



Learning & Development Policies

‘Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.’

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952)

Introduction

Coed Cariad is a nature based, child-centred learning community where children are able to direct their own learning primarily through play and collaborative projects.

Children who attend Coed Cariad are home-schooled or flexi-schooled; this means their learning opportunities at Coed Cariad are in addition to their main education.

The curriculum at Coed Cariad encompasses all of the activities which we organise to promote learning, personal growth and development. It also includes all of the activities and projects the children co-construct spontaneously as part of the self-directed learning process. Coed Cariad would like our learning programme to foster self-esteem, independence, emotional, resilience, co-operation, personal responsibility, autonomy and motivation, as well as a deeply personal knowledge, respect and care for our environment.

The approach at Coed Cariad is learner-led, play-centred, holistic and experiential. When taking part in our learning programme a child is engaging with nature in wild spaces in an exploratory, sensory and physical way. We believe it’s important to create, where possible, a long-term relationship between a location and a group of children, giving all participants a chance to get a feel for how an environment changes over time. Children will be encouraged to take constructive risks in order to develop skills, good judgment and to learn and develop through managing their own and others’ risks. In planning activities, we consider not only the risks, but also the potential benefits for the learner. Evaluations will be completed after each session and a reflective report is compiled on a termly basis.

We believe that self-directed learning is the most child-centred and appropriate pedagogical approach to providing a holistic curriculum because every child is unique and individually motivated by their own passions and interests. It is well documented in educational research and in the reflective practice of those who facilitate in self-directed learning contexts, that the vast majority of children learn to read, write and become numerate in their own time when they realise a need to have those skills and therefore become self-motivated.

It is therefore our policy that our facilitators spend a significant proportion of their contact time not instructing children, but observing and reflecting on the children’s

learning needs. Our facilitators will then be best situated to support individual children to:

- 🍌 reflect on their current motivations and interests
- 🍌 articulate their learning goals in relation to their current motivations and interests
- 🍌 set personal learning goals and plan how they can achieve their goals, including identifying and sourcing any support or resources they might need.
- 🍌 review the learning process, highlighting strengths and how challenges were overcome

Aims

We aim to offer a curriculum through which children can:

- 🍌 Develop their communication and leadership skills by being empowered to take an active role in the day to day running and the development of the community.
- 🍌 Develop their critical thinking, presentation and debating skills by being encouraged to question, reflect and problem solve independently and in groups.
- 🍌 Develop their interpersonal skills and self-awareness through being part of a democratic community where inclusive and respectful communication is modelled and reflected on.
- 🍌 Develop their resilience and confidence by being allowed to experience, manage and overcome risk.

Our curriculum will do this by:

- 🍌 Ensuring the importance of freely chosen play and learning activities
- 🍌 Facilitators being highly skilled at supporting children to create a safe and nurturing environment.
- 🍌 Providing opportunities for children to engage in a wide range of activities designed to allow them to practice personal, learning and thinking skills.

Guidelines

Each day will have a number of routines at the start, middle and end of the day to allow a familiar structure and culture to permeate the children's experience and also allow for housekeeping and health and safety. This established rhythm of the day will foster a sense of place and security amongst the children and adults.

Our session routines are influenced by Flow Learning, whether they be a two hour club session or a full day holiday session.

Setting Up:

- 🍌 Carry out a session risk assessment of site and advise/act accordingly
- 🍌 Collect necessary equipment and restock first aid where necessary
- 🍌 Meet and register group
- 🍌 Check phone signal (when off-site)

Starting the day:

- 🍃 Introductions of any new faces
- 🍃 Make the group aware of new hazards or medical considerations
- 🍃 Check that they are all wearing suitable clothing and footwear
- 🍃 Take the group to the location
- 🍃 Form an opening circle
- 🍃 Describe or walk the boundaries for the day
- 🍃 Engage children in the development of guidelines and plans for the day

Sessions where the Lead Facilitator takes on more of teaching role (where required/requested by children in their learning plans will often be comprised of 4 stages:

1. Awaken enthusiasm
2. Focus attention
3. Offer Direct Experience
4. Share Inspiration.

Other considerations are:

- 🍃 Visually check all equipment before use
- 🍃 Check on pastoral needs of group
- 🍃 Conduct a head count, as needed
- 🍃 Ensure appropriate personal protective clothing is worn

Ending the day:

- 🍃 Extinguish any fires properly
- 🍃 Count any tools used into their bag
- 🍃 Remove structures
- 🍃 Check for litter, clean environment.
- 🍃 Collect, clean and store the equipment
- 🍃 Form a closing circle
- 🍃 Conduct some type of evaluation with the group (questions, talking stick or drawing)
- 🍃 Walk the group to the welcome shelter
- 🍃 Bid farewell to the group

After the day ends with the children staff will:

- 🍃 Thoroughly check equipment
- 🍃 Check areas are left clean and tidy.
- 🍃 Complete the appropriate evaluation forms

Every week, and also whenever the community feels it necessary, there will be a democratic community meeting. Children and adults have an equal voice in these meetings. The meeting should be the place where any decision which affects the community and / or the day to day running of the project, be discussed.

Planning

Facilitators should complete their long-term curriculum planning after fully consulting the children on the types of learning opportunities they would like to have in the following half term. Facilitators should also create a skills map tracker to ensure they have an overview of the skills children have had an opportunity to practice across a half term, term and year.

Feedback and Assessment

Children are supported to review their own learning against their learning goals. Once a fortnight each child will meet one to one with the Lead Facilitator to complete the review cycle and adjust their goals or write new ones. Once a term (three times a year) parents and the child are able to meet with the Lead Facilitator to review the child's learning over the term.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff members involved in the Learning programmes are conscious that it is an exploratory experience for the group. They allow the group to play and learn as independently as possible, often without demonstrating or suggesting. If invited to provide support then they do, but otherwise merely observe, allowing the experience to be learner-directed.

The Lead Facilitator is responsible for the following:

- 🍌 Writing a curriculum plan which is based on the children's interests and has opportunities for children to develop many different skills
- 🍌 Quality assure the work of any other facilitators, volunteers or visiting facilitators.
- 🍌 They also take primary responsibility in ensuring that policies and procedures, rules and guidelines are adhered to.
- 🍌 The learning review process of each child.
- 🍌 Ensuring fortnightly review meetings happen.
- 🍌 Ensuring termly parents meetings happen.

Web link References for further reading:

Self-Directed Learning ; <https://www.self-directed.org/sde/>

Outdoor education ; <https://www.outdoor-learning.org/Portals/0/IOL%20Documents/HQOL/2049-Highquality-outdoor-learning-web-version.pdf?ver=2017-04-14-165244-293>

Free Play ; https://issuu.com/playwales/docs/play_types?e=5305098/53885121

Democratic processes ; <http://democraticeducation.org/index.php/features/what-is-democratic-education/>

Welsh Language Policy



Welsh language translations of the documentation are available on request from the Coed Cariad.

During sessions the use of both English and Welsh will be welcomed and encouraged. The Forest School and Outdoor Learning Leader will ensure that a list of key words specifically for that session in both languages is available at the start of each session.