

Newsletter

Dear Parents/Carers

We are excited to share the latest developments at Orchard Therapeutic Farm! Your unwavering support has fuelled our journey of growth and positive change, and we are thrilled to update you on the new opportunities and services we have introduced.

The completion of our fishing lake has been a remarkable addition to our farm. This serene haven offers the perfect setting for therapeutic fishing, providing a space for children to connect with nature and find solace in the act of fishing. The fishing lake has already been accessed and enjoyed by many children, fostering their love for the outdoors. There is a qualified instructor who has been teaching fishing and began putting a qualification framework into place.

In our ongoing commitment to holistic care, we have recently constructed new stables and a horse menage, enriching our equine program. The horse menage not only provides a space for exercising our ponies but also provides the space for animal-assisted therapy. The bond between our children and our equine friends is growing stronger each day. Alex our animal therapist uses the children EHCP targets to target specific areas of support using the animals - All learners can access to this service whose parents/guardian have consented to this service.

To ensure the emotional well-being of our participants, we are proud to always announce the presence of dedicated Mental Health First Aiders on site. Their presence offers reassurance and immediate assistance, ensuring the safety and emotional health of our children. Congratulations Laura on her passing of the qualifications - We look forward to setting her up in her own designated hub!

Our gardening area has blossomed into a hub of growth and learning. Children are now presented with new opportunities to cultivate their green fingers, developing a deeper connection with the earth while acquiring valuable gardening skills. The therapeutic benefits of working with nature have been immeasurable.

In addition to our other services, we are pleased to announce that we are an approved Functional Skills centre, delivering English and Maths education through small group sessions. This expands our educational opportunities we can provide to our learners (at an additional costs) and making them even more independent and preparing them for future roles in education, employability, and training.



And lastly, we would like to ask parents/carers if they would be interested in supporting our Board of Advisors as we develop our Governance Board. Please do contact me if this is something that may be of interest to you.

We are indebted to you for your continued support, trust, and collaboration. These recent developments are the result of our shared vision for creating brighter and more hopeful futures for children with SEN in our community.

Ludivine



This half term..

On the farm, we have welcomed some new animals here at OTF and it has been lovely to help them settle in, along with some of our new learners. Everyday we are completing our animal care duties, making sure they're all fed, clean, entertained and happy! We have made posters to learn all about safe and unsafe foods, created enriching games and puzzles and even tried our hands at free lunging the ponies.

As mentioned above, in our outdoor learning sessions we have loved launching our new allotment area and gardening curriculum. Our learners have learnt a lot about seasonal planting, with onions, garlic and pea shoots all taking off nicely as we head into the winter. We have also planted daffodils, crocus and hyacinths ready for spring- we are having to learn lots about patience and are looking forward to seeing them bloom next year!

To prepare the soil before all this planting, we have gained good understanding of how to weed a bed and although there is not too much in the allotment at this time of year, we have added all sorts of beautiful signs and decorations to add as much colour as possible! The therapeutic benefits of gardening are enormous and it's lovely to see our learner's taking ownership of the space and feeling excited when those first few shoots start to come through!

This term has been extremely productive in the kitchen for all our young people. Our seniors have been looking at the cuisine of France, which has allowed us to cook some truly delicious meals. To do this we first discussed different French dishes we know and would be keen to cook as well as those we hadn't previously tried for example onion soup, Crème Brûlée, beef bourguignon, steak and frites and quiche Lorraine. This has meant learning new recipes as well as the skills required to make them including how to split eggs, the importance of slow cooking with dishes like beef bourguignon and how to pre-cook short crust pastry with rice in order to stop it from rising before adding the quiche filling. Whenever cooking meat our seniors enjoy going out to local butchers and farm shops to learn more about where food comes from and keeping our ingredients as local as possible.

Furthermore, tying into our overriding theme for this term of 'keeping safe', we have been learning and practicing our safe knife skills as well as learning how to be as safe as possible when frying items like steak in a hot pan and how to place them into it in the safest possible way. We are extremely excited about what our seniors will be



making in the kitchen next term when our topic area will be seasonal British foods as well as our favorite foods.

Meanwhile our juniors have been continuing to refine their basic cooking skills this often involves making their own breakfasts and/or lunches following recipes for delicious homemade chips, pancakes, and pizzas. While cooking our juniors have also been refining their basic knife skills using our sparing knives to practice techniques such as the bridge and claw technique tying into our overriding theme for this term of 'keeping safe'. Additionally, we have also done some seasonal cooking with our juniors this term making apple crumble using apples from our orchards. We are excited to continue seeing our juniors developing their basic cooking skills and expanding these life skills.

During art this term, we have focused on the theme Autumn and expressing their creativity through different materials including spray painting, watercolours, leaf printing and more! This term art has been an opportunity for our learners to build new positive friendships and has provided a therapeutic approach for the children to talk about their feelings and express themselves. Art has been great for our children to build their confidence to try new things and to experiment!

The OTF Team!

Any other business..

- We return to after the half term break on Monday 30th and Tuesday 31st October – we would like to invite all learners in on that day to wear a Halloween costume. **(One that is farm appropriate and is able to get a bit mucky.)**
- Now that winter is approaching and the wetter weather is coming, please could all learners come armed with **spare clothing/waterproofs and wellies or boots.**
- Please could we remind everyone, if providing lunchboxes, that the content of these is well balanced and in line with our healthy eating targets. A well-balanced lunch provides energy and nutrients to keep the body and brain working efficiently through the afternoon!

