

Coed Cariad Learning Community

Pedagogy & Curriculum Policy

*‘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.

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 to 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

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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.

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.

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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

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.
- The learning review process of each child.
- Ensuring fortnightly review meetings happen
- Ensuring termly parents meetings happen.

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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-High-quality-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/>