



play : freedom : equality

Information for Parents

Statement of Purpose

About us

Coed Cariad started with Gwendraeth Environmental Education, which was a company set up many years ago, as a not for profit company to teach people about natural building, willow weaving and other environmentally friendly activities. In fact, one of the first projects was to construct the Welcome Shelter, where Coed Cariad is now housed. Recently, other opportunities have come up and many of the company members have moved onto other projects, so the remaining members, primarily Staci and Richard Sylvan, discussed setting up a nature-based child-centred learning community. In the interim the site was used by parent and toddler groups and by a forest school practitioner running sessions for parents and children.

These discussions led to the creation of Coed Cariad, and its Core Group of interested parents. Coed Cariad began life operating as part of Gwendraeth environmental education. The original Core Group are Katie Ruddy and Jeannette Simpson, and Ellie Smallcombe along with Siobhan Price and Janina Henly more recently, and initially a few others, who have since moved on, but we are open to new membership from interested parents! The original Core Group put together a

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vision and some initial policy documents and set about looking for a Lead Facilitator to take the project forward and in March 2019 they found and employed Elanor Smallcombe, known as Ellie, who joined the Core Group and helped to drive the project from vision to a reality, by writing policies and procedures and applying for CIW registration. We moved forward and found the lovely Siobhan Price who has come on board as the PIC for the setting. Coed Cariad became a CIC for banking and accountancy purposes, in January 2021.

Our Vision

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.

Democratically run, everyone collaborates equally to create a nurturing space where children are free to learn and grow in their own time.

Our vision is to create a learning community based on the joy of learning and discovery. A place where each child is nurtured and encouraged to become their best self. We aim to create a learning space where children and parents feel heard and nourished within a rich community environment.

We strive to provide an environment where the facilitators can hold a space for children, providing experience and resources to meet the children's needs. A space where children are accepted just as they are and where they feel happy and free to be themselves.

Children will be free to play and develop a connection with nature and so the physical space will be mostly based outside with warm and safe indoor retreats. There will be time for quiet contemplation with no pressure to be object or results driven, with space for wild play, adventure and exploration and making mess.

With love, the facilitators will trust each child to find their own way whilst standing alongside them so that they are able to shine their brightest and develop their own individual sense of purpose and passion.

The happiness of all is of primary importance for this is what we know will facilitate the best learning. We are equal, children and adults, different in our roles and responsibilities, but nonetheless equal in our influence to shape our community. We will nurture a culture of respect for ourselves, practicing empathy, compromise, cooperation and decision making.

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At Coed Cariad all children will be supported to play freely in outdoor settings as much as possible. We aim to use a variety of pedagogical theories including the Forest School Ethos of child led activity, Montessori, Steiner, Waldorf to name but a few at the heart of our work, building on children's interests to aid their development in all areas of learning.

We believe we can offer a valuable experience to children and a high standard of care. Our preference is to form long – term relationships and support to families and to become a community, with the children at the heart.

Coed Cariad is run at Blaen Y Wern, a short drive from Carmarthen and the National Botanical Gardens and we provide care and education for boys and girls who are home schooled or flexi schooled, in a home/forest school/outdoor learning and smallholding setting. We aim to provide a high quality, flexible childcare for families, with families. We aim to work with parents and will respect your wishes, values and practices for the care of your child, without compromising the ethos of self-directed and democratic learning. To ensure the best care and continuity we encourage the sharing of information regularly to help children feel secure and safe.

Our Lead Facilitator is Elanor, known as Ellie, who is a qualified Forest school practitioner and has a passion for getting children back to basics in nature. She runs her own Forest School business and prior to this she taught children with Special Educational Needs in a special school for 12 years. She has completed many courses, qualifications and checks to help deliver a quality Forest school/Outdoor Learning service and continues to access a wide variety of continuing professional development courses. These include:

- 🌿 DBS Checks
- 🌿 Agored Cymru Level 3 Forest School Practitioner, currently updating this to include Coastal school Leader training and Outdoor Learning Curriculum Coordinator Training.
- 🌿 Level 3 CCPLD
- 🌿 Outdoor 16 hour Paediatric First Aid Level 3
- 🌿 Bsc Hons Human Communication Studies (non clinical Speech Therapy)
- 🌿 PGCE Primary Education
- 🌿 Various SEN courses, such as PECS, Signalong, TEACCH, Team Teach
- 🌿 DSO training in order to be our safeguarding lead
- 🌿 Food Hygiene training

Ellie, who is also our Responsible Individual with CIW, will be supported by our Person In Charge, Siobhan Price, a qualified teacher and childcare practitioner with

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many years of experience working in a wide variety of child care settings, including now training the future childcare providers at a local further education college. Janina Henly joined the team as a Level 3 CCPLD apprentice in October 2021 with many years of experience in running Montessori style Kindergarten sessions and childcare, a passion for the outdoors and the natural world, and a Masters Degree!

We are registered to care for up to 16 boys and girls, who are home schooled or flexi schooled, under the age of 12, although we also take children above the age of 12, in true multi age learning style, but we ensure that the care of the 3 -12 year olds is not impacted negatively by having the older children working alongside.

We operate within the government and CIW guidelines for child to adult ratios, in fact we aim to have a higher adult to child ration than recommended to enable more activities to be offered. We aim to work with parents to deliver flexibility when needed so please feel free to contact us to discuss your needs.

We welcome all children into our setting regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, family status cultural background, disability, we will treat all children in our care as an individual and with equal concern and encourage all the children in our care to do the same.

Our Contact details

Coed Cariad

Email info@coedcariad.org

Tel 07736 488660 (please note that this is Ellie's personal Mobile, so try to keep Coed Cariad phone calls to the Coed Cariad days or thereabouts!)

We have Public Liability Insurance through Birnbeck Insurance Services.

Ellie has her own Forest School Insurance, also through Birnbeck Insurance Services,



Our Site.

Blaen Y Wern is owned by Rhuddin Housing co-op, who also go by the name of Heartwood in more recent years. It is a 37-acre former dairy farm, set in the beautiful Gwendraeth Valley. There is approximately 10 acres of pastures and paddocks that house a few sheep a pony, an assortment of ducks and hens, cat and dogs. Most of which have no access to the Coed Cariad part of the site during our operational hours, although one or two of the cats may slink past! Therefore, the children will not have regular contact with the animals on site, but should projects require, animal experiences may be brought in or sought at a variety of sites and excursions.

The rest of the land is a mixture of newish woodland planted approximately 10 years ago and mature broadleaf deciduous woodland.

Approximately 20 acres has been set aside for educational projects, and there is a stream bisecting the land forming a natural boundary between the Heartwood Community and Coed Cariad.

The Welcome Shelter

A beautifully constructed A frame round wood building close to the driveway, set on an area of hardstanding and adjacent to the toilet facilities and a large barn. The Welcome Shelter has a removable front allowing it be opened up for the outside and indoor spaces to flow.

The welcome shelter offers comfortable seating, table space and wood burner for the colder days. Within the Welcome shelter and the Welcome shelter vicinity there are banks of resources for the children to access, including but not exhaustively, books, art and craft supplies, loose parts, play equipment and toys, and forest school inspired resources.

The Barn

The barn is adjacent to the welcome shelter and its is currently kept shut, although in the future we hope to access a part of it to possibly develop a workshop space.

The Toilets

Children can access the toilet whenever they need to and these are in a separate small building opposite the welcome shelter. The toilets are a composting toilet system, with handwashing facilities. If support is required, we will assist them. We will monitor hand washing at all times. If required we change nappies regularly on a changing mat which is cleaned before and after use and we always protect the child's dignity. We support parents with potty training where needed and with any additional toileting requirements as required. There are two toilets close to the Welcome shelter and one further toilet at the other end of the site by the Roundhouse.

Outdoor Space

The site for Coed Cariad is based on around 1 acre of hard standing and garden area based around the buildings. The area is gated off from the main driveway. The garden has areas for growing, a log circle and there are plans to develop this area further to support the children's play and interests. Behind the barn there is a flat area of grass, which can be used to erect a large yurt for events or different activities.

There is a 3 acre field known as the Heart Field, with a flat wood chipped path winding through it. From the Heart Field you then move into the mature broadleaved woodland, in which the forest school site is situated.

The forest school site is comprised of the roundhouse, which will form a second indoor space for Coed Cariad, once repaired and there are a variety of woodland based resources and toys for the children to access.

Children under the age of 8 will be supervised at all times in the outdoor areas and whilst we are in the Welcome shelter area they are within earshot/sight of staff whilst playing in the various areas, with staff completing regular checks of all play areas. With parents' written permission children over the age of 8 will be allowed to play unsupervised in the outdoor learning provision areas and close outdoor areas, further afield they will all be supervised.

We encourage outdoor play and ask children come suitably dressed for the weather with wellies and coats and clothes that you don't mind getting dirty!



Activities, Aims and objectives.

We aim to offer a learning space where 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.

Coed Cariad will do this by:

- Ensuring the importance of freely chosen play and learning activities
- Our 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.

Ellie's first language is English, Siobhan is Bilingual Welsh and English, and we aim introduce children to a basic use of Welsh and encourage the Welsh speakers to use the language. The facilitators are making use of local Welsh language learning drives to learn more Welsh. Ellie also speaks some French and Spanish to a basic conversational level so can introduce children to additional languages. If we have children in our care who speak another language, we will endeavour to learn a few key phrases, which will also be introduced to all the children.

All snacks and meals will be provided in line with healthy eating and fresh drinking water is available at all times. Children's individual dietary needs are adhered too

and we will also take the time to learn and consider their preferences when planning menus.

We are able to offer a wide range of activities both adult and child led to encourage your child to develop and learn through new experiences. Along with our passion for outdoor activities, these include cooking, messy play (we love this!), gardening, dressing up, role play, block play, puzzles, stories and arts and crafts using various mediums. Outdoor activities may include:

- 🍃 *Nature Exploration*
- 🍃 *Building dens and other structures*
- 🍃 *Fires and cooking*
- 🍃 *Games and imaginative play activities, including access to a Mud Kitchen*
- 🍃 *Natural Crafts*
- 🍃 *Using tools, where appropriate for example knives, peelers and saws.*
- 🍃 *Scavenger Hunts*
- 🍃 *Seasonal Celebrations*

Children are encouraged to join in the planning of activities and contribute to any review or evaluation of their experience if they are able and willing.

We will follow the interests of the children in our care and plan age and developmentally appropriate activities that they will enjoy.

We have a good understanding of the Foundation Phase and the National Curriculum, including keeping abreast of the changes to the curriculum with announcement of the 2022 curriculum and the Areas of Learning and Experience, and we encourage children's learning through play.

Observations assessments and record keeping - we take a reflective approach to our work using observation as a tool to plan activities and ensure children's needs are met. The progress of children is assessed by observation and recorded. We have a duty to share some information with the local authority/CIW. Our records are kept in line with our confidentiality policy and are available for discussion with parents/carers at any time.

We will take appropriate action when special needs are identified and the welfare and development of the child is promoted in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties. The new Additional Learning Needs Transformation programme for Wales is now being followed. We have access to this document digitally.

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Our preference is to offer children active experiences wherever possible.

We will also take children on trips and walks or story walks, which are enjoyable learning experiences.

Before starting at our setting, we will arrange settling in sessions, so that your child can get used to our staff and setting. The more information you give us about your child's routines, likes, dislikes and any special comfort/security things he/she may have like a teddy blanket etc will go a long way to helping them settle. These settling in sessions will be charged at the daily rate of £25, or £12.50 for half day sessions if required.

We may be able to offer a place to children with special needs. In these circumstances, the main concern will be whether we are able to offer the best care that the child needs and that our setting is suitable for their requirements. We would need to have a full understanding of any conditions and treatments before a child comes into our care and we are willing to attend training and further ongoing training to provide your child with the best possible care.

As a professional organisation we use legally binding contracts, which must be signed by both parties before care can commence. All details about the care that you require will be set out in the contract and parents have their own signed copy to keep.

We have a Handbook of information, policies and procedures for our setting which we will go through with you and ensure you understand. We will give you a digital copy for your records, with printed versions of policies such as The Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

To ensure that we are providing a children's service in accordance to the wishes of parents and children. We will carry out a review of our service every year and will ask you to make comments on the provision of the service.

We will then review any changes or improvements that will be planned in the near future. This will be available to CIW.

We welcome any comments, suggestions, compliments and complaints by parents and are willing to answer any questions or concerns that parents may have.

We have a complaints policy which sets out the procedures we follow when a complaint has been made. Alternatively, if the complaint is of a regulatory nature, parents may contact CIW who will investigate thoroughly

The contact details are as follows:

Care Inspectorate Wales,
Welsh Government Office
Sarn Mynach
Llandudno Junction
LL31 9RZ
CIW@gov.wales
www.careinspectorate.wales
0300 7900 126

As a registered day care provider and also forest school leader, we have a policy and procedure in the event of an emergency. Ellie holds a current 16 hour outdoor paediatric first aid certificate and all parents give signed permission for us to use first aid or seek emergency treatment should the need arise. We will contact parents as soon as possible if an emergency should occur to advise them and ask them to collect their children. If for whatever reason we are unable to contact parents our responsible person may contact them.

Services; including Numbers, Ages, Genders, Opening Hours, Staffing.

All sessions are for both boys and girls and we aim to work within Forest school ratio recommendations.

Up to 6 3 -11 year olds (per staff member)

Up to 8 9 -13 year olds (per staff member)

Up to 10 14 - 18 year olds (per staff member)

These numbers may vary depending on staffing levels.

Working hours and holidays

Our normal working hours are 9am to 3pm, Monday and Tuesday.

We aim to be as flexible as possible to accommodate parent's needs and wraparound care maybe discussed as Coed Cariad develops, and it is noted that Ellie is on site longer hours than the usual 9-3 day.

We work within the Carmarthenshire term dates, again with the option of developing holiday clubs as Coed Cariad develops. Full contracted fees will be payable for any holidays taken outside of these dates.



Forest School and Outdoor Learning Information.

Forest School and Outdoor Learning is a unique educational experience and process that offers predominantly children; though other client groups are developing, including young people, adults and people with learning difficulties, “the opportunity to succeed and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment.” (Forest of Avon Trust, 2014)

In Forest School and Outdoor Learning children, young people and adults engage tasks and activities, many of which are self-motivated and all are set out in small achievable steps, throughout the year and in almost all weathers. Clients “will work with tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world.” (Forest of Avon Trust, 2014)

The Forest School and Outdoor Learning concept originates in Denmark and was originally aimed at pre-school children, where it was found that children who had attended Forest School and Outdoor Learning then arrived at school with strong social and communication skills, having the ability to work in groups effectively, generally had high self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities. These foundations were found to help them to raise their academic achievements.

Forest School and Outdoor Learning Programmes encourage holistic development in children including the opportunities for them to:

- develop personal and social skills
- work through practical problems and challenges
- use tools to create, build or manage
- pursue knowledge that interests them and take ownership of their learning
- build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- develop practical skills
- understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- explore, learn about and understand connections between humans and the natural world
- regularly experience achievement and success, whilst also learning how to manage set backs

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- reflect on learning and experiences
- develop their language and communication skills
- improve physical motor skills
- develop the ability to be self-motivated
- improve their concentration skills

Forest School and Outdoor Learning activities will depend on the ability and experience of participants, however examples of Forest School and Outdoor Learning activities include:

- Fires and cooking
- Building dens and other structures
- Woodland management and nature exploration
- Games for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts
- Seasonal celebrations

Coed Cariad also provides more generalised outdoor learning activities, which are not necessarily classed as Forest School and Outdoor Learning Activities, but are play based and in the outdoor environment.

[Admissions and Fees Policy](#)

Coed Cariad welcomes all children from all backgrounds, cultures and abilities. Children need to be aged between 3 and 12 years old and we can currently accept 16 children in total and the space will be provided 2 days per week.

- Any family interested in their child attending Coed Cariad is welcome to make an appointment to visit the space and the facilitators by emailing Ellie@coedcariad.org or Info@coedcariad.org
- Parents are required to fill in an application form and sign to say they have read and understood the policies and procedure documentation of Coed Cariad, available in hard copy on site, or digitally on our website, facebook group or via email on request.
- Once an application form has been received by the admin team and the staff feel that the child's emotional, social and academic needs can be met at the space, and the children with their parents have completed a minimum of two full or half day visits, and an induction evening, the trial period can begin.
- The 6-week trial will be costed at the normal rate to cover running costs, but should a child leave during this 6-week period the 4-week notice period will be waived and fees paid refunded. The trial period will give the child the opportunity to experience Coed Cariad and for the staff to ensure that Coed Cariad will be a space where the child will be happy and thrive.

- 🍃 We ask that once a term a member from each family commits some time to helping to maintain the space. We will hold half termly work days where possible and parents or a nominated person are required to attend at least one per term.
- 🍃 We are happy to take on children with special needs providing we feel we can provide them with the care and resources and equipment that they need. If your child has additional needs please discuss them with us first as we would not want to raise your expectations.
- 🍃 Parents are welcome to stay as long as they wish at drop off times.
- 🍃 Parents will be asked to read and sign policies and procedures, and to complete and sign contracts and enrolment forms, before admission.
- 🍃 We aim to make attending Coed Cariad as accessible as possible for families and we are striving to keep the costs as affordable as possible.
- 🍃 Please see below for guidance on fees. If you would like your child to attend Coed Cariad but you are currently not able to meet the fees requested, we encourage you to come and talk to us. Whilst we need to ensure the viability and sustainability of the project, we would like to be able to consider the possibility of 'payment in kind' contributions as an alternative payment. Families with an annual income lower than 50k, who wholeheartedly believe in Coed Cariad, are invited to apply to be considered for this.
- 🍃 We will currently be open 2 days per week

Daily Fee	Monthly Fee	Annual Fee
£25	£162.50 (if paid monthly over the full 12 months of the year)	£1950

- 🍃 We will calculate each half term's days and invoice accordingly in advance of the half term.
- 🍃 Fees will be invoiced each half term via email and we request that they are paid on receipt of invoice, or in two instalments, as per the invoice or accompanying letter notations.
- 🍃 Each family will be required to pay an additional fee of £20 per term to contribute to materials and resources.

Sibling discount

- 🍃 10% sibling discount will be available for each additional child.

Notice

- To aid proper planning, parents are requested to give as much notice as possible of their child leaving, and must give at least 4 weeks notice in writing. In the absence of this, fees must be paid in lieu.

Advance Payment

- Every family will be required to pay the half term's fees in advance by direct debit. We will invoice you before the start of each half term. If in the event that you decide to leave Coed Cariad and give at least 4 weeks notice, any outstanding payment will be returned to you.

Absences

- If your child cannot attend for whatever reason you will still be required to pay the full amount.

Voluntary Bursary Contribution

- Families with an annual income of 80k or over are encouraged to contribute £50 per term to help families that cannot afford the fees requested.

If you have any concerns regarding our admissions and fees policy please do not hesitate to contact us.

The full Coed Cariad handbook contains information, policies and procedures relating to the running of Coed Cariad, including Accident and Emergency procedures, Child Protection Policy and Procedures, Behaviour Policy and Forest School and Outdoor Learning sessions in a safe and enjoyable way. It was developed by Elanor Smallcombe on behalf of the Coed Cariad Core Group.

The Handbook is made available to partner organisations wishing to work with us prior to the activity taking place. It is also to be read by all staff, volunteers and freelancers working for or with Coed Cariad prior to participation.

The overall Handbook including all policies and procedures is subject to annual review and to immediate review if an issue or incident indicates the need for this.

All the policies and Procedures are available on our website www.coedcariad.org