metropolitan University. She also provides information, updates and resources for EYT trainees on her website at [www.earlyyearsteacher.info](http://www.earlyyearsteacher.info) and <https://facebook.com/earlyyearsteacher.info>.

Leonie has delivered tutor training and bespoke professional development events at adult education centres and further education colleges, establishing knowledge cafe forms, focus groups and peer visiting programmes. She facilitated tutor-led think tanks at the Mary Ward Centre and the development of *Gatekeepers, Midwives and Fellow Travellers: The Craft and Artistry of the Adult Educator* (DfE, 2005), promoting innovative and creative approaches to staff development. She also delivered CPD events including career development, stress management, understanding trauma and the role of attachment in education.

Leonie has a PGCE (Primary) and Postgraduate Certificate in Child Development, Early Years and Introduction to Counselling from the Institute of Education and an MA from the Tavistock Centre in Emotional Factors in Teaching and Learning. Here she specialised in the impact of trauma on thinking and learning and strategies to address individual and institutional barriers to learning.

She has recently published *Personal and Professional Development for the Early Years Workforce* (Pre-school Learning Alliance, 2016) and articles in *Nursery World*, *Teach Nursery* and *Early Years Educator*. She is also a member of Early Education and the Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health.





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# 1 Introduction to Early Years Teacher Status

In 2013 Early Years Teacher Status was launched to build on the successes of the Early Years Professional Status programme, introduced in 2007 to increase numbers of graduates leading practice in early years settings. In this chapter we look at the role of the Early Years Teacher and how this relates to policy developments that promote the professionalisation of the early years workforce.

This process of professionalisation has created a generation of Early Years Professionals and Early Years Teachers and has been a fascinating and fruitful journey for all concerned. You can feel proud to become a part of this tradition.

## The introduction of the Early Years Professional

The journey began in 1997, when the new Labour Government chose to prioritise the needs of the youngest children and their families. In the Ten-Year Strategy, *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare* (HM Treasury, Department for Education and Skills, DWP and DTI, 2004), the Government laid out a commitment to *reviewing the qualifications and career structure and investing in training and support in order to further develop a workforce fit to deliver the kinds of services children and parents expect in the 21st century.*

The intention was to establish a graduate in every full-time early years setting by 2015 in the belief that this would raise standards, and in 2007 Early Years Professional Status was introduced alongside this national framework for change. This framework was underpinned by the Children Act 2004 and *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) and designed to improve the experiences of the youngest and most vulnerable members of society. It can be helpful to see the role of the Early Years Professional and Early Years Teacher within this context.

The *Evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund* report evaluates the impact of Government attempts to professionalise the early years workforce. It examines the use of the Graduate Leader Fund (replacing the Transformation Fund in 2007) providing funding for settings to employ a graduate or Early Years Professional (EYP) by 2015 *to lead practice across the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It highlights the role of these graduate leaders in supporting and mentoring others, as well as modelling skills and good practice to secure high quality provision* (Mathers et al., 2011).

The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) was tasked with introducing this first professional status for early years practitioners working with children from birth to age five. It was designed to be broadly equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status (ages 5–18) and to achieve this practitioners were required to hold a degree and successfully complete an assessment in an early years setting. By early 2009 there were more than 2,500 graduate-level EYPs and a further 2,400 in training and by August 2012 the number of EYPs reached the 10,000 milestone (The Guardian Teacher Network, 2012).

## Why the emphasis on graduates?

*The Evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund* identified a positive relationship between qualifications and the quality of early years provision (Mathers et al., 2011). The final report in 2011 identified the increasing impact that graduates have on the delivery of quality early years education and the resulting improvements in outcomes for young children (Department for Education, 2014).

In particular, it noted that:

*Settings which gained a graduate leader with EYPS [Early Years Professional Status] made significant improvements in quality for pre-school children (30 months to five years), as compared with settings which did not. The evidence also suggests that EYPS provided 'added value' over and above gaining a graduate ... Improvements related most strongly to direct work with children, such as support for learning, communication and individual needs, reflecting the role of EYPS as 'leaders of practice'.*

(Mathers et al., 2011)

## The role of the Early Years Professional

According to the Children's Workforce Development Council, which was responsible for the delivery of Early Years Professional Status, the EYP is a *catalyst for change* who will

- *take responsibility for leading and managing play, care and learning;*
- *develop, introduce, lead and supervise development work;*
- *act as a team leader and inspire others;*
- *possess up-to-date knowledge and understanding of early years practices;*
- *help colleagues to develop and improve their practice.*

(Children's Workforce Development Council, 2009)

As many EYPs have formed local support networks, their work now has a positive impact beyond their own setting.

One of the most exciting aspects of Early Years Professional Status was that any graduate, whatever their individual background or role, could take on leadership responsibilities. The Graduate Employment Pathway, in particular, encouraged many graduates to consider a second career in early years and this had a positive impact on the diversity of the workforce. I had the pleasure of working with musicians, scientists, nurses, dancers, artists, accountants, managers and school governors, all of whom brought something unique to their setting.

Early Years Practitioners were encouraged to lead and support practice in ways that addressed the individual needs of their setting. As a result, the work of many Early Years Practitioners has been varied, creative and often unique. I have been able to observe at first hand the positive impact of these enthusiastic and committed professionals: baby room gardens transformed, toddlers involved in designing new play areas, young children growing fruit and vegetables, and practitioners working with parents to build a den and with architects to design a purpose-built baby unit. Now that Early Years Teachers have taken on this mantle, they too are creating inspiring environments for children and families.

## The introduction of Early Years Teacher Status

In January 2011, the Coalition Government announced its continued support for Early Years Professional Status and acknowledged the benefits of developing a highly skilled workforce. However, In January 2013 the Department for Education published *More Great Childcare* (Department for Education, 2013), which set out plans for improving quality in early education and childcare. Its aim was to raise the status and quality of the early years workforce and replaced Early Years Professional Status with Early Years Teacher Status, building on the strengths of the previous programme.

## Early Years Teacher Status: the debate

There has been much debate about the introduction of Early Years Teacher Status. On the one hand, the National College for Teaching and Leadership has emphasised that practitioners will benefit from the respect in which the term 'teacher' is held and that parents find this term familiar. They state that this creates parity of esteem with teachers in primary and secondary schools and that Early Years Teacher Status and Qualified Teacher Status are parallel routes with equivalent value (Gov.uk, 2014). However, some existing EYPs have said that the term 'teacher' does not convey the complexity of their roles.

With the introduction of Early Years Teacher Status some changes were made to the Teachers' Standards (Early Years) to bring them further in line with the Standards for trainee teachers in primary and secondary schools. This, and the introduction of the same entry requirements, creates further parity between the Qualified Teacher Status and Early Years Teacher Status routes. There is, however, concern that the changes to the Teachers' Standards (Early Years) have reduced the focus on the needs of the

youngest children, even though trainees still demonstrate their practice with children from birth to age five.

Another concern is that, despite meeting the same entry requirements and a similar set of Standards, Early Years Teachers will not access benefits such as teachers' pay scales, terms and conditions and access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. However, this position may be untenable in the long run and beneficial changes may be introduced, bringing Early Years Teacher Status further in line with Qualified Teacher Status.

## Becoming an Early Years Teacher

Although there are still many unanswered questions about the place of the Early Years Teacher, the current Government have emphasised their commitment to the programme and there are new possibilities opening up for EYTs in academies, free and independent schools, and school-based units for two-year-olds. There is also no doubt that gaining your Early Years Teacher Status is a journey that will inspire, stretch and challenge you, enhance your professionalism and expertise and have a long-term, positive impact on your career. As you develop your confidence as a leader you will raise expectations and encourage colleagues to move forwards in their careers, so that they, too, feel able to take on a role in leading practice.

I hope that the process of working through your Early Years Initial Teacher Training provides you with an opportunity to take stock of what you have already achieved, appreciate the depth and breadth of your professionalism and recognise the positive impact you have on the children, families and colleagues you support.

## Where next?

Becoming an Early Years Teacher can take you in many directions. Many Early Years Teachers have taken on positions as nursery or reception teachers in academies and free and independent schools as these are free to appoint teachers without Qualified Teacher Status. Others have stayed within their settings but taken on new responsibilities or promotion. Some Early Years Teachers have decided to embark on further studies and applied for a Master's. Others have enjoyed their school-based or age-related placements so much that they decided to specialise in this area. Whatever you decide, you can feel confident that the process of working through your Early Years Initial Teacher Training has developed your skills as a sensitive, reflective practitioner, your understanding of the needs of the children and families in your care and your ability to support the professionalism of those around you.

I wish you all the best for your future.