

For information on any of the provision below please ring 0114 2360096 or email johng@whirlowhallfarm.org

School Day and Residential Visits

We play host to a very large number of day and residential visits from schools in Sheffield and the surrounding area. The majority of our visitors are from primary schools and experience our detailed, hands-on farm tour plus a host of sessions on curriculum linked subjects exploring a diverse range of subjects such as early farming, plant and animal lifecycles, animal habitats, children's literature, WW2, the Victorian age, maths and science. We provide enriching, real world experiences that bring children's education to life and are used as a reference for further studies back at school. For many of the children who stay residentially it is their first time away from home overnight and as well as the above they get involved in age appropriate farm jobs, animal care activities and pony riding sessions. Although the majority of school visits are from the primary sector we do have a number of secondary school visits and can tailor sessions to meet the student's needs whenever required.

Working with young adults with special educational needs and disabilities

Whirlow L.I.F.E. (Learning In a Farming Environment) is our programme for young adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) accessing personal budgets. Many come with personal assistants as their needs are quite high. It runs yearlong, except for Christmas. Activities include farm work, animal care activities, planting, growing, harvesting, cooking and most importantly, eating! They also work a lot with natural materials to create art and craftwork. We also want them to get involved in the shop and café where possible and we are going to start residential stays where they can learn day to day life skills. Some of them are now completing AQA units and we might progress them on to other qualifications if there is a desire from the learner. They have also been rearing a baby barn owl called Harriet and are currently engaged in flight training the owl. We basically want to be able to provide as much variety as we can based on the needs presented.

We run days for primary aged children who are at risk of permanent exclusion from their schools

We partner with Sheffield City Council, the Primary Inclusion Panel and the child's school and aim to provide a child-centred, supportive and therapeutic range of activities. These activities are focused on outdoor activities on the farm, engaging in animal care, forest schools, growing food, cooking, and natural arts and crafts. All activities link into the curriculum and we are constantly developing new sessions to better meet the needs of the child. The activities are structured in a topic based format and the aim for the child is to develop pieces of work that play to their strengths whilst also working on aspects of behaviour, working in groups and other skills for learning that they may be struggling with.

The current charge is £40 per day per child and we ask that schools provide a support worker who understands the needs of the child to be present. Transport also currently needs to be organised by the school.

We typically form groups of up to six children and our minimum requirement is an adult/child ratio of 2:1. The groups spend a lot of time outdoors and if a child becomes anxious and needs to calm-down it may be that they and their support have to leave the group for a spell. The ratio becomes crucial if more than one child has to leave. On the subject of calming down, we will very shortly have a calm room installed local to the classrooms so that the child knows there is a place where they can go if it all gets a bit too much for them.

Working with primary aged children who may not be at risk of exclusion but are disengaged with their education

The programme described above can be very easily used to work with disengaged children. They may not be prone to violent outbursts but there may be issues in their life which they are finding hard to handle and as a result are not interested in learning. We currently work with a small number of such children. The supportive and peaceful environment of the farm may act as a powerful settling force in their learning week and we are open to working with schools to provide an appropriate programme.

Providing support to the Sheffield Inclusion Centre

We provide support for children who have been permanently excluded from their schools. Children who are excluded will attend the Inclusion Centre. The staff at the centre recognised the value of outdoor education and aim to send a group to the farm for a day a week. Excluded children generally fall behind their peers at school and this causes further problems in catching up when they are re-integrated. So, whilst the programme at the farm runs in a similar way as described above there is a stronger emphasis on curriculum based activities.

Sheffield's Alternative Provision programme

Over three days a week, school children aged 14 to 16 attend a variety of sessions that aim to provide the best outcomes for their future prospects. These children tend to be struggling with academic subjects in school, excluded from a mainstream setting or are out of the education system altogether. All have expressed an interest in pursuing a career in animal care or agriculture. Some will study a City & Guilds L2 Extended Diploma in Animal Care. This qualification is the gateway to more academic qualifications in Animal Care and Agriculture run by the Sheffield College. For other learners AQA unit awards are worked towards whilst others aim towards developing social, employment and life skills. Our aim with everything we do is to build a programme of activities to meet the individual needs of each learner.

Partnership with Sheffield College enabling curriculum delivery on Animal Care and Agriculture qualifications

The Sheffield College run Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) and Level 3 (A Level equivalent) BTEC qualifications in Animal Care and Agriculture. We provide the facilities for their students to meet the practical elements of these qualifications. We also have a steady stream of Sheffield College

students attending on work placement. To many of the other groups that attend the farm the presence of the college is a vivid reminder of the possibilities for progression in the sector.

Special Needs Inclusion Play Scheme (SNIPS)

We run SNIPS days through the holidays. SNIPS provides opportunities for parent/carers of children and young people with special needs and disabilities to take short respite breaks from caring, knowing that their child/children will be in a safe and supportive play environment. The activities are farm and animal focused with the children getting lots of fresh air.

Visiting groups over the summer

Apart from Whirlow LIFE and SNIPS running in the summer we also have two week long visits from both Sheffield Autistic Society and Sheffield Young Carers. They engage with various farm based activities as well as having their own programmes running.

Special Schools and Colleges

Freeman College and The Willows special school – these organisations attend one day a week and we either teach formal qualifications or work on developing social, employment and life skills. Engaging with special schools and LSU's is one of my priorities and I am hoping to spend time over the next few months visiting them.

Home Schooling

We work with home schooling groups to provide a range of activities to suit the needs of the individual children