

Girlguiding's Educational Framework



Introduction

Girlguiding believes that education does not begin or end in the classroom. Education is a lifelong process that contributes to a person's continuing development and involvement in society. We also believe that it is important to recognise the value of non-formal education and the skills and competencies that young people acquire outside their school or home life.

Girlguiding enables girls and young women to develop their potential and to make a difference to the world. We seek to promote six areas of girls' and young women's development:

- Spiritual.
- Social.
- Emotional.
- Physical.
- Moral.
- Intellectual.

Girlguiding's programme is structured around five key elements, known as the 'Five Essentials', which support the development of girls and young women:

- Working together in small groups.
- Decision making as individuals and groups.
- A balanced and varied programme which is girl-led.
- Care for individual girls and their fulfilment.
- A shared commitment to a common standard.

Every Child Matters

In 2003 the Government published a report called *Every Child Matters: Government framework in England* to help promote the 'joining up' of children's services. The report included five universal ambitions for every child and young person, whatever their background or circumstances:

- Be healthy – enjoy good physical and mental health and live a healthy lifestyle.
- Stay safe – be protected from harm and neglect and grow up able to look after themselves.
- Enjoy and achieve – get the most out of life and develop broad skills for adulthood.
- Make a positive contribution – to the community and to society; avoid engaging in antisocial or offending behaviour.
- Achieve economic well-being – overcome socio-economic disadvantages to achieve full potential in life.

Girlguiding supports these ambitions and reflects these rights in guiding throughout the UK.

Girlguiding's programme

Girlguiding works with girls and young women aged 5 to 26 (4 to 26 in Northern Ireland). Young members are divided into sections according to age. They meet regularly in units, which consist of a group of peers, trained adult volunteer Leaders and helpers. Girlguiding's sections are:

- Rainbows – aged 5–7 (4–7 in Northern Ireland)
- Brownies – aged 7–10
- Guides – aged 10–14
- The Senior Section – aged 14–26

Decisions about how Girlguiding develops its programme of activities for girls are based on whether proposed changes 'fit' with the Five Essentials and are geared towards at least one of the six areas of girls' development. Girlguiding is also committed to ensuring that our programme takes into account the five Every Child Matters ambitions.

This document outlines the educational benefits of Girlguiding's programme and explains the contribution that guiding can make to girls' and young women's development. It aims to give the reader a deeper understanding of why the section programmes contain the themes and activities they do.

The Five Essentials and the guiding programme

Working together in small groups

In guiding, girls often work in small groups over a period of time. Small groups are used to give girls and adults a sense of identity and belonging. Girls learn about teamwork, sharing experiences, taking responsibility, personal relationships and leadership. This equips them with the skills to make a positive contribution to the group they are working with and to society as a whole.

Working together in small groups also allows girls to enjoy and achieve within guiding. Playing games and carrying out activities together provides challenges which they can meet as a group, and requires girls to make decisions, build confidence and be creative.

Decision making as individuals and groups

For the individual girl, decision making within guiding is about choosing activities and challenges. Making decisions as an individual allows her to 'learn by doing'. Girlguiding aims to provide a safe environment for her to make mistakes and learn from them without the pressure of meeting a pre-defined academic standard; girls are encouraged to 'do their best'.

At a group level girls can plan activities from the broad range available within the programme, and share in the management of the unit in age-appropriate ways. For example, younger girls are encouraged to select activities by a Leader who facilitates the process and then organises the chosen activities. Older girls and young women, however, lead the decision-making process and seek advice from a Leader if they want to. They will then plan, and where appropriate budget for, their chosen activities before carrying them out with minimal supervision.

Group decision making uses a range of interpersonal skills such as negotiation, influencing and listening. Girlguiding is committed to helping girls to develop these and many other skills. We realise that such skills will be carried forward into later life, allowing the young women to develop to their full potential and take advantage of the best available opportunities.

A balanced and varied programme which is girl-led

Girlguiding strives to have a girl-led programme and trains its adult Leaders to ensure that every unit's activities are based around the needs and wants of that particular set of girls. Organisationally we have developed a Youth Participation position statement:

'Girlguiding is working towards making youth participation an integral part of our decision-making processes. Our youth forums, peer education projects and girl-led approach to guiding already shape and inform our work. We support the Government in its work in this area.'

Balance and variety in the programme are achieved through a variety of indoor and outdoor activities, residential experiences and community action projects.

Indoor activities usually mix games and creative projects with issues relevant to the girls, their community or the wider world. Younger girls might do activities about children around the world, take part in a community initiative or raise funds for a charity important to them. Older girls could choose to run a session on body image, research how to write a CV or work towards one of guiding's awards – these include a community service element.

Outdoor activities promote a healthy lifestyle and enable girls to experience many new adventures and different types of exercise, from rounders to rock climbing. It is hoped that girls who enjoy such activities in guiding will be inspired to include more physical activity in their everyday lives as they grow older.

Girls can also work towards 'interest badges', in which they learn as individuals or groups and are rewarded with a badge. The subjects of interest badges range from practical skills (Communicator, Road safety) to creative (Artist, Party planner), active (Sports, Out and about) or confidence-building (Entertainer, Speaker). All the badges are designed to be fun and useful to girls.

Residential experiences encourage girls to develop skills necessary for independent living. Girlguiding holidays, camps and sleepovers give girls the opportunity to take those first steps towards looking after themselves; for example cooking their own food, being responsible for their own belongings and spending time away from home and family.

Community action is strongly encouraged by Girlguiding and allows girls and young women to make a positive contribution to society. They can do so in many ways, for example gardening for older residents in the community, raising money for a good cause or, for older girls, being involved in the local branch one of Girlguiding's national projects such as our peer education initiative.

Care for individual girls and their fulfilment

Caring for individuals includes learning about relationships, learning how to listen and being sensitive to the needs and wants of others.

Learning about relationships is a thread that runs through all sections' programmes. For example, very young girls might focus on what being a good friend means, while older girls might look at anti-bullying strategies or learn about sex and discuss its consequences for their relationships.

Learning how to listen is part of working and making decisions together. This key life skill will enable a girl to care for individuals in later life and have respect for others' opinions and points of view. Young women who want to build on these skills have opportunities to use them in external forums such as Girlguiding's delegation to the British Youth Council.

All girls within guiding are expected to be sensitive to the needs and wants of others. Young girls might demonstrate this by sharing resources during activities, while older girls can allocate responsibilities according to the interests and skills of individual group members.

A shared commitment to a common standard

Girlguiding welcomes girls and women from all faiths, cultures and races. A shared commitment to a common standard is expressed in the Promise, which underpins every element of the programme. By making the Promise, girls and Leaders express their commitment to the values of guiding, which encompass active citizenship and spiritual development.

One example of how Girlguiding encourages girls' spiritual development is through learning about different cultures. A young girl might listen to stories told by a person from another country/culture, whereas an older girl might research and discover the different faiths that are represented in her local area.

Conclusion

Learning is a lifelong process and it is important to give girls and young women the tools to carve out their own pathway. Through our Five Essentials and our integration of the Every Child Matters ambitions, we impart non-formal education to girls and young women aged from 4 to 26. Girlguiding also empowers women to develop their potential long after they reach the age of 26. Women use the skills they have gained from guiding in everyday life, and many also stay with guiding and take on a leadership role – thus continuing the cycle of skill development.

Girls in guiding form close friendships, grow in self-confidence, learn new skills, try new experiences – and have fun!