CASTLE FARM
COUNTRYSIDE CLASSROOM

In association with

LEAF

"Linking Environment and Farming"

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BROCHURE and STATEMENT of PURPOSE

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INTRODUCTION

Castle Farm Countryside Classroom is an alternative education provision that's tailored to the individual children's needs, working in a natural environment, outdoors, in an agricultural environment and supports students' development of key life skills with the use of natural resources and environment. As a member of LEAF (Linking environment and farming), we help educate our students around topics such as agriculture, horticulture and environmental studies. We also offer workshop-based activities such as carpentry and restoration projects and activities such as fishing, walking, cycling, as well as more academic based subjects.

Castle Farm Countryside Classroom is located on approx. 3 acres of land, adjacent to the Burgh Castle Roman Fortification and Archaeologic site. The area is recognised as an area of outstanding beauty through Natural England. We also have a second base located at St Olaves Village Hall, with access to their playing field are car park facilities.

We work with children and young people, from mainstream children to more vulnerable and traumatised children with associated mental health issues, self-harming and sexualised behaviours, some of whom have come to us as a 'step down' from exclusion from school or in fact live in specialist residential settings. Some children invariably display social emotional and mental health needs, have a history of insecure attachments and obstacles to learning due to their challenging behaviour.

At Castle Farm Country Classroom, we believe that regardless of past difficulties and traumas every young person, given appropriate support, has the internal resources, however fragmented, to manage successful educational achievements. They may also have previously undiscovered gifts and talents or passions for what we do.

We have a team that have a passionate conviction that all our young people are able to achieve. We are optimistic about success and accept no restriction on what is possible with the young people who are taking part in our project

- ✓ We believe natural outdoor education to be an excellent therapeutic way of developing children from all backgrounds
- ✓ we believe in children's abilities and potential
- ✓ we believe in unconditional positive regard
- ✓ we believe our children deserve fun and happiness in childhood
- ✓ we believe in a 'can do' philosophy
- ✓ we believe in success and learning from mistakes
- ✓ we believe intelligence is multifaceted
- ✓ we believe learning is a lifelong process
- ✓ we believe creativity and imagination are the keys to developing passions and talents, and preparing for life in a rapidly changing world

We look to offer bespoke, personalised education that are tailored around the individual's needs.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- As a member of **LEAF** "Linking Environment and Farming" Agriculture worldwide is facing one of its greatest challenges: to produce enough nutritional food to fulfil the needs of our current and future population, while at the same time, protecting the environment and human health.

Finding and implementing innovative solutions to sustainability challenges cannot be addressed in isolation. It requires the involvement of a wide range of actors from across the food chain – farmers, retailers, researchers and NGO's.

- **To gain broader knowledge of wildlife, animal habitats and food sources, different ecosystems and the importance of having a strong bio diverse woodland.**
  This will be learnt over regular sessions on site and around our natural environment, there will be hands on activities such as viewing animal spotting hides and use of binoculars to spot them, looking for what the animal eats, where and how they live and to study how important the environment, the animals, bugs and insects are to one another.

- **To gain a strong understanding of, 'tool use and safety' through practical demonstration.**
  The session leader will demonstrate these skills in a designated safe area. Student will be given the opportunity to use the different tools and equipment and will work individually. They can whittle sticks or creatively make things from the woodlands natural resources using the equipment available. We have a designated workshop area on site.

- **To gain knowledge of different outdoor skills and activities such as fire building and outdoor cooking, tree climbing, tree swings, knot tying and den building.**
  These activities will largely be delivered through play. Learners will be encouraged to be creative and given opportunities to explore their own ideas. Equipment such as ropes and string can be used with designated staff member at all times.

- **To become self-aware of health and safety risks and to understand our environmental impact while at the 'Castle Farm Countryside Classroom site.**
  The session leader will deliver the health and Safety rules before each session, encourage learners to be environmentally friendly and to wear appropriate PPE if required. Staff will also remind students to assess their own risks before undertaking their individual activities.

OUR THERAPEUTIC ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH

All young people coming to our organisation are seen firstly as individuals, therefore their needs are unique and as such a carefully planned, individually constructed approach leads to long term therapeutic outcomes from the initial point of entry. It is well documented and proven that stress is relieved within minutes of exposure to nature as measured by muscle tension, blood pressure, and brain activity. Time in green spaces significantly reduces your cortisol, which is a stress hormone. Nature also boosts endorphin levels and dopamine production, which promotes happiness.

We have a broad view of what constitutes "therapy". The therapeutic milieu is grounded in the overall approach to promoting positive change in the children and young people in our care. All aspects of a child's engagement at our project are potentially capable of having therapeutic impact. We do believe in and promote the the PACE model and trauma informed practice at Castle Farm CC.

PACE: Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy A trauma-informed approach to supporting children and young people

PACE *is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make children and young people feel safe. It is particularly effective in meeting the needs of children and young people who have experienced trauma. Developed by clinical psychologist, Dan Hughes, the approach focuses on building trusting relationships, emotional connections, containment and a sense of security. Given the current situation, it will be important for us to consider the PACE approach in our practice when children and young people return to school. This summary has been compiled from a range of sources and aims to provide you with some background information about PACE and practical examples of how it can be successfully used in practice.*

What is PACE?

PACE was developed by Dan Hughes more than 20 years ago as a central part of attachment-focused family therapy, with the aim of supporting adults to build safe, trusting and meaningful relationships with children and young people who have experienced trauma. It is based on the way that caregivers interact with very young infants. It describes a way of relating to others or 'a way of being'. It pays attention to *how* we deliver messages to children and young people through our communication. The principles offer a useful framework from which we can develop attunement and strengthen our relationships with the children and young people we work with. **PACE** stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy.

Using **PACE** helps adults to slow down their reactions, stay calm and tune into what the child is experiencing in the moment. It supports us to gain a better understanding of what the child is feeling. In tricky moments it allows us to stay emotionally regulated and guide the child through their heightened emotions, thoughts and behaviours. In turn, **PACE** helps children and young people to feel more connected to, and understood by, important adults in their life and ultimately, to slow down their own responses.

Why is PACE important?
PACE focuses on the whole child, not simply the behaviour. It helps children be more secure with adults and reflect upon themselves, their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, building the skills that are necessary for maintaining a successful and satisfying life. The child discovers that they are doing the best that they can and avoids labelling themselves negatively.

When children experience adults doing the best they can to understand them and trying to work out together more effective ways for the child to understand, make sense of and manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviour they start to believe that adults really will keep on trying until things get better for all of them.

For adults, using **PACE** most of the time, we can reduce the level of conflict, defensiveness and withdrawal that tends to be ever present in the lives of some children. Using **PACE** enables the adult to see the strengths and positive features that lie underneath more negative and challenging behaviour.

Playfulness

This is about creating a fun, light and playful atmosphere when communicating with the child. It means using a light tone of voice, like you might do when storytelling, rather than an irritated or lecturing tone. It is about having fun and expressing a sense of joy.

Relating with a playful attitude keeps the interaction light and upbeat. It can help diffuse a difficult or tense situation. Children are less likely to respond with anger and defensiveness when the adult has a touch of playfulness in their communication. Being playful could mean having fun with shared games or a shared activity that involves you both.

Having a playful stance isn't about being funny all the time or making jokes when a child is sad. It's about helping children be more open to and experience positive connection. While such a response may not be appropriate at the time of risky or distressed behaviours, when applied to low level behaviours, playfulness can help keep it all in perspective.

Acceptance

This is about accepting that whatever the child (or you) are feeling right now is ok. You are accepting their thoughts, feelings and perceptions without judgement. You may not agree with their interpretation, but you accept their feelings about it. It is *their* experience and this is important. Don't minimise or invalidate it. Show them it's

ok to feel the way they do – actively communicate to the child that you accept their feelings and thoughts underneath the observable behaviour.

For example, a child may tell you *"I know you hate me"*. It is tempting to respond with "that's not true" or "don't say that" but this may leave the child feeling that you really don't understand what it's like for them. Instead, through using **PACE** we could respond with *"I'm sorry you think I hate you, that must feel awful, no wonder you're angry with me"* or *"I didn't realise that you feel like that, I'm sorry it feels that way to you".*

Acceptance does not mean you have to accept the behaviour if this is harmful to themselves or to another person. You can limit the behaviour while at the same time understanding and accepting the motives for the behaviour. Convey your acceptance through your tone of voice - try using a 'storytelling' or gentle tone, showing your interest, showing your understanding and maintaining a non-judgemental stance. Acceptance is most clearly conveyed through non-verbal communication.

Curiosity

This is about approaching children with an air of curiosity. Seek to understand what it is that drives them. What is important in their life? How can you get to the core of who they are and bring out the best in them? Curiosity means you don't judge them so quickly. You can ask more questions of them, as you are curious to know more about them.

Curiosity involves a quiet, accepting tone: *"What do you think that was about?"* or *"I wonder what...?"* You say this without anticipating an answer or response from a child. This is different from asking the child, *"Why did you do that?"* with the expectation of a reply. Children often know that their behavior was not appropriate. They often do not know why they did it or are reluctant to tell adults why.

If an adult can stay curious about why their child is behaving as they are, the child and adult are less likely to feel cross or frustrated. With curiosity we are trying to show we simply wish to understand *why*. We hope to convey that our intentions are to truly understand and help the child, not to lecture.

Empathy

Empathy is about putting yourself in someone else's shoes and allowing yourself to feel what they must be feeling. It gives us a sense of compassion for the child and their feelings. This is essential in helping a child feel understood. When someone really understands you, it can make a big difference to how you cope. Being empathic is not about reassuring the child (which tries to make the problem go away) but about being with them in the moment, carrying and containing their big emotions. This lays the foundation for connection.

With empathy, when a child is sad or in distress, we are feeling the sadness and distress with them and letting them know that. We demonstrate that we know how difficult an experience is for them. We are telling them that they will not have to deal with the distress alone. Together we will get through this. The adult will stay with the

child emotionally, providing comfort and support, and will not abandon them when they need the adult the most.

Using PACE in Practice

Alex is refusing to engage in his tasks. He is crawling under tables, scribbling all over his worksheet and poking holes through it. He says that there is no point in doing it because he can't do it, he hates you, the work and the school. He says he doesn't care what you say or if he gets in trouble.

Typical responses might look like:

- "Alex. Come here. Stop that now. That's no way to treat your work. You'll just have to start again and that will waste your time. If you don't get it finished before break you'll have to stay in and do it."
- "That's not true Alex. You're not rubbish. Your work is great."
- "I don't think that's a very nice way to talk about yourself, me or the school Alex"
- "I know you're feeling angry. You know what you need to do to feel better."

A PACEful response may be more appropriate and lead to better outcomes for you and the child. The examples below show how you can convey **PACE** in your response. Which response you use will depend on the context and the child. In many situations, you may wish you to use a combination of Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. When using **PACE** it is important to try and match the affect of the child. If they are angry, screaming and shouting, use a big voice and gesture (feel their feelings). Try to avoid using judgmental tones or statements and instead 'wonder aloud' with the child. Using a rhythmic, 'storytelling' voice will help keep your communication open and light and also allows you to diffuse some of the heightened emotion and bring the energy of the situation down.

Playful response: "Oh my goodness, look at that worksheet Alex, it looks like a little mouse has nibbled right through it. I hope he's not going to eat my secret sweetie stash too. Are you ok Alex? You look really sad and upset. Why don't you come over to the comfy corner and we'll see what we can do - we're a pretty good team when we work together."

Accepting response: "Oh Alex, you're right, work can sometimes be really difficult and it's so rubbish when we feel like we can't do something. It's horrible when you feel rubbish at something. Sometimes I feel rubbish at things too and when I can't do something I get angry with everything and I just want to scream. It's a really awful feeling."

Curious response: "You usually really enjoy your Maths work. I wonder what's different about today? I wonder what might be making things so tricky today? I know that your grandpa hasn't been well. Are you feeling upset or worried about other things as well as the Maths?"

Empathic response: "Oh Alex, look how really upset you are. You look really sad. Is that right? That must not feel very nice. I think we need to work together to have a

think about how to make things better for you. I know things can feel really awful and tricky sometimes but if we work together, we can find another way for you to let me know when you feel rubbish. What do you think?"

LEARNING AND CREATING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Most, if not all, young people attending Castle Farm Countryside Classroom will have experienced learning difficulties within a variety of settings. There may well be a complicated picture of learning dysfunction categorised as:

- Complex Emotional and Social Difficulties
- Mental Health Problems
- Attachment Difficulties
- General Learning Difficulties
- Specific Learning Difficulties
- Developmental Delay
- Attentional Problems

All of these require bespoke planning and may require targeted individualised support.
Within our organisation our vision is to deliver a personalised education package for each child. This is combined with our therapeutic natural environment.
Learning is a life-long process not just a 'classroom' or 'school' process. It is with this in mind that we take advantage of all opportunities open to us for extending learning beyond the project site where practicable.

There are regular meetings between the company directors gaining and balancing the promotion of a consistent approach to learning.

The starting points for our students are almost inevitably extremely low relative to their cognitive potential. They will have been in repeated failure situations both in many ordinary and specialist settings. As a result of their fragmented education and care, our students are likely to have missed positive early childhood learning experiences and may not have attained age related developmental milestones. Our students may need support and guidance for them to start to re-engage in their own learning processes.

We respond in a high-quality way to each student's individual starting points, needs and aspirations. We accept no barriers to innovation, creativity and response in order to reawaken a passion for learning in each student.

REVIEWS OF PROGRESS

Every child attending our organisation will have weekly progress reports completed. We will bring alive these by adding other evidence such as photos and certificates along their journey. We will share these reports with the referring parties and Family (if requested), so together we can celebrate their development within our organisation.

REFERRAL AND ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Initial enquiries should be made through contact with the company directors and each potential placement will be looked at on an individual basis.

Together directors consider applications. If initial assessment documentation indicates that we may be able to meet the needs of the individual then an initial planning meeting will be held. This affords the parent/carer, or school etc, to have a formal opportunity to visit our provision. If all parties agree on the appropriateness of the placement then an agreement will be reached as to how to involve the young person in the process. The assessment and admissions process will in every case be tailored to meet individual needs.

Both the needs of any new young person concerned, and the likely effects of their admission upon other young people who attend our provision are fully considered when making decisions in respect of all admissions to our provision. This is to ensure 'best fit' matching for all young people and to ensure, as far as possible, no child presents a significant or disproportionate risk to the safety or developmental opportunities of any other.

MISSING FROM CARE OR EDUCATION

Castle Farm Countryside Classroom's leaders should know the whereabouts of the young people on site at all times. Should a learner choose to leave site without authority, the leader should follow them and attempt to verbally de-escalate the situation and encourage them to return. If this is unsuccessful, we should call their education provision and or parents and if deemed necessary the Police. We should

attempt to keep eyes on them as much as possible until the situation is under control. If in the event, the young person puts themselves or others at serious risk of harm or injury, we should utilise whatever strategies we deem are proportionate in the circumstances. We will also have a prior agreement and strategy with specific schools/parents etc before any place with our provision is agreed.

CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Castle Farm Countryside Classroom is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

We make every possible effort to maintain a safe and caring environment where children and young people can prosper, build friendships, develop social skills, grow in self-confidence and achieve their full potential in preparation for later life.

LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

At Castle Farm Countryside Classroom, we respect and hopefully nurture a personalised response to individual needs. We use a variety of formal and informal means, to support students in identifying ways we can help them develop emotionally, socially and educationally.

STAFF TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION

All of our staff must have the following as a minimum:

First Aid
Full UK driving License
Must have completed basic Safeguarding training (min level 2)
PREVENT

We offer a range of training opportunities that are specific to the activities we offer as part of a staff development strategy.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

We have three owners of Castle Farm Countryside Classroom who are also the three company Directors for the day-to-day operations. We also have an operational director who oversees the day to day running of the provision. Together we have over 30 years of experience in management and working with children and young people and have all worked together at a successful “outstanding” children’s home. Two have gone on to work in education within School settings before creating CFCC.

POSITIVE MANAGEMENT OF BEHAVIOUR

One of our aims at Castle Farm Countryside Classroom is to help young people develop personal controls from within. To this end good behaviour patterns are encouraged and rewarded. To assist this development, an environment has been established which gives both support and security to children and young people, whilst allowing sufficient flexibility for the encouragement of individual development. Adults are role models of considered conflict resolution. Management techniques involve a range of strategies including the use of positive reinforcement and counselling and detailed positive behaviour management techniques. These are -

- To provide security for the young people and to aid personal development
- To protect the health and safety of others
- To maintain a positive environment
- To maintain an emotionally positive and supportive atmosphere

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Castle Farm Countryside Classroom has a designated fire safety co-ordinator who has duties that include checking the fire systems and protocols, conducting fire drills, reviewing fire evacuation procedures, and liaising with the Fire Brigade in respect of

all fire safety measures. They will, together with the Castle Farm countryside classroom Directors, conduct the annual Fire Risk Assessment as part of the Castle Farm Countryside Classroom Health and Safety Risk Management Cycle.

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ETHOS

Whilst we are non-denominational we seek to promote an awareness of a value system based on Humanistic principles. As a provision we are sensitive and respectful of the religious and cultural needs of all the young people and their families, or schools with legal responsibility, and seek information prior to admission concerning any specific requirements. Young people will be supported in any religious observance of their choice.

All children are encouraged to pursue their own religious observance and this will be facilitated and respected by all people within the provision.

Parents and others with parental responsibility are advised that adults will encourage religious customs and observances, but these cannot be enforced.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

Most concerns or worries that young people, parents/carers or staff may have can usually be resolved by discussing issues with the individuals concerned. In the case of complaints coming from external sources, the directors should be notified immediately.

If a formal complaint is made which cannot be resolved by informal procedures then a formal complaints procedure should be used.

We recognise at times that young people may experience situations or circumstances which they consider to be unfair, threatening, or an infringement of their rights. At such times our young people may feel angry, anxious, frightened, confused or miserable, and they should be enabled to communicate or challenge such situations and circumstances.

It is essential therefore that any young person or a representative of a young person wishing to make a complaint is treated with respect and that their complaint is taken seriously.

Our young people may choose to complain to any adult on the premises, peer, parents/carers, teachers, etc. All parties involved remain informed about the progress and outcome of the complaint.

For a complete explanation of the process and procedures please see the Complaints Policy and Practice document which can be obtained as described below.

AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF DOCUMENTS

Key documentation (hard copies) is made available to parents/carers, social workers and teacher representatives as part of the admission process for a child.
Policies are available on our website www.castlefarmcc.com. Access to other hard copies of documents is available by application to the directors.

Should you have concerns or enquiries about any aspect of our policy and practice please contact the company directors, who will provide you with the appropriate documents and/or discuss any feature of them with you.

COMPANY CONTACT DETAILS

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