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‘Coastal Warrior’

Coastal warriors is a bespoke educational experience which offers school teachers the opportunity to provide their children with the chance to discover the beautiful coastline of Gower and the rich opportunities it can provide. By providing specialist led educational visits to Gower which focus on sustainability, children become engaged and informed on the impacts that ocean plastic pollution has on the environment. From the harm it causes to wildlife, to the toxic threats of micro plastics. The hands on experience can allow children to identify and embrace the vital part they play in protecting the ocean environment, developing their knowledge on sustainability and reinforcing their global citizenship as part of the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and skills, 2008).

Children can also experience an introduction to foraging; learning that their food does not need to be packaged and hauled across the country or indeed the world, Nature's plate has a lot to offer! Cookery classes using the hand-picked ingredients can afford a range of learning opportunities, from mathematical skills to physical skills, cognitive development to social skills (Gerald, 2008), the skill set on offer is abundant.

With so many aspects of the curriculum incorporated in to a ‘Coastal Warrior’ experience and a stress free day on the coastline of Gower, where we take care of everything, the ‘Coastal Warrior experience is an opportunity not to be missed!

The learning hub



(Source: no date)

'Coastal Warrior' beach clean days

What's involved?

The coastal Warrior beach clean day is a fantastic opportunity to provide children with a hands-on experience of the effects of plastic pollution on the environment. Children are given the appropriate equipment to collect rubbish from the beach before returning to the learning hub where they will be given an educational talk and partake in sorting the rubbish. Following this, they will get creative designing a sculpture or creating art work using the materials they have collected.



(Source:Chronical
2014)

live,

'The 'Coastal Warrior' beach clean day was fantastic. Dawn was amazing with the children. They have learnt so much about the effects of plastic pollution and are eager to make a difference to society by signing up for 'Coastal Warrior' status and becoming a plastic free school.'

The Foraging experience



(source: Natured, 2015)



The 'Coastal Warrior' foraging experience allows children to gain an understanding of foraging and how the environment is rich with free food that doesn't need to be packaged and hauled across the country or across the world. Children will be given a taster session in foraging along the beautiful coastline of Gower and within the wonderful woodlands of Caswell Beach. Once they return to the learning hub they will partake in a cookery activity, using some of the free ingredients they have found. Elderflower lemonade and blackberry pie have proven to be a firm favourite with our past warriors!

The benefits of choosing a ‘Coastal Warrior’ experience for your school class

Both the Coastal Warrior beach clean day and the Foraging experience can enrich children with the importance of sustainability and allow them to develop a keen interest in the environment. The hot topic of plastic pollution is fast gaining momentum with statistics suggesting an estimated 8 billion tons of plastic waste ends up in the sea each year (Plastic Oceans, 2019). In the United Kingdom, The Marine Conservation Society found 718 pieces of litter for every 100m stretch of beach surveyed (BBC News, 2017). A recent survey by Plymouth University (2017) found that plastic was found in a third of UK-caught fish, including cod, haddock, mackerel and shellfish. This can result in malnutrition or starvation for the fish, and lead to plastic ingestion in humans too (Kirby, 2018). Through participating in the beach clean and educational discussion, children can become engaged, enraged and informed on the impacts that ocean plastic pollution has.

The programme is enriched with the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship. The ESDGC seeks to find ways to raise awareness and action to address the consequences of our lifestyle choices, it focuses on the ‘local and global implications of everything we do and the actions that individuals and organisations can take in response to local and global issues’ (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and skills, 2008).

The experience doesn’t end at the end of the school trip; schools are encouraged to sign up to the coastal warrior package. They can earn Coastal Warrior status, a quality assurance mark that is fast gaining momentum in the current climate where there is a push for sustainable living. Coastal warrior status can be achieved by attending both sessions. Sessions also differ each term; there are six coastal warrior days in total. This allows children to experience the different seasons and what nature’s plate has to offer throughout the year. Once children have attended each session they will be awarded a Coastal warrior bronze badge. Silver and gold can be achieved through implementing a ‘plastic free’ initiative within the school. This is the perfect opportunity to get pupil voice groups involved as they can hold discussions on how they are going to implement the programme.

The Educational visits will be run by Angela Honey, an Early Years Outdoor Practitioner with fifteen Years’ experience working in a primary school and Dawn Cartwright, a renowned Environmentalist who has twenty years’ experience and has had three books published on foraging for kids and sustaining the coastline.

An Innovative idea

The Coastal Warrior programme is a unique idea which has proven to be very successful during the pilot scheme in West Wales. Beach cleans are becoming ever more popular around the world (Smithers, 2018). As we discover the damning statistics that plastic pollution can have, more and more people are getting involved in such schemes.

Surfers against sewage (2019) run a similar beach cleaning scheme, however it is a one off day course and is currently only running in England. The Coastal warrior experience is unique in that it offers schools a whole package to developing sustainability for our coastline. Schools can choose to partake in a one off school trip or they can choose to get more involved by joining up to the quality assurance scheme and eventually becoming a plastic free school. Plastic free school schemes are already in place in a number of areas (Davies, 2019) but none offer the hands on experience that coastal warriors can provide. Experiencing and witnessing the damaging effect that plastic can have on our coastline and doing a little bit to make a difference empowers children to stand up and make a difference. The 'coastal Warrior experience' is also unique in that offers the added activity of sculpture using the materials the children have collected. This allows children to be creative and to gain first-hand experience of reusing and recycling materials.

Teacher feedback questionnaires from past participants revealed that they have found the overall experience 'exceptional'. The general consensus from teachers is that to be able to go on a school trip, step back, and have someone else deliver a lesson has enabled them to enjoy the moment and support their children whole heartedly, without the worry of planning and time keeping. Teachers have also revealed how the experience has been a learning opportunity for them and how it has allowed them to participate in sustained shared thinking with their pupils.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety is of the utmost importance to us at 'Coastal Warriors'. With such rich learning opportunities on offer, there will always be elements of risk. Beach cleaning can of course bring elements of danger, broken glass and other harmful objects are often found during beach cleaning sessions. This danger can be eliminated by our provision of appropriate safety equipment. We provide thick hard wearing gloves and litter picking devices so the children will never have to come in to direct contact with anything harmful.

Foraging can also bring an element of risk which is why we provide gloves for this experience. Picking and sampling unknown species can be very dangerous, we inflict a no eating policy until we return to the learning hub. This way the qualified, experienced foragers can make sure there are no harmful species being ingested.

Cost

We have received funding from the sustainable development fund (SDF), which was set up by the welsh government and is co-ordinated by the natural resources Wales. They have pledged 75% of the total cost of the project which will cover staff costs and they have provided us with access to the learning hub located at Caswell beach. The remaining 25% has been covered by the European Union so the only cost of the trip will be for transportation to the venue.

Part 2- The Research

The Coastal Warrior experience is an opportunity for teachers and early years' practitioners to provide an educational visit for their children taking place in the outdoor environment. The origin of outdoor Education dates back to the end of the 17th century when John Locke (2013) discussed the importance of children spending some time in the open. Since then many philosophers have championed the importance of an outdoor education. Froebel (1862) asserts that through the observation of nature, children develop geographical knowledge as well as the capability of becoming responsible, active citizens.

In recent years, policy makers have taken on board the importance of an outdoor education suggested by philosophical and pedagogical thinking. The foundation phase framework emphasises the importance of the child being central to all learning, taking in to account the child's well-being, it advocates a balance between both child-initiated and adult led activities taking place within the indoor and outdoor environment (Welsh Government, 2015).

The Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) document aims to assist learners in becoming aware of the impact that their choices can have on other people, the economy and the environment (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and skills, 2008). Coastal Warriors incorporates the foundation phase framework and The ESDGC informing participants about the 'local and global implications of everything we do and the actions that individuals and organisations can take in response to local and global issues' (DCELLS, 2008:4). The Coastal Warrior beach clean day allows children to have a hands-on experience of the damage that plastic pollution and consumerism is having on the environment. Dewey (1938) discussed how first-hand experiences can be essential and invaluable. It is hoped that the visits will enrich children with the importance of sustainability and allow them to develop a keen interest in the environment.

A report from Estyn on the progress of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship outlined that children's understanding of the natural environment is 'often confined to their immediate environment, such as their school or home, however few pupils are able to refer to the wider world, for example where things people consume come from and go' (Estyn, 2014:7). The Coastal warrior beach clean day allows children to step away from the classroom and see for themselves the damaging effect that littering and plastic consumerism is having on the environment. The educational talk which they receive when they return to the learning hub is designed to empower children to make a difference, developing their global citizenship and encouraging them to become a plastic free school. Hammami et al (2017) suggests that interactive activities and lectures discussing environmental issues can help tackle the problem. He proclaims that the process of active learning should be introduced in the early years and should be continued throughout the education system.

The United Kingdom is committed to becoming a global leader in tackling the issues of plastic pollution; in 2018 the Education Secretary urged all schools to eliminate their use of single plastics by 2022 (Department for Education, 2018). The 'Coastal Warrior status' quality assurance scheme could enable schools to achieve this. After partaking in the beach clean and educational talk, children will return to school empowered to make a difference. It is suggested that the schools pupil voice group could discuss and implement a scheme to enable them to become plastic free. Pupil voice groups allow children to voice an opinion and to have their opinion taken seriously, complying with article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child which states that all children have the right to express their views (UNICEF, 1989).

The Coastal Foraging experience will also inform pupils of the over consumption of plastic in packaging. The Wales we want by 2050 document states that 'we need to reduce our consumption of natural resources and act to tackle the causes and consequences of climate change' (Welsh Government, 2015:1).

One of the seven well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act is for 'a globally responsible Wales – where we look after the Environment and think about other people around the World (Welsh Government, 2015). Sustainability is the

driving force behind 'Coastal Warriors'. Each of the experiences on offer is aimed at informing children of the importance of sustainability. The Well-Being of Future Generations Act (2015) advocates the importance of 'Involvement' in delivering sustainability, suggesting the need to involve people in achieving the well-being goals.

Foraging can be a fun, fulfilling way to spend time in the wild. Experiencing nature can develop skills and knowledge that can have a lasting effect on every aspect of a child's life and it can enhance their sense of wellbeing (Forage well, 2019). Hunt (2001) proclaims that foraging 'is a behaviour that is as important to the development of a child as it is to the future of the environment'. Foraging in your local environment can create local cultures reflective of local nature, it can impart a sense of ownership in local natural environments which would be fitting with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states 'Young children should be recognized as active members of families, communities and societies, with their own concerns, interests and points of view' (UNICEF, 2006:19).

The; A child's place: why environment matters (2004) document produced by the Green Alliance and in partnership with Barnardo's recommend that new ways are found to facilitate environmental education through out-of-school learning and green school design. They suggest that our generation of children will face the most challenging environmental issues in terms of the ever-increasing pressure on natural resources and climate change; they will need to be equipped with awareness of environmental issues and citizenship that is established through exploring the environment during childhood (Thomas and Thomson, 2004). The 'Coastal Warrior experience' facilitates these recommendations, providing an environmental education that is unique and engaging for a wide age range of children.

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Although the educational visits focus on sustainability, stepping outside of the classroom can afford many other learning opportunities (Bilton, 2010). Outdoor learning can be of substantial benefit to pupils in the development of their social

skills and can help to build the child's character (National Union of Teachers, 2012). Through outdoor learning, emotional and social well-being, renewed pride in community, an increase in confidence, stronger motivation towards learning, and a greater sense of belonging and responsibility can be developed (Charles 2012; Charles and Senauer 2012; Gill 2014; Maller 2009; Waite 2011a). Ofsted (2008) also discuss an increase in academic achievement and Bilton (2010) puts forth the physical and behavioural benefits of such learning.

However, with any outdoor learning activity or educational visits, barriers will arise and elements of risk will be present (Gill, 2013). Whilst beach cleans are growing in popularity (Smithers, 2018) there is the danger that children could encounter some unwanted and potentially dangerous media. Although protective equipment is provided, children could remove their safety wear and come in to direct contact with dangerous objects.

Foraging can also be a dangerous activity if not done correctly and this may well put some parents and teachers off participation. Although safety measures are in place and no foraged food should be consumed without inspection by a trained practitioner, young children are susceptible to putting things in their mouth. This could become very challenging for practitioners to insure the safety of all participants.

Another problematic factor that practitioner wishing to take part in the 'Coastal Warrior beach clean' and the 'Foraging Experience' may encounter is the inclusion of all pupils. Wheel chair users may be faced with barriers for participation due to the uneven terrain of a woodland and coastal path. The United Nations on the Convention of the Child, article 23 states that children with a disability should be able to join in with activities and that their disability shouldn't stop them from taking part (UNICEF, 1989).

The United Kingdom's coastline stretches for over 6500 miles (Coast, no date), which affords opportunities to expand 'Coastal Warriors' to other coastal areas. With documents like; The Wales We Want by 2050 championing the need to reduce our consumption of natural resources and act to tackle the causes (Welsh Government,

2015:1), the Coastal Warriors experience could be advantageous in delivering an education enriched with sustainability, making it a unique selling point with room for expansion.

The Foraging experience need not be restricted to woodland areas; there is the potential to expand the foraging experience to include rock pooling activities, resulting in cookery classes with sea food. However, further research needs to be undertaken to discover the feasibility of such activities with young children.

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