



Willow Farm Care Farm, Lughorse Lane, Yalding, Maidstone, Kent ME18 6EB 01622 815559

**SEN School Visits
and
Referrals**

at

**Willow Farm
A Care Farm with Heart**

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Willow Farm Overview

Care farming provides opportunities to help people to connect with animals and the natural world around them. We offer the opportunity for school children to learn about animal husbandry, where food comes from and the natural environment. It is well understood that interaction with animals and working the land is very therapeutic to children with additional needs and we give these children the chance to flourish in a calm and caring environment.

Our farm is approximately 27 acres of fenced land which consists of a small ancient woodland shaw, a cherry orchard, plum orchard, pear orchard, hay meadows, grazing land and a pond. We have pygmy goats, sheep including new born lambs, chickens, a horse, rabbits and guinea pigs. During the summer of 2021 we will be welcoming some donkeys to the farm. We also have a polytunnel where we will be growing fruit, vegetables and flowers. We will also be making a vegetable patch.

Willow Farm is a small working farm which offers an opportunity for children with additional needs to reconnect with the land and the natural environment around them. We started out at Willow Farm with just the orchards, pond and open meadow. We have worked over the past two years building the farm buildings, farmyard, animal paddocks, housing and polytunnel in order to open the Care Farm up to the children of Kent.

We are members of Care Farming UK (Social Farms & Gardens) which is an organisation that supports and promotes care farming and community garden projects across the UK. We are currently working towards the Social Farms and Gardens Code of Practice.



What we have at Willow Farm

Willow Farm has the following across 27 acres:

- Pear Orchard
- Plum Orchard
- Cherry Orchard
- Cobnut Trees
- Blackberries
- Hay Meadows
- Natural Pond (wild ducks visit daily)
- Ancient Woodland Shaw with a Bluebell carpet in the spring
- Polytunnel
- Rare Breed Coloured Ryeland Sheep
- Coloured Ryeland x Valais Blacknose Lambs (born March 2021)
- Pygmy Goats
- Chickens
- Horse
- Guinea Pigs
- Geese
- Poly Tunnel
- Pizzeria

We will be looking for some donkeys and honey bees to come and live on the farm alongside our other animals as soon as we are able.

On the Farm

The children will experience a wide range of activities at the farm which will provide them with the opportunity to work through challenges and gain confidence in a peaceful, relaxed, safe and secure environment. Work on the farm contributes to their personal growth and social awareness and also helps them to develop skills for life.

The children will be introduced to all of the animals on the farm.

Chickens



Egg collecting is the first task for our budding farmers, we then need to feed our free range chickens and make sure that their water is topped up for the day and then give them their morning treats. Our chickens are very friendly and love a cuddle too.

Sheep



Our sheep are all very friendly and enjoy a scratch and a cuddle, especially the babies. The first task of the day for the sheep is to give them their breakfast treat to start the day and then to make sure that their water is clean and topped up. Clean straw is put in the shelter and hay in the hay racks are all done on a daily basis. Certain times of the year there are other essential tasks that need to be done to the sheep such as feet trimming, fleece trimming, and shearing. Shearing is done by a professional shearer and normally takes place around June time although our crossbreed sheep need to be sheared again in the Autumn too. We always find time to give the sheep some cuddles and attention which they really enjoy.

Goats



The Pygmy goats are such funny entertaining animals and they make us laugh every day. The morning routine for the goats is pretty much the same as the sheep in that they require fresh clean water, bedding and hay but they also have grain feed all year round so we need to make sure that they have their feed bowls filled with food for the day. Goats need to have their feet trimmed on a regular basis just like sheep so this is a job which we do all throughout the year. Unlike sheep they do not need to be sheared as their coat is hair rather than fleece and it is not waterproof so they need shelter from the weather.

Rabbits and Guinea Pigs



The Rabbits and Guinea Pigs need fresh water and food every day along with some fresh vegetables which we give them whilst we give them a brush. Most of their diet is made up of hay which we produce here on the farm. Cleaning their hutches out is done twice weekly. We enjoy handling these beautiful little animals and giving them a good groom.

Horse



Our horse is a very friendly chap who loves his treats. He is a shire x welsh so he is a big boy. Part of our daily routine is to give him a good groom and clean out his hooves. The field also has to be cleared of dung daily so that he has a clean field to graze.

The following work is undertaken at different times of the year in the orchards. The children will be able to help with certain tasks such as removing excess fruit and harvesting.

Orchards



Pruning of the pear trees takes place over the winter between November and March when the trees are dormant. June time we can remove some of the fruit to give the good fruit more nourishment. The pears are harvested around October.



Cherries and plums are ready to be picked around July/ August time and this is also the time to prune the cherry and plum trees if needed.

Blackberries



Blackberries are ready to be harvested in September.

Ancient Woodland Shaw



Our little ancient woodland shaw is a beautiful spectacle when the carpet of bluebells and wild garlic breaks through in the spring. There are so many different animal habitats in the woodland and provides a wonderful area to search for mini-beasts, do rubbings of the different tree bark and also build wildlife habitats with the dead wood and branches found on the woodland floor. We also collect branches as a treat for the goats to eat as they like nothing better than fresh branches.

Natural Pond



Our natural pond provides not only a beautiful setting on the farm but is also frequented by the wild ducks. We do not have fish in the pond at the moment but it is full of pond life such as pond-skaters, water beetles, water boatmen and larvae. Pond dipping is a fascinating activity and the children can identify all of the different creatures in their samples.

Polytunnel



Our polytunnel is a new addition to the farm and so we are starting with our seed planting which the children can fully participate with. As the produce grows the children will be able to harvest the fruit and vegetables, thin out and re-pot the flowers etc. This activity is also ideal if the weather does not allow some of the other outdoor activities.

Facilities

We have a fully accessible WC onsite.

A Classroom where indoor work can be carried out and lunches eaten.

Hand washing facilities

Fridge for drinks and lunches to be kept

Accessibility

Unfortunately, as this is a working farm and there are animals resulting in muddy gateways etc we are not able to have children with severe mobility disabilities due to the risks.

Times

Sessions between 10.30am and 3pm

Sessions are generally between 2 and 2 ½ hours long.

Drink breaks mid-morning and mid-afternoon session as required, lunch can be taken at a time to suit

Staying Safe Whilst Visiting the Farm

Farm Responsibilities

Provide Health and Safety information to the School

Create a safe and friendly environment

Provide a member of staff to deliver the activities

Responsibilities of the School

Ensure children behave during the visit

Provide suitable staff to children ratios

Responsible for any child's medication brought on site

Ensure that children wash their hands thoroughly

Arrive at the agreed time

It is important that all children and supervising adults are aware of the correct health and safety guidelines. The risk of infection is very small, but the disease caused by an infection could be serious. By following the simple guidelines, which are similar to everyday basic hygiene recommendations, the risk can be easily minimised.

During and after the visit, please make sure that individuals:

- Do not kiss any animals
- Do not put fingers in or near their mouths
- Do not climb on the animal fencing
- Do not chase, frighten or torment the animals
- Always wash their hands and arms with hot water and soap before leaving the farm and eating or drinking. Unfortunately, hand gels are not effective in killing bugs that may be found around the farm.
- Clean or change their footwear before leaving if required
- Listen carefully and follow the instructions given by farm staff

If a member of your group shows signs of illness (e.g. sickness or diarrhoea), after a visit, advise them or their parent/guardian to visit the doctor and explain that they have visited the farm.

Recommended Kit List

Regardless of the time of year we would suggest that these 2 items are brought with each child:

- * A good waterproof jacket (not tightly fitted)
- * Wellington boots

Other items suggested depending on the time of year:

- * Plenty of layers of warm, comfortable clothing, if the weather changes layers can be removed to allow for more comfort.
- * Thick socks, maybe wellie socks to save sore legs.
- * Outdoor shoes (trainers) or boots that are comfortable.
- * Change of shoes to go home in.
- * Warm coat (if waterproof jacket is thin).
- * Sun cream and sun hat.
- * Spare plastic bag to take dirty clothes, wellies or boots home.

Please ensure that all personal items are clearly labelled.

Pricing:

Please contact for session prices.

Willow Farm Booking Procedure

If you would like to book a school visit or enquire about a referral please do get in touch through the website or by using the contact details below:

Lorraine Trowell
Willow Farm
Lughorse Lane
Yalding
Maidstone
Kent ME18 6EB

Tel: 01622 815559

Mobile: 07817 030442

E mail: info@willowfarmcf.co.uk

Website: <http://www.willowfarmcf.co.uk>

Required Information

Group size

Age group

Proposed date(s)

Any special additional needs

Name and contact details of main contact

Any questions you may have

We hope to see you soon