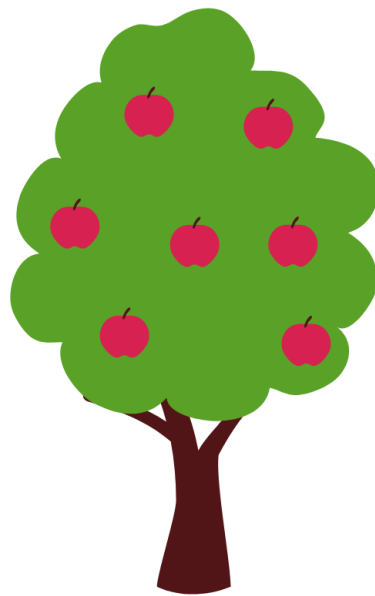




Little Eden Nursery

Resoridorf inspired learning and care
for children aged 0-8

About us

A privately run day nursery, for 0–8-year-old children, set on four acres of land in the outskirts of Cardiff. A nursery who cares for more than just our children. We care for our families, our employees, our community, our natural environment and aim to make a difference for the future of childcare and learning provision.

Our roots

The owner of Little Eden Nursery is a qualified childcare practitioner and has over ten years of experience working with children in the early years care and education sector. They have had various roles, including being a childminder assistant, a nursery practitioner, nursery manager and a teaching assistant. During their time as a daycare nursery manager, the owner realised common themes and challenges within the nursery setting. They observed low wages for childcare practitioners, long working hours and an alarmingly high staff turnover due to staff finding higher paid jobs in other sectors. Furthermore, they faced challenges with underqualified staff or staff who had recently qualified from college with a certificate yet seemed to lack basic and essential skills required to provide a high standard of childcare provision. This led to the owner to speculate the standard of childcare training at colleges. Moreover, the owner concluded that the elements of the national minimum standards such as child to staff ratio were not suitably high enough, to provide exceptional childcare provision. Even though the owner had responsibility and authority with many aspects of the day to day running of the nursery, they felt that there were many elements that were out of their control; financial budgets and staff ratio expectations were set by their higher authority. This led the owner to do their own research, identify a vision for a nursery that would succeed in delivering the highest quality of childcare and learning. The owner has a passion to become an employer who will positively change the narrative of what a career in childcare looks like, spread the vision and overall impact the expectations of childcare practice.

The owner was brought up on a farm, assisting tending to the animals, gardening, cooking, spending hours playing on the land and making hay in the fields during the summer. They embraced the simplicities of explorative learning and thrived. This is a part of the owner's vision, to bring that same sense of wonder for nature, life skills and creativity to the children who attend Little Eden Nursery.

A new approach

Little Eden Nursery has taken inspiration from three learning approaches, Reggio- Emilia, Montessori and Waldorf. The owner felt that their vision for Little Eden didn't align entirely with any one singular approach; for example, the Montessori approach promotes child centred learning and loose parts which is important to Little Eden, however it does not include fantasy and role play. This did not align with the emphasis on creative learning within the Little Eden Nursery vision. However, the Waldorf approach does value role play.

This led the owner to combine key elements of each approach that align with the Little Eden ethos and vision, to create a bespoke approach to learning and care provision which the owner refers to as a 'Resoridorf approach'. Little Eden is passionate about creating a calm, home from home environment, where children are encouraged to explore, be curious learners, use their innate creativity, discover their individualism, grow their independence, foundational life skills and develop a natural confidence for seeking out learning. Outdoor exploration and learning are intertwined into the daily routine, enjoyed on the 4 acres of land that the nursery is situated on.

Part of the Little Eden vision is to inspire children to embrace the wonder of the outdoors, encouraging curious minds, creativity and independence. Children will be equipped with the foundations of life skills and an understanding of the value of being a part of the diverse Cardiff community and wider world around them. Children will leave Little Eden Nursery with a love for exploration and will walk into their futures with a natural confidence and passion for learning.

The Eden Practitioner status

The second key element of Little Eden is the Eden practitioner status. When offered employment, all staff are to attend compulsory training over a six-month period. Little Eden staff are paid to undertake this training. This training has been inspired by the 'Noland College'. At the highly prestigious private Norland college, students qualify with a standard Level 3 childcare qualification, however they have an added certificate known as the Norlander practitioner status which they obtain following completion of their in-depth training. This then allows the practitioners to go on and earn higher wages as 'Norlanders', in comparison to a childcare practitioner who obtains the standard Level 3 qualification alone from local state funded colleges and generally will go on to earn the national minimum wage. The owner believes that a high standard of training should be accessible for all, regardless of whether practitioners attend private or state college. The owner

has carefully crafted a Norland inspired training programme for staff to obtain an 'Eden Practitioner Status'. With this status, Little Eden staff can access higher wages, enhance their skills, knowledge and future career prospects. The owner believes this will contribute positively to standards of childcare provision, employee satisfaction and lower staff turnover. The six-month programme includes cooking, basic farming and gardening, outdoor learning, Art and craft, music and creative arts, professionalism, wellbeing and mental health, ALN support and Signalong, as well as courses in swimming and sports provision.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

For a business idea to be strong and innovative, it is essential for it to have a 'unique selling point' (Business Wales, 2024). Little Eden Nursery is a social enterprise, meaning all the profits generated go directly back into the nursery budget. The nursery budget covers areas such as learning resources and external activities for children, staff training, staff wages, the Eden bursary fund, the nursery environment and wider community events, summer and fayres, sports day, nature week, farmers market and family cookery classes. Nursery fees at Little Eden will be as low as possible and competitive with other nurseries in the area.

Weaknesses

From my own personal experience of being a manager during the early days of a new nursery business, it can take some time for families to come through the doors and sign their children up. This can create financial pressures due to needing to fund outgoings during the early set up stages of opening a new business. It can take time for communities to hear about the new business.

Opportunities

Once Little Eden becomes well established, the families and employees who work with us will be a part of an exciting new community base, with opportunities for children to have access to the rural world within a city, with exceptional learning and care. Furthermore, employees will receive quality training and be a part of a team aiming to make a real difference in the childcare sector.

Threats

We live in a VUCA world, of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Millar et al., 2018). The recent COVID-19 pandemic showed the us exactly how fragile the world can be. From my own experience of managing a nursery during the pandemic, I can testify that with the endless changes to guidelines, staff shortages, lockdown closures and all the other complexities that did arise, created immense financial pressure on the business and at times, a threat of permanent closure.

Following this SWOT analysis (Business Wales, 2024), it is concluded that Little Eden has a unique selling point alongside many other strengths. For Little Eden to get families and employees signed up, investing time and finances into the business marketing from the beginning is essential. Little Eden is going to create new opportunities within the community, from quality childcare to exceptional childcare practitioner training. Opportunities can be built on over time as it becomes more established in the community. Businesses will always face potential threats from entirely unpredictable circumstances, such as changes in law, economic recessions, health pandemics and outbreaks of war. However, with Little Eden becoming such a hub of community, it is anticipated that although these threats cannot be erased, the community would support Little Eden as best as they could during unpredictable circumstances.

Financial forecast

The owner of Little Eden nursery has extensive experience with managing financial aspects of a business, dealing with budgets, service fees, grants, invoices and staff wages. The owner has been able to apply their knowledge to consider the start up costs required to open the doors of Little Eden Nursery. Expected start up costs include rent for nursery premises, CIW registration, nursery equipment, learning resources, farm animals, staff training, staff wages, energy bills and business insurance. According to Business Wales, Little Eden Nursery would be eligible for a start up loan of £250,000 and more (Business Wales, 2024). Due to Little Eden being a social enterprise and an asset for the community, the owner plans to set up a Crowdfunding site, for local people and businesses to donate for start-up funding (Crowdfunding, 2024). The owner has calculated that this would be sufficient to cover the startup costs. Furthermore, the owner has the support of their family members, who are qualified and willing to provide free training for employees in gardening and cooking.

Research

Academic research studies have found that there are many benefits to a child's health, wellbeing, learning and overall development through being in touch with nature and having opportunities to be outdoors. Learning which engages the senses and takes place in a natural, real-life environment is said to provide a more memorable and effective learning experience for children. Outdoor provision unlocks the full potential of children by offering an unpredictable environment where children have opportunities to explore, react, problem solve, work and communicate with others in circumstances they may not face otherwise when learning in an indoor classroom environment. When children are immersed in their learning in a natural environment, a level of innate curiosity is activated, stimulating a deeper level of understanding of the world around them (Rolf et al., 2022).

Research studies have found that children who engage in more outdoor based learning become more confident and resilient learners, who are strong communicators, are physically fit, less stressed and more able to stay engaged due to a calm environment. It was also found that these children had higher test scores, performed better in reading, writing, mathematics, social skills, critical thinking, problem solving (Camassao et al., 2018). Furthermore, these children had a stronger emotional connection to the natural world around them, which led them to become more environmentally conscious young adults where they are considering their impact on the ecosystem. Studies have shown that a passion for the natural world and preservation of nature is formed in the early years of childhood (Omidvar, 2019). Children who spent their learning time immersed outdoors, were able to grow in their personal and holistic development, just as much as their academic progress with the basis of outdoor learning (Lekies et al., 2015).

The 'Resoridorf' inspired approach curated by Little Eden has been pieced together by combining key elements of Reggio Emilia, Montessori and Waldorf, which align with the Little Eden vision. The Reggio Emilia approach which originally emerged in a town called, 'Reggio Emilia' in Italy, was developed in World War two, by local educators, families and other individuals in the community. Loris Malaguzzi was an educator and key contributor to the creation of the approach (Moss, 2016). Reggio Emilia emphasises the importance of children being viewed as capable and competent, who benefit from having an active role in choosing their learning, which puts the child and their interests at the centre of daily activities. This is part of fostering an emergent style curriculum where nursery practitioners plan their sessions around what the children want, rather

than predetermining what they are going to learn. Reggio Emilia promotes long term projects, which allows children to take their time with their learning and develop a deeper understanding of topics. Furthermore, Reggio Emilia approach has described the classroom or learning environment to be a 'third teacher' (Moss, 2016). This is where Little Eden is passionate about carefully curating nature rich environments, where a curiosity for learning is organically stimulated, without a practitioner having to 'do' or 'set up' anything at all.

The Montessori approach was originally developed over time in the early 1900's by an Italian educator and physician, Dr Maria Montessori. Little Eden aligned with the Montessori approach of having a mixed age learning environment. Children from 0-8 can move freely around the premises, which really enables that 'home-from-home' environment. Older children can mix with younger children and can learn from each other (Dreimane, 2018).

Little Eden strongly aligns with many elements of the Waldorf approach. The Waldorf approach, also known as 'Steiner', education, was created by an Austrian philosopher and social reformer, Rudolf Steiner. He founded the first Waldorf approach school in 1919 in Germany (Homa, 2022). Overall, Waldorf holds a holistic approach to learning, where practitioners aim to aid development of the whole child; intellectually, emotionally, socially and artistically. There is an emphasis on creativity, imagination, storytelling and the integrated arts, music, visual arts and movement (Homa, 2022). Research has shown the endless benefits of the creative arts in aiding children's overall development, including language development, social and emotional, cognitive and academic. Furthermore, children develop their problem-solving skills, due to creativity growing a mindset of approaching situations from multiple perspectives, experimenting and exploring. Particularly for younger children, creative learning through painting and mark making aid the development of fine motor skills. Moreover, drama and dancing develop a child's gross motor skills through larger movement of their bodies. Waldorf promotes outdoor learning activities and gardening which is integrated into the Little Eden vision (Nicol et al., 2017).

The Norland College, which is in the city of Bath, England was founded in 1892 by a governess called Emily Ward. She originally established the college due to observing a need for professional childcare training and aimed to provide high quality training, which emphasises the importance of childcare skills, moral education, character development and physical fitness. In current day, Norland College is now famous worldwide for its prestigious training and Norland Nannies who go on to have affluent careers, caring for children from famous families such as princes and princesses of the British Royal monarchy. The Norland Practitioner status is a professional and

accredited status awarded to graduates of the Norland College, who have completed the rigorous training programme, including health and safety, nutrition and meal planning, communication and relationship building, creativity and play, safeguarding and child protection, professionalism, problem solving and continuous learning. This status enables Norland practitioners to access higher paid childcare opportunities due to the professional reputation the 'Norlander' status holds (Norland, 2023). Little Eden has adopted inspiration from the Norland training and created a training programme with similar learning elements to equip practitioners with a high level of skills and gain the Eden practitioner status.

Before opening as a nursery, Little Eden must be registered with The Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), who are the regulatory body responsible for inspecting early years and social care services within Wales. The CIW play a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness, safety and quality of childcare provision. The CIW monitor services and carry out regular inspections to ensure settings are complying with legal requirements. As a daycare provider, Little Eden would be expected to follow the National Minimum Standards (NMS) set by the Welsh Government. The NMS is an in-depth document of expected standards for the operation and management of a daycare service. It includes, staffing and qualifications, safety and premises, child development and learning, health and wellbeing, safeguarding and child protection, partnership with families, equality and diversity and documentation. The CIW has the authority to permanently close a daycare business if standards are not adhered to (Gov Wales, 2023).

It is required for daycare settings to ensure childcare practitioners hold the relevant qualifications required by the CIW. Daycare settings must have a Safeguarding officer and all staff must receive training in safeguarding and child protection. Staff must be First Aid trained and follow procedures. It is an expectation that daycare settings have all the relevant policies for staff and service users to have access to. Policies and procedures include, Safeguarding, Equality and diversity, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and confidentiality, fees, complaints, emergency evacuation, medication administration, digital safety, adverse weather, missing child and First Aid administration (Gov Wales, 2023). Additionally, daycare settings are required to have relevant public liability and employer insurance. Furthermore, it is required that daycare services comply with other relevant legislation set by Welsh Government, including environmental health regulations and employment law (Gov Wales, 2023).

Moreover, by law is required that premises serving food are registered with the Food Standards Agency who are the government regulatory body who inspect standards of kitchen premises, food

preparation, provision and documentation. Any staff preparing any type of food, must have completed Food Hygiene training and have an accredited certificate (Gov Wales, 2021).

Long term, Little Eden hopes to collaborate local colleges in implementing the 'Eden Practitioner Status' training into state funded courses, to improve the way in which childcare qualifications are taught. This will change the narrative of a career in childcare, expand career opportunities for childcare professionals and ensure the quality of childcare and learning provision in the future.

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