

## The Handwork and Crafts Curriculum as Part of Curative Education

The Waldorf Curriculum is the inspiration for the curriculum taught at Camphill Rudolf Steiner Schools. Since the 1940s craft activity has been an integral part of the anthroposophical curative education curriculum. It is placed in the curriculum in such a way that it accompanies pupils throughout their education.

True education aims to serve the needs of the whole human being. *Head, heart and hands* are brought into a particular relationship with each other in the practising of handwork and crafts. In the lessons pupils have the opportunity to 'tangibly grasp' the world and give expression to their latent creativity.

Handwork and craft activities serve to educate the pupils in the nature of different materials and processes involved. There is also the therapeutic aspect from which the pupils benefit. For it is the very nature of handwork and craft activities to bring order to the materials used and to bestow order upon the maker. In practising his craft a potter not only leaves his imprint—his thumbprint on the clay—but he is also inwardly impressed by the creative process at work.

In addition to the educational and therapeutic benefit that crafts can offer there is an opportunity to acquire differing manual skills; older pupils may be introduced to the experience of real work.

Apart from the therapeutic contribution that crafts can offer, involvement in craftwork presents the pupil with the challenge of working from the idea for an object (abstract) to the finished product (concrete). In this process the pupil is made aware of the human attributes, both at an emotional and intellectual level, that are involved in the creation of an object.

In the Camphill Schools craft activity assumes a further role for pupils aged 15-19 in that it can help introduce them to the work ethic but in a creative and therapeutic way. For many pupils of this age the transition from childhood to adulthood can be difficult. Unlike other young people many of our pupils struggle to gain knowledge from their peers, environment, books and computers and thus benefit from some form of integrated practical activity to achieve this.

Together with offering pupils an appropriate school programme, therapy and practical tasks in and around the residential settings, placements are possible in the following craft areas:

- Felt Making
- Candle Making
- Weaving
- Pottery
- Woodwork
- Metal Work
- Tool refurbishing



Each craft workshop at any one time can take from two to six pupils~all of whom have different degrees of ability and level of need.

One important approach of curative education is to identify and respond to the potential of the individual. This approach also holds true for all craft activities. The purpose of crafts is to:

- give pupils opportunities for *creativity and self-expression*
- encourage pupils to express their *choices, preferences and ideas*
- engage pupils in creative processes that require *patience and determination*
- encourage pupils to become '*masters of their own action*' leading to the ability to create items that are useful to others
- introduce pupils to *working*
- provide a frame of activities in which pupils can *learn to relate and interact with others*
- introduce pupils to the importance of *team work*
- guide pupils to create products that are *of practical value* in daily life.

In the workshops pupils have the chance to *explore different materials*, learn craft specific techniques and skills and work with different colours, smells and textures. A unique and creative opportunity is provided which enables them to become familiar with a variety of experiences and activities.

Young people engaged in craft work may learn the virtues of *persistence and determination* by having to complete objects. They may also gain a measure of self-esteem through the successful completion of craft items. To be able to hold an item made with their own hands can be a *positive and motivating experience* for most pupils.

# Felt Making

## Felt making

The Felt Making Workshop, which is a neighbour to the Weavery, is located on the Murtle Estate. This workshop offers pupils the opportunity to experience a craft activity which is fairly easy to learn. It involves creating textile articles~a process which starts with the raw material~unspun, natural and commercial coloured wool.

For felt making the pupils are taught to prepare a raw fleece which involves sorting it, removing dirt, and then washing and drying it. After teasing, which necessitates loosening and separating the wool fibres, the wool can be carded. Once the wool has been carded, it is ready to be felted, spun or dyed. In the workshop the wool is used for felting two- or three-dimensional items.

Using warm, soapy water and rhythmical movement of the hands over the wool fibres are reduced to a flat piece. The felted piece can be decorated or sewn into a variety of objects, such as bags, pouches, clothing, dolls, toys, etc.

The pupils are encouraged to participate in all stages of the process. But pupils will do so according to their ability and needs. There are many possibilities in this craft where pupils can express their own creativity, for example, by choosing a shape or item they wish to make or by creating colourful patterns or pictures with the wool.

Felt working requires in pupils an ability to concentrate on their task and to direct the application of their will. At the same time the

process has a soothing effect and can engender warmth and a peaceful working atmosphere. Whilst it is an activity which is stimulating to the senses, it also lends itself readily to group work.





# Candle Making Craft Studio



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## Candle Making and Craft Studio

The Craft Studio, which is located in Briar Rose House, which is next to the School House on Camphill Estate. It is a multi-craft workshop where pupils can learn to experience working with different materials and craft techniques. This permits a greater degree of flexibility which it is hoped will make craft activity more easily accessible to pupils.



In the Craft Studio activities are planned in such a way that they mirror the seasonal changes. Activities are also influenced by the festivals celebrated in Camphill and by the meaning and value that these festivals have for individuals in their daily life.

In the Craft Studio pupils have the opportunity to work with:

- wool for felting
- yarn and material for tapestry weaving
- beeswax for candle making**
- paper and water colours for making boxes, folders, cards, envelopes and books
- leather
- candle dipping (see candle making)



The Craft Studio offers the possibility for pupils to learn many different techniques for making useful and beautiful items. To work with so many things naturally sparks interest in the pupils. It also provides a good way of stimulating the curiosity of young people and a trigger to their enthusiasm to make things using their hands and imagination and in the process enjoy the experience.



# Weaving



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## Weaving

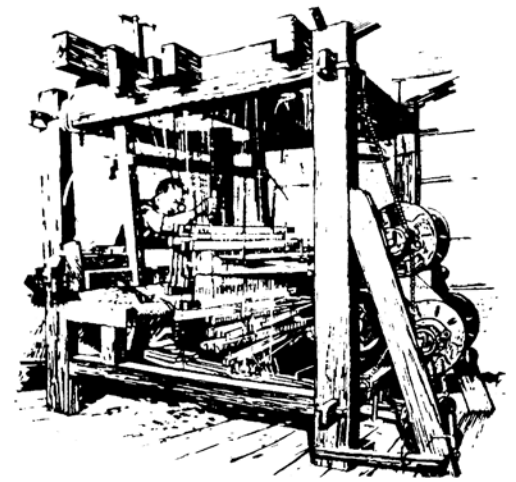
The Weaving Workshop is in the Rowan craft workshop building on Murtle Estate.

In this workshop the pupils obtain experience in plain weave and have the possibility for pattern weave. As far as possible they are involved in creating useful textile articles like tablecloths, table runners, bags and cushions.

Cotton and linen yarns, as well as commercial and homespun wool, are woven into fabric, using floor looms, table looms, inkle- and tapestry looms.

The basic knowledge for weaving is gained at a simple loom through demonstrating the alternating over and under thread process. According to the skills and interests of the pupils further work is chosen. The aim is to help pupils to weave independently. In the weaving process an appreciation of colour combination is fostered.

Because of differences in ability it is often necessary to share weaving tasks: part of the work may be done by the pupil and another part by a helper. The pupil's contribution to the end result—to whatever extent is always the important consideration.



Weaving needs an orderly working process. Weavers sit at their work and perform a range of tasks involving a specific sequence of movements. There is the back and forth movement of the beater, the right to left movement of the shuttle and the up and down movement of the levers. Through this process pupils are likely to gain a heightened sense of spatial awareness.



# Pottery



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## Pottery

The Pottery Workshop, which is situated on the Camphill Estate in a small courtyard next to the walled garden, aims to give pupils practice and understanding of basic pottery techniques. Pupils are guided to work on a task individually or as part of a group. Pupils are given the opportunity to experience working with different types of clay and, using glazes, they can design patterns and decorations to finish their pottery items.

In the Pottery Workshop pupils are introduced to handling a variety of tools. These include tools for measuring, tracing, shaping and slicing or rolling out the clay as well as using moulds made from plaster casts.

One activity that pupils might learn in the pottery workshop is the construction of a bowl. Throughout the process of making the bowl, pupils are encouraged to focus on their work.



Using such a process a variety of items, such as cups, plates, vases, jugs or pots, can be produced. Some pupils can progress to more complicated procedures where they may learn to 'throw' clay at a potters' wheel or use clay for sculpture.

Pottery is a valuable therapeutic activity insofar as pupils are guided in such a way that they may gain confidence, improve their fine/gross motor skills and learn about the importance of being motivated and enthusiastic about their work tasks. Pottery making can also be a helpful medium for creating friendship and the appreciation of other people.

Pottery can be 'magical' for pupils. Witnessing a lump of clay being transformed into a recognisable shape can make their eyes light up with wonder and joy.



# Woodwork



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## Woodwork

Woodwork lessons take place in a purpose-built Wood Workshop which adjoins the Tools for Self Reliance Workshop on Murtle Estate.

The lessons provide pupils with an opportunity to work with different species of timber in a variety of ways to produce attractive, useful and well-finished items.

A strong emphasis is placed on the correct use, care and maintenance of hand tools.

Workbenches with suitable vices and bench dogs are used to hold working pieces safely. Power tools and machines are operated only by the woodwork instructor in order to prepare wood for pupils.

The following are examples of items made in the Wood Workshop:

Pupils are encouraged, wherever possible, to make objects to their own design, as long as the object fulfils some practical and useful function.

A wide range of skills can be taught in wood working, for example, measuring, drawing, cutting, carving, spatial awareness, number work, the following of instructions and plans, identifying timbers and knowing their appropriate or traditional uses.



# Metal Work



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## Metal work

The Metal Workshop is located on Murtle Estate. It forms part of the workshop complex which includes the Estates Maintenance Workshop.

The Metal Workshop aims to give pupils an understanding of and practice in the basic techniques of metal work. The pupils are encouraged to design their own work pieces and are given the opportunity to work with different soft metals~copper, aluminium or brass. Occasionally, iron may be used in blacksmithing.



When pupils practice metal work, they are taught to handle the variety of tools required for this craft. These include tools for measuring, tracing and cutting as well as the use of wooden moulds and various hammers. Under supervision pupils learn to use a gas torch in order to soften the item on which they are working. Safety measures are always observed.

An example of an activity in which pupils might be engaged is the making of a bowl.



Using similar processes a variety of items, such as candleholders, jewellery or plates, can be produced. Able pupils can learn to engage in further and more complicated processes. Items, such as fireplace tools (e.g. tongs, pokers) can be made as well as candlesticks, copper balls, metal sculptures or pictures. The list is almost endless!



Metal work is a craft in which the direct engagement of the will is needed. To work on a piece and to finish it requires patience, determination and persistence, qualities which pupils with special needs often find difficulty in acquiring. The involvement of hard/cold material (metal) with fire makes metal work an attractive craft.



It is very gratifying for craft instructors to help pupils to complete beautiful items which then go into the residential households where they serve a valued function in the household's daily life.

# Tool Refurbishing



  
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## Tool refurbishing

'Tools for Self Reliance' is a national charity which organises the collection, refurbishment and distribution of hand tools. The refurbished tools are assembled into tool kits and distributed to developing countries.

The TFSR Workshop is part of a network in Britain. The Workshop provides an opportunity for senior pupils to be trained in basic tool refurbishment. The related educational programme looks at the history and use of hand tools, intermediate technology and international social and economic issues.

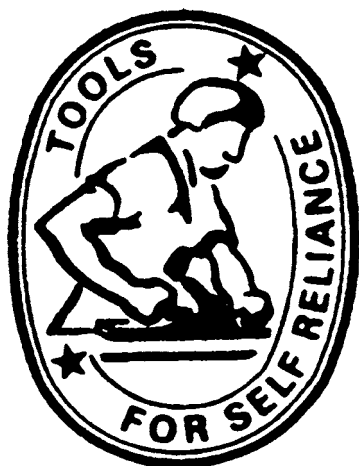


A pupil will take a tool apart, note all the different parts and the way in which the tool had been assembled. The cleaning of parts is carried out using sandpaper, wire brushes, de-rusting and de-greasing agents.

For the refurbishment of wooden and metal parts a range of tools and techniques is employed. On completion of the refurbishment pupils are involved in box making, then working through a checklist to ensure that all the tools have been packed in the kit and, finally, including a letter of goodwill to the recipients of the tool kit.



The recycling and refurbishing of old and broken tools into good-as-new ones can be an encouraging, positive and challenging experience for senior pupils with special needs. The repaired tools are assembled according to trade: there are kits for black smiths, builders, joiners and even shoemakers. These are then sent to developing countries to aid disadvantaged people. This aspect of the work gives additional value to it and motivates the pupils to use their hands and work in a precise and reliable way



A close-up photograph of a person's hands weaving a basket from reeds. The person is wearing a blue shirt and a watch. The basket is partially completed, with a metal mold visible at the bottom. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green plants and a wooden wall.

# Crafts at Cairnlee House



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Skills that have been acquired through the craft curriculum for pupils of school age can be further developed into a meaningful work situation for those young adults who leave school and find a placement at one of the Camphill Communities for 'Further Education and Training'.



Cairnlee House is a provision of the Camphill Rudolf Steiner Schools dedicated to fostering further development in young adults with special needs. Located on a separate estate, Cairnlee provides a therapeutic community for 12 young adults with training and work in the crafts of basket-making, weaving, woodworking and pottery.

Young adults can experience the transition from craft-work as an educational activity to a more long-term placement in a workshop which is aimed at producing goods to be sold and used. Through seeing their products going out into the world or being used daily in their own community, the young person can be helped to experience the results and meaningfulness of their own deeds.

