



Specialists in Alternative **Education**



River Bourne Community Farm

"Inspiring, engaging and educating young people through farming"



I was raised on a small dairy farm in the Midlands in the early 1960s when it was just possible to raise a family on a small farm income. The farm was heaven to a young person and the involvement with the local community was enjoyed by all, farmers and villagers alike.

At the age of 15 I was asked to leave my school and was not permitted to take 6th form examinations. I had not been able to conform to classroom learning, had become disruptive and could not fit in to the normal school routine. For me, school was equivalent to prison.

At this early age I went back to work on the farm for a period but then into the wider world. I did well in my career and at the age of 34 acquired a post graduate degree with distinction. I was ready to learn, in a subject of which I could make sense.

In my retirement, I was eager to provide facilities for young people who faced the same difficulties which I had experienced. Farming appeared to be the obvious medium providing practical work, care of animals and linked to the need for writing up results and brief reports.

As a result of my belief in the need for this facility, River Bourne Community Farm CIC was set up in 2010 and has now received many pupils, each for an academic year of one or two days per week, or in some cases, agreed short periods of involvement.

Schools and parents report to us that our facility improves student behaviour at school and home and opens the minds of young people to interests beyond computer gaming and other distractions.

We provide support to schools that have pupils with issues which cannot be resolved in the normal classroom format. Please talk to us so that we can help to be part of a solution, in partnership with your school.

Benjamin A Parker MBE

Farm Chairman



River Bourne Community Farm

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An introduction to our farm

“Education is at the heart of what we do”

River Bourne Community Farm (RBCF) was formed in 2010 with the aim of providing access to a working farm for everyone in the community. The main focus has always been education and we strive to provide quality alternative outdoor education using the farm as a resource. Within a year of opening, the farm started to offer courses to schools who wished to send pupils for this bespoke outdoor education. The secondary and post-16 pupils who attended in those first few years all gained Level 1 or Level 2 qualifications in Land-Based Studies and Animal Care, and we have continued this success in the subsequent years.

We now offer education in many forms:

- Bespoke outdoor education and qualifications for small groups of secondary school pupils who attend for one or two days a week.
- Bespoke outdoor education for small groups of primary school pupils who attend for at least one morning a week.
- Guided educational activities on the farm to local schools, free of charge.
- Education sessions for home-educated pupils.

Our students - primary, secondary and post-16 - **become involved in all aspects of the farm** including: Animal Care, Agriculture, Horticulture, Nature and Conservation, Estate Maintenance and Engineering.

“Not everyone learns through reading and writing; whilst some learners might feel that they don’t have the determination and perseverance in the classroom, they can quickly discover that they have the most grit in the class when it comes to getting things done in an outdoor environment”

keyskillseducation.co.uk



Some of the students who attend have additional needs, including autism and ADHD, are non-attenders, are at risk of exclusion, have mental, emotional or behavioural issues, or are simply not accessing mainstream school in a meaningful way. By engaging them on the farm by working outdoors and with animals, we are able to **increase their confidence, self-esteem and mental well-being**, which translates into improved engagement in the classroom when back in their schools.



The Natural Connections Project, funded by DEFRA, Natural England and Historic England and delivered by Plymouth University, researched effective ways to deliver outdoor education and inform schools of the benefits of it. They reported that learning in natural environments had a positive impact on their pupils:

- Enjoyment of lessons (95%)
- Engagement with and understanding of nature (94%)
- Social skills (93%)
- Engagement with learning (92%)
- Health and wellbeing (92%)
- Behaviour (85%)
- Attainment (57%)

“The opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem, motivation, communication, teamwork, kindness, risk and ownership of their own learning in contexts outside the classroom contributed to improved behaviour...outdoor learning consistently enthused and motivated children resulting in greater engagement with learning”



Continued overleaf

Our facilities include:

- * A total of 70 acres of land including paddocks, farmyard, watermeadows and river
- * Variety of animals including cattle, sheep, pigs, donkeys, alpacas, goats, rabbits and guinea pigs, chickens and game birds
- * Free-range flock of laying hens who supply our fresh eggs
- * Large straw-bale classroom
- * Second teaching area with changing area and kitchenette
- * Fully equipped tool-shed
- * 1960s Ferguson Tractor, adapted for teaching secondary pupils



The farm is one of Wiltshire Council's Approved Alternative Education Providers.



Testament to the quality of the education we are delivering is seen by the **grants** we have received to **fund particular education projects**, including those from:

The National Lottery Community Fund
The National Lottery Heritage Fund
Comic Relief Community Fund
Wiltshire Community Foundation
Co-op Community Fund
Wessex Water Community Fund
Aviva Community Fund

The farm has also won many awards including:

- ♦ Community First's Most Innovative New Community Project 2014
- ♦ The Prince of Wales Award of Honour 2015
- ♦ Wiltshire Life's Community Group of the Year 2019
- ♦ Salisbury Journal's Education Awards for Community Engagement 2018 and Community Involvement 2019

"Outdoor education broadens the horizons of pupils and enhances their progress in classroom work. These activities contribute to pupils' improving spiritual, moral, social and cultural development"

OSFTED Report 2014

The Benefits of Farm Education

Information for School SENCOs & Headteachers



"Outdoor education encourages pupils to work independently, use their initiative and exercise problem solving skills. Many pupils who struggle in the classroom often thrive in an outdoor environment; the move from visual and auditory to kinaesthetic learning is a refreshing change for all and notably of benefit many students with SEN. Physical activity is proven to help increase attention, reduce anxiety and develop coordination skills"

Beth Swait, SEN Magazine

Many of the young people who access the farm's education have **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** with significant barriers to learning. Children with SEND can find the classroom and the social demands of a busy school challenging and can benefit from alternative settings which help them reach their full learning and social potential. The SEND Code of Practice (2015) places particular emphasis on **improving outcomes**, **preparing for adulthood** and placing **pupil voice** at the heart of decision making – all of which the team at River Bourne Community Farm can partner with you to deliver.



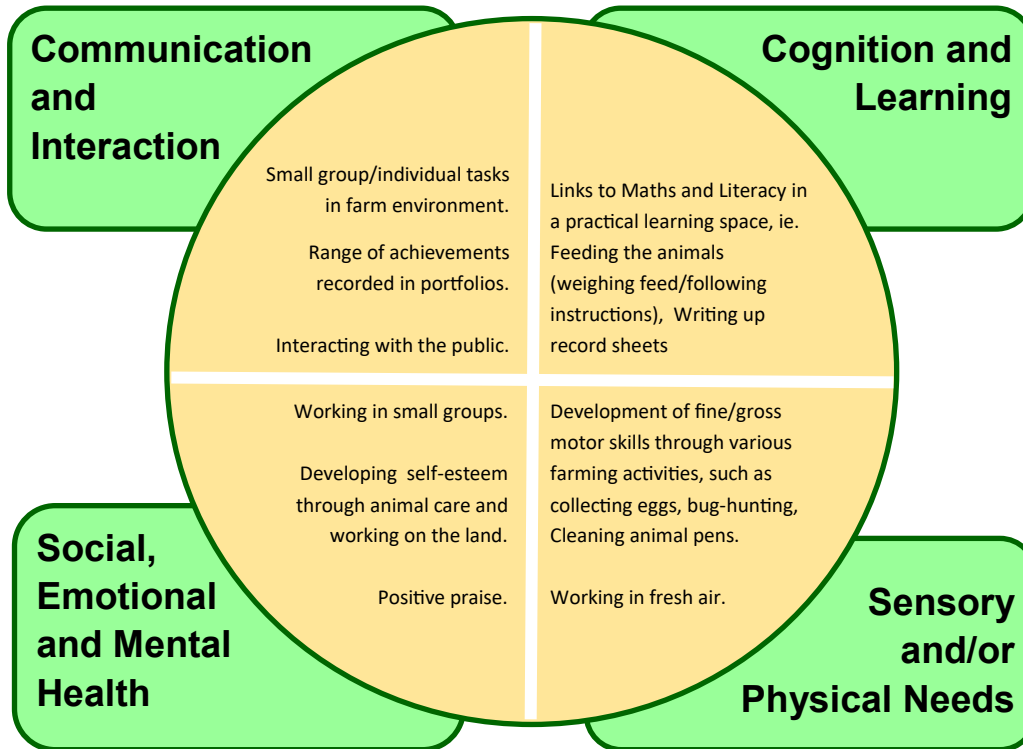
At the farm, it's not just about taking learning outside, it's about what makes learning outdoors - with nature, our local countryside and animals - **special**, and how we can capitalise on that for the young people who learn here. The education team at the farm work with the principles of care farming, taking the everyday activities of the farm and using them to develop **self-confidence**, **self-esteem** and **better communication skills**. Being a working farm, the learners at River Bourne Community Farm are also developing transferable skills and paving the way to employment. Working in small groups, **provision can be tailored** towards the individual's needs. We find out about our learners by **constantly listening to what they tell and show us**, always exploring where their interests and skills lie.



"Outdoor education could be a key factor in supporting the UK's current child mental health crisis. Recent studies have illustrated that outdoor environments provide stress relief, remove children from classroom norms and increase serotonin levels. These factors have a beneficial effect on child mental health."

A Wilderness Way Ltd - The Benefits of Outdoor Education on Mental Health
- A Wilderness Way (awwltd.com)

Based on the **SEND Code of Practice's four categories of need**, here are some examples of how the farm can support and motivate your SEND learners:



"L has loved every minute of her time on the farm and has become so much more confident to talk to people about her experiences. We have seen a very positive change."

Local Salisbury School SENCO, 2021



We encourage all secondary pupils to complete assessment-based courses at an appropriate level, to gain registered OFQUAL qualifications. Primary pupils, will gain a farm certificate, identifying what they have achieved during their time here.

The education team at River Bourne Community Farm are extremely experienced in working with SEND pupils, of varying abilities, and are always happy to meet with you and explore what we can offer your learners. We especially look forward to meeting your learners and seeing their progress as they work and learn with the whole Farm community.

"SEND students have often learned helplessness and passivity because, consciously or not, we exert a huge amount of control and going outdoors forces us to relinquish that. Giving SEN students that feeling of space, and the sensory stimulation that comes with being outdoors, is absolutely vital."

Andrew Colley, University of East London.

"On the farm day, T has no trouble getting out of bed! It breaks the week up and it makes him feel important that he is invited to go—which goes a long way for a child that often doesn't feel capable enough to do certain activities. His confidence around animals has grown, considering that he started at the farm being terrified of all birds and now he cleans out the chickens!"

Parent of RBCF 2019 SEND pupil





Secondary & Post-16 Provision

Course and Qualification Information

Secondary and Post-16 pupils may attend the farm for bespoke outdoor education courses for one or two days a week, usually for either one or two school years, although shorter courses are available.

In small groups, we aim to get pupils - who often have a diverse range of needs - to work together to achieve their goals. By encouraging them to work independently, to assess risks and by celebrating their successes, we see improvements to their social, emotional and behavioural development and mental health. We also hope that they will leave us with a qualification *and* a better understanding and appreciation, of the countryside in which they live in and an awareness of caring for animals.



"Plenty of evidence, not least from the Education Endowment Foundation, suggests that outdoor education is beneficial for academic attainment, with a clear link between academic progress and engagement with an outdoor programme.... Our research has shown that students who have been involved in outdoor educational opportunities have, on average, consistently performed higher in their GCSE examinations than those who have not."

Liz Briggs, Bohunt Education Trust

Tell OFSTED you are using our provision. They will appreciate your use of outdoor alternative education!

"Students' attitudes and behaviour during outdoor education activities are good and often exemplary, with mature responses to challenging situations."

OFSTED, Outdoor Education – Aspects of Good Practice Report 2004

"Students gain appropriate accreditation from their placement, which contributes to their qualifications at the end of Year 11, and/or their improved motivation and confidence contribute to achieving the qualifications they are working for in school....Students make positive choices about the next steps at the end of Year 11. They choose a college course, or gain an apprenticeship or job, sometimes based on their experiences at their placement."

OFSTED, Alternative Provision report, 2011

The Farm has been visited several times, as part of OFSTED inspections of schools who use us, and inspectors are impressed with what we do.

The government is actively promoting outdoor education and in its Learning outside the Classroom (LotC) Manifesto, it stated that it **"strongly supports the case for LotC"** and that it is about **"raising achievement through an organised, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance. This is *not only about what we learn but importantly how and where we learn.*"**

Key Stage 3 Pupils who attend the farm complete a farm course designed to get them involved in all aspects of our working farm and the nature of the land that surrounds us. They care for our animals, and undertake projects in conservation, environment, horticulture and estate maintenance. These activities are all designed to improve their confidence and self-esteem to help with team-building and improve their awareness and appreciation of the area we live in. The students receive a certificate showing their achievements during their time on the farm. For selected KS3 pupils we are able to provide an Ofqual recognised formal qualification at an appropriate level.

"We are really pleased with how well this course is organised and appreciate the school offering P this opportunity. It has really helped her to thrive and to gain confidence in herself."

Parent of Year 10 farm student 2021

KS4 and Post-16 pupils are all encouraged to complete a recognised qualification during their time on the farm. We are approved to deliver Animal Care or Countryside Skills qualifications, via ABC Awards (part of the Skills and Education Group) from Entry Levels up to Level 2. We assess pupils and recommend levels according to their ability and on information given by schools. These pupils are involved in **many aspects of the running of the farm**. The qualifications we deliver are all coursework-based without exams and we tailor the units taught to best fit the abilities and interests of the pupils. We deliver the vast majority of the course by getting our pupils outside doing practical tasks that are then supported by classroom work. They spend at least 80% of their farm time on practical tasks. We also introduce **outside professionals** to deliver additional courses such as Pet First Aid, for which they gain an additional certificate.

Since starting our Secondary/Post-16 provision in 2011, our students have achieved a Pass or Merit result in the following:

**Level 2
Qualification
48 Pupils**

**Level 1
Qualification
164 Pupils**

**Entry Level 3
Qualification
32 Pupils**

To date, at least 85% of the pupils who have attended farm courses have continued on to higher levels courses, many at agricultural college, or into employment. Some continue to volunteer at the farm, whilst attending college.

A TYPICAL DAY ON THE FARM

- Put on PPC (overalls, boots, gloves)
- Briefing of the days tasks
- Go to Feed Barn and check feed board for changes
- Feed farmyard animals, spot clean field shelters and paddocks, do visual health checks
- Correctly remove waste to muck-heap
- Clean tools, wheelbarrows and boots
- Wash hands then have short break
- Feed and spot clean small animals and bird aviary
- Groom small animals and do visual health checks
- Feed laying hens. Collect, clean and grade eggs for sale
- Lunch
- Classwork to back up practical activities of the day
- Additional short activity (e.g. walk goats or donkeys)
- Clean and tidy up, wash boots and hands, hang overalls
- Write up daily diary



"As a result of the farm, O is looking to apply to agricultural college for either a level 2 agriculture qualification or a level 3 apprenticeship as a crop technician. I truly believe that without this intervention he would have been permanently excluded from school with very little hope of being able to secure an appropriate college placement."

Parent of Year 11 farm student, 2021



Primary Outdoor Provision

Information for Primary Headteachers & SENCOs

“Research shows that healthier and happier children do better in school, and that education is an important determinant of future health. But education is not just about lessons within the four walls of a classroom. The outdoor environment encourages skills such as problem solving and negotiating risk which are important for child development.”

Report – Outdoor Education has huge benefits for children and teachers – so why isn't it used more in schools, Learning Outside The Classroom, www.lotc.org.uk

Working closely with our partner schools, we offer practical and classroom based learning experiences to **Key Stage 2** pupils. Each half term is themed so pupils gain in-depth experiences with particular animals or to a seasonal theme. **Our goal is always to integrate the national curriculum into activities and engage pupils in learning.** We are able to do so outside the school environment which, for some pupils, may be a barrier to progress. By engaging pupils to learn in an outdoor setting, we find behavioural issues are rare, particularly when working with our animals. We are also able to tailor our offering in line with the topics that are being covered in the partner schools to **provide continuity and encourage the ongoing improvements to continue** when back in the school environment.



Our provision is particularly beneficial to pupils with additional needs and other challenges. We work with those who have autism or ADHD, those with developmental delay, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and pupils dealing with mental health issues or trauma. Sessions are designed to **build self-esteem and confidence** and our animals are naturally excellent teachers of emotional regulation and empathy. We **integrate wellbeing activities** into sessions that pupils can take with them into different environments. Many of the tasks and activities require the pupils to work together to be successful and by structuring this we find that it helps pupils **develop social skills and confidence.**

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OFSTED, Outdoor Education – Aspects of Good Practice Report 2004

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Expected Outcomes for Primary pupils attending farm sessions:

Confidence: We expect to see an increase in confidence in all pupils as they become more comfortable with the farm and what we do. We give them increased responsibilities as they go through each term.

Engagement: We want to see our pupils engaged in everything we do on the farm by listening, questioning and participating.

Self-Esteem and Resilience: We encourage them all to 'have-a-go' at as many activities as we can, including those that they may feel that, at first, they are unable to do – almost every time we see that they can!

Team-Building: We encourage small groups to work together to complete tasks or to solve problems. Working with animals is particularly good for this as we explain how animals are relying on us to look after them by working together.

Independence: We encourage our pupils to work independently when possible, particularly on creative projects.

Empathy: We teach our pupils to be empathetic through learning about the animals and the nature of the farm.

Problem Solving & Independent thinking: We will challenge our pupils to improve their problem-solving skills and become more independent thinkers through appropriate tasks and activities.

Communication Skills: Our tasks are aimed at improving listening and communication skills.

"I like working with K (farm tutor), going in to see the sheep because they are lovely, and cuddling the guinea pigs. I like helping out with the piglets. I love going to the farm and helping with the animals because they make me feel happy."

Primary Pupil 2021



"I am really pleased that E is able to engage in the community farm environment as I believe it provides an interesting and varied approach to learning, especially for E as she responds well to practical study and loves being outside."

Parent of primary pupil 2021

"River Bourne Community Farm is a short walk from our school and is a great resource for our students to investigate and explore where our food comes from and learn how people and nature can work together. Back at school we love hearing their stories of what they've seen and done!"

Local Salisbury School SENCO

A TYPICAL DAY ON THE FARM

- Arrive at the straw-bale classroom
- Understand the plan for the day
- Assess pupils existing knowledge of a topic through art or a game.
- Go on a nature walk/treasure hunt
- Write a poem or learn a song about the animals
- Meet one of the animals on the farm including going in enclosures and handling the animals
- Complete an animal care task such as cleaning and feeding the animals
- Walk the goats
- Return to the classroom and assess learning through a whole group activity



I started the education programme on the farm in 2011, when we had just two groups, each coming for one day a week. All of those pupils completed, and passed, a Level 2 qualification. From there, the secondary education provision has grown to five days a week, and we have now five days a week of provision for primary aged pupils and an additional classroom. I have team of enthusiastic, skilled and dedicated staff, who are as passionate as me about delivering excellent quality outdoor education and getting the most out of the farm as a fantastic teaching resource.

We are constantly amazed by our pupils. Schools send us information about pupils before they start, particularly informing us of any additional needs or behavioural issues, but we rarely notice these issues when they are engaged in learning on the farm. We foster a “have-a-go” attitude and often the students surprise themselves with what they actually can do!

In times when children spend so much time inside, in front of screens, we believe that spending time outdoors, particularly with animals, has extremely positive benefits – and if we can also gain those pupils a meaningful qualification – even better.

This testimony, from the parent of one of our recent pupils, perfectly sums up why we do what we do, and why we are so proud of what we have achieved. **The farm can, and does, change the lives of our young people:**

“Prior to O being offered the provision of the farming course, he was reluctant to attend school and participate in lessons, feeling that he had little worth or value. He was struggling to keep up with the learning and therefore acted out, spending a lot of time in isolation. Since attending the farm he feels confident and has regained his self-esteem. This has been reflected in his behaviour and engagement during lessons, which can be evidence by his attainment points and lack of isolation!”

The farm has been instrumental in broadening O’s understanding of the importance of education and how you apply this in day to day living, such as knowing how to measure the correct length of wood to fix a fence etc. The farm has given him the motivation to think about his future and allow him to try new skills before embarking on further education in an avenue that he had not previously considered. As a result of the farm, O is looking to apply to agricultural college for either a level 2 agriculture qualification or a level 3 apprenticeship as a crop technician. I truly believe that without this intervention O would have been permanently excluded from school with very little hope of being able to secure an appropriate college placement.”

Sara-Jane Hancock BSc Hons

Education Manager



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