



Parent & Toddler for 0-3 years

Where Scout Hall/Christchurch United Reformed Church, Belle Vue Crescent, Llandaff North, Cardiff CF14 2FJ

When Tues & Thurs 9.30 - 11.30am (term-time) you can see our term dates here cardiffsteiner.org.uk/term-dates

Getting here

We are in the main church building not the portacabin. Please just come on in. There's lots of room for buggies and coats in the room. We're really easy to get to. Llandaff train station is just a few streets away, we're very well served by regular bus links from all areas of Cardiff, we're just 5-10 minutes from the A470 and M4 (junction 32) and the Taff Trail cycle route runs through Hailey Park right next to our venue.

Parking

We are in the residential area of Llandaff North. There is on-street parking on Belle Vue Crescent and the streets around. Please park considerately for our neighbours (not in front of driveways, on drop curbs or too close to corners) or use nearby Hailey Park Car Park 2 mins away.

Welcome to Parent and Toddler. Please make yourself feel at home and if you have any questions feel free to ask the Group leaders, Mandy and Gail.

All sessions include healthy snack, coffee, tea and herbal tea with dairy or oat milk. If possible please bring a piece of fruit to share at snack time. Give yourself a break and turn off your mobile phone, this is a time for you and your child. We hope you will enjoy it.

A little about our approach

Our Parent and Toddler groups are informed by Steiner Waldorf early education principles. This understands that a play-based, child-centred and unhurried approach offers the healthiest and strongest foundation for children's physical, social and cognitive development.

When given the opportunity, young children are naturally drawn into immersive, self-directed, free play. Our groups support your understanding of play, helping you provide an environment that enhances your child's imagination and experience of the world.

Here are some of the key benefits of free play for young children.

Encourages Cognitive and Brain Development

Children are hardwired to play. More than any other activity, play naturally stimulates a child's neural pathways, encouraging healthy cognitive and brain development.

Builds Social Skills and Self-Control

From rocking on a seesaw to setting up a tea party, play is how children learn to interact with one another, building essential skills in cooperation, conflict resolution, self-regulation, and communication. Research shows that children who engage in free play in the toddler and preschool years have better self-regulation abilities at ages 4 to 7.

Develops Creativity and Problem-Solving Skills

Children are naturally curious. By allowing them to play freely - with adult supervision but without adult direction - they learn to express themselves and use their imagination. Moving at their own pace they discover their own areas of interest. A baby's first movements to grasp objects become an adventure in learning about near and far, attainable and unattainable. Toddlers develop important problem-solving and decision-making skills by thinking up solutions to their own problems, like how to pull a toy around obstacles or getting objects "unstuck".

Supports Physical Health

Moving, rolling, grasping, stacking, balancing! Play helps young children develop both fine and gross motor skills, and is a natural opportunity to promote movement and physical expression.

Improves Language Skills and Literacy

Children's literacy and communication skills are developed during play. In fact, research indicates that children use their most advanced language skills while playing, which in turn supports the development of literacy skills.

How do we support Freeplay in our Toddler Groups?

The toys and materials are intended for open ended or multi use by the children. They are made of natural materials and are deliberately relatively undefined to allow maximum scope for imaginative use in children's play.

During Freeplay our task as adults is to be fairly unobtrusive. You may want to join in the Craft Activity, or sit near your child while they play. To encourage independent play we try to remember to talk quietly and to sit down and back so we don't dominate the children's space with either our bodies or our noise. You can use the time to quietly observe your child, they will come to you if they want something, and watch as they explore, discover and enjoy.

Feel free to talk with other parents / carers or with us, whilst trying to respect the calm atmosphere. Ringtime and Storytime are when we all join together and share experiences.

The Rhythm of the Session

Little children love the familiar, it makes them feel safe, and for this reason our sessions always follow the same pattern and include much repetition of songs and verses.



Our room is made to feel as cosy and homelike as possible. We try to provide a calm, unhurried and relatively peaceful atmosphere, whilst understanding that children this age need to use their bodies and voices, a lot, with much energy and loudly.

If you and your child attend regularly you'll find that your child learns the pattern and rhythm of the morning. A familiar song signals the move from one activity to the next. Your child will adapt to the rhythm of this and enjoy the safety of knowing what's coming next:

- **Freeplay & Craft** – an hour of indoor play in a homely atmosphere. You are welcome to join in with the seasonal craft activity
- **Tidy up Time** – all help to clear the toys into their special baskets
- **Ringtime** – the group join together for songs and finger rhymes - developing language skills and strengthening motor skills
- **Snacktime** – sitting quietly and waiting for candlelight to signal the start of the meal
- **Storytime** – a quiet finish to the session with a chance to snuggle you child on your lap and watch a seasonal puppet story

It takes time for children to get used to this rhythm - alternating between child-led play and times of group activity. We think of this rhythm as taking "in breaths" and "out breaths", that help children gradually learn to regulate these experiences at their own pace. We have experience in the group of many

children, from those who like to move a lot, to those who prefer quieter activities. The age and personality of each child will be key. If your child is not ready to join in a group activity yet then they, and you, are welcome to sit and observe for as long as needed. We can try to gradually encourage them to take part, knowing that all children are different and working with that.



During **Ringtime** we ask you, when possible, to participate, as young children learn most naturally by imitating what people do around them. If your child is not ready to join in yet they still benefit from you joining in. Your musicality, rhythmic movement, playfulness and sociability will mean they gain from being around the activity, and they often cannot resist joining in with the group themselves. Don't worry if you don't know the words, you'll soon get to know them and Mandy and Gail can give you a copy of the words if you would like them, or you can [see them here](#).

Supporting you, Supporting each other

We aim to provide a supportive environment for parents and carers of young children, and a nurturing one for the children themselves. It's a space to come together to share experiences, learn new skills and support each other through the highs and lows of parenting.

We know that parents/carers of young children can sometimes feel exhausted and isolated during this often joyful, fulfilling stage of family life. Our most important task is to support you whilst you raise and care for your children. Our Parent & Toddler groups are run by Mandy and Gail, who have a wealth of experience in our Kindergartens, Afternoon Care, Parent and Toddler Groups, and as mothers. They can offer information about Steiner Waldorf Education as well as parenting issues, if you want to ask them.



Mandy Haueisen
Group Leader



Gail Chester
Group Assistant

Mandy has been leading our Parent & Toddler sessions since 2015. She is a warm and welcoming presence for parents taking their first steps into Steiner education with their child at our Parent & Toddler Groups. Mandy has a deep understanding and commitment to supporting families as they adjust to parenthood and the new experiences it brings. Mandy has a BA (Hons) in Pedagogy from the University of Erfurt, Germany. Mandy also works in the School's Kindergarten Afternoon Care sessions for 3 to 6 year olds, and with our younger Classes in Social and Imaginative Skills.

Gail has been working at Cardiff Steiner School since 2008 in our Parent & Toddler groups and Kindergarten. She is a qualified Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten Teacher, and our and Kindergarten and Parent & Toddler Assistant, bringing new insights, initiatives and latest practice into our Early Years team.

Keeping Safe - Many and Gail are enhanced DBS checked and hold paediatric first aid training. Risk assessments are undertaken for the group, and we monitor toys and equipment regularly. We would like to remind you however that your children remain your responsibility and that you take responsibility for their health, safety and protection at all times during the session. The job of the Parent and Toddler Leaders is to oversee and hold the group as a whole.