

THE 2026 NATIONAL EARLY YEARS CONFERENCE: BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR A LIFETIME OF LEARNING EXPLORING WHAT MATTERS MOST IN THE FIRST YEARS - FROM PLAY TO PEDAGOGY

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Tuesday 3rd March, 9:00 am – 4:15 pm

Fielder Centre, Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield Ave., Hatfield AL10 9TP

Time	Details	Location
8:30 – 9:00 am	Conference registration and exhibitor networking Tea, coffee and pastries served in Function Room	Function Room
9:00 – 9:10 am	Conference Welcome Anne Peck, Director of Education Services (Primary and Early Years), HFL Education	Conference room
9:10 – 10:10 am	The Power of Schemas in Early Childhood Education Dr Stella Louis, Early Education Associate	Conference room
10:10 – 10:40	Headline Sponsor Keynote & Dragons Den Showcase Ben Case, Education Advisor and Setting Liaison Specialist, Tapestry Dragon's Den Showcase Compered by Emma Wild, Senior Early Years Consultant, HFL Education	Conference room
10:40 – 11:00	Refreshments and exhibitor networking	Function Room
11:05 - 11.45 am	Igniting Literacy Through the Power of Storytelling Olivia Corbin-Philip, Storyteller & Consultant	Conference room
	The Freedom to Imagine: Loose Parts as a Pedagogy of Possibility Shardi Vaziri, Assistant Headteacher at Ludwick Nursery School	Room E
11:50 - 12.30 pm	Belonging Begins Here: Nurturing Connections in the Early Years Jo Watkins, HFL Education	Conference room

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	Leading from Where You Are: Empowering Every Role in Early Years Nicki Waller, HFL Education	Room E
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Lunch and exhibitor networking	Function Room
1:35 – 2:10 pm	Movement Matters in the early years Helen Battelley, Education Consultant	Conference room
2:15 – 2:55 pm	Igniting Literacy Through the Power of Storytelling Olivia Corbin-Philip, Early Years & Literacy Consultant	Conference room
	The Freedom to Imagine: Loose Parts as a Pedagogy of Possibility Shardi Vaziri, Assistant Headteacher at Ludwick Nursery School	Room E
3:00 – 3.20 pm	20 mins Refreshments and exhibitor networking	Function Room
3:25 – 4:05 pm	Belonging Begins Here: Nurturing Connections in the Early Years Jo Watkins, HFL Education	Conference room
	Leading from Where You Are: Empowering Every Role in Early Years Nicki Waller, HFL Education	Room E
4:05 – 4:15 pm	Conference close Emma Wild, Senior Early Years Consultant, HFL Education	Conference room

Session Details

This list gives full details of each keynote and seminar session.

Dr Stella Louis

The Power of Schemas in Early Childhood Education

The session will explore the powerful role of schemas in early childhood development. Through a pedagogical lens, Dr Louis will connect theory to practice, offering insights into how educators can harness schema theory to create rich, responsive environments that support deep, meaningful learning.

Olivia Corbin-Philip

Igniting Literacy Through the Power of Storytelling

Join Olivia as she introduces the key differences between storytelling and reading aloud, shares tips on choosing the right books, and offers inspiring examples from her own practice.

Shardi Vaziri, Assistant Headteacher at Ludwick Nursery School

The Freedom to Imagine: Loose Parts as a Pedagogy of Possibility

Discover how everyday materials can spark extraordinary learning. This workshop explores the transformative role of loose parts and open-ended play in developing creativity, problem-solving, and strong foundations for lifelong learning.

Jo Watkins

Belonging Begins Here: Nurturing Connections in the Early Years

This seminar explores how practitioners can intentionally nurture belonging through inclusive practice, equitable approaches, and strong partnerships with families.

Nicki Waller

Leading from Where You Are: Empowering Every Role in Early Years

This session will share how leadership manifests across roles: from teaching assistants fostering high-quality interactions, to teachers shaping pedagogical practice, and senior leaders establishing the overarching direction. This reflective and empowering session aims to strengthen professional confidence, promote clarity of purpose, and foster a shared sense of leadership across teams.

Helen Battelley

Movement Matters in the early years

Discovering how movement skills impact on early childhood development. This is a broad session on the basics of brain/body connectivity and why movement matters.