

VERONICA SHERBORNE AND SHERBORNE DEVELOPMENTAL MOVEMENT

"I have come to the conclusion that all children have two basic needs: they need to feel at home in their own bodies, and so to gain body mastery, and they need to be able to form relationships."

Veronica Sherborne pioneered the idea that children with serious mental or physical handicap can benefit immensely by one to one movement in a suitable environment. She devised a system of movement - Sherborne Developmental Movement - which is used today by many around the world to help children with all sorts of learning difficulties to develop good self-esteem, form positive relationships, and improve their communication and creative expression.

Veronica's career spanned almost 50 years. During the war years she trained to be a teacher of physical education and dance at Bedford College of Physical Education and, after teaching at Cheltenham Ladies College for three years, she returned there in 1947 as a Lecturer in Dance.

Whilst still a student in Bedford she had attended a two day course given by Rudolf Laban - pioneer of the theory and practice of movement, and a founder of modern dance - and this had such a deep and long lasting effect on Veronica that, prior to taking up her Lectureship at Bedford, she studied with Laban for a year at the Art of Movement Studios.

"From Laban I learnt a different understanding and awareness of the human body and its movement"

In those days the Art of Movement Studios was situated above a garage in Manchester where the smell of petrol fumes would sometimes waft up from between the floorboards, but it was here that the beginnings of Sherborne Developmental Movement were formed. Veronica always acknowledged the debt she owed to Laban as she explained how in her own work she applied Laban's theories to the needs of mainstream children and children with special needs. Her approach was firmly rooted in her own observation of how children play in the normal course



of their development, and then grounding these observations in the philosophy and theory of Laban's movement analysis. She worked her method with classroom teachers, physical education teachers, drama teachers, physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, nursery teachers, nursery nurses, and teachers in special education; and brought up children of her own.

Over the years Veronica was invited to introduce her movement work to teachers and therapists in Norway, Sweden, Canada, Australia and Poland and later in Finland, Estonia and Belgium. Since her death in 1990 training has also taken place in Japan and other European countries including movement projects in Romania.

She made six training videos between 1966 and 1986 - In Touch 1966, Explorations 1970, A Sense of Movement 1976, Building Bridges 1982, Good Companions 1985 and A Matter of Confidence 1990; three of these have been selected for preservation by the National Film Archive. In 1990 her book Developmental Movement for Children was published.