



Outdoor Learning Experiences supports learning and engagement with the natural environment for all ages. Activities take place throughout the year, and include farm visits, forest school, outdoor science classes, and art in the woods. We have been offering educational visits to school children since 2007. We offer a broad range of activities on the farm with school children, depending on their age, the time of year, and the specific needs of the teacher and class. I am happy to discuss needs with teachers and either lead sessions myself, or allow teachers to take the lead in planning lessons and activities, if they so wish.

Activities take place at East Hall Farm, part of the [St. Paul's Walden Bury Estate](#). This historical estate comprises a mixed farm of cereal crops and beef cattle, a walled garden containing an old fruit orchard and commercial vegetable production, and woodlands. This environment offers an opportunity to teach about farming, food production, conservation, wildlife, tree planting, and woodland management.

Visits are run by a trained leader (CEVAS (Certified Educational Visits Access Scheme) and Forest School level 3 qualified), and the farm meets appropriate health and safety guidelines for hosting visits from school children. We offer pre-visits to teachers, during which we discuss specific learning needs to integrate the field trip with the classroom. We provide guidance on preparing to come to the farm, and assistance in preparing risk assessments.

We are 30 miles from London, close to Stevenage, St. Alban's, Luton, Hitchin, Harpenden, Welwyn and Hatfield. We can offer a range of activities throughout the seasons, which can be tailored to the visitors' needs.

To discuss further or arrange a visit, please call 01438 871948 or e-mail info@outdoorlearningexperiences.org

Our web site is outdoorlearningexperiences.org, which contains further information and photographs.

Resources

Crops and farm machinery

- Beef cattle
- Woodland - ancient and newly planted
- Kitchen garden with established fruit trees and vegetables
- Farm Walk: This crosses the farm and illustrates a range of habitats and farm activities.
- Seasonal displays: of daffodils and bluebells
- Wildlife: During farm walks it is possible to see deer (fallow and muntjac), hare, rabbits, squirrels and stoats as well as many birds including ravens, red kites, sparrow hawks, pheasants, partridge, ducks, geese, owls and other woodland birds.
- 18th century grade 1 listed formal garden and historic landscape

Facilities

- Classroom
- Activity leader (CRB checked, CEVAS trained, OCN level3 Forest School leader)
- Coach parking

Educational Visits to the Farm

The farm offers a diverse environment in which children can explore a wide range of learning which is related to the classroom curriculum. We usually meet at the farm buildings, and walk along footpaths and lanes past fields of grazing livestock, crops growing in fields, and sometimes through woodland. The farm walk is 1 mile long, slightly downhill, therefore accessible to children or all ages and levels of fitness. There are frequent stops along the way to smell, touch, feel, discuss and ask questions. It usually ends in the walled garden, an ideal picnic spot if the weather is fine. In poor weather we can walk a bit further to an indoor classroom. The range of locations provides scope for many activities throughout the season.. We are happy to discuss what topics are being covered in the classroom, and link the farm visit with particular topics or themes, or develop specific themed days.

Visits are free, as we are funded by Natural England's educational access programme. Pre-visits should be arranged 2 weeks prior to the visit to provide help with risk assessment and visit planning. The group should bring sufficient adult helpers to meet OFSTED requirements.

Outdoor Science

Teaching science outside allows children to link classroom learning with the natural environment. During visits to the farm and woods, it is possible to engage in detailed science learning on the following topics:

Soils and earthworms

Hedgerow habitats

Pond dipping (small groups only)

Biodiversity, using either daffodils or apples (depending on the season).

Vegetable growing

Bug hunts

Several of these activities involve the OPAL environment surveys. We are happy to try to develop new themes in conjunction with teachers.

Forest School

Forest School is a form of outdoor learning during which children engage in a range of playful activities which challenge them to be imaginative, creative, develop social skills, engage with the environment and in so doing, learn about their natural environment and themselves.

Usually children come to the woods weekly (or bi-weekly) for either 6 or 10 sessions. A forest school session lasts for 1.5-2 hours. During this time, they become familiar with the woods, and engage in a range of activities mixing environmental education, experiential learning, and nature exploration in an outdoor setting. The final forest school session ends with a closing celebration around a campfire.

Sessions can be tailored to suit the age and needs of the individual group. Groups are usually made up of about a dozen children. Children must come with sufficient adult helpers to meet OFSTED requirements. Forest school sessions do bear a charge, which can be discussed according to requirements. Schools with staff qualified to Level 3 OCN Forest School leader level may enquire about running sessions at our site for free.

A typical 6 week series of sessions is as follows:

Week 1. Familiarisation with a woodland environment.

Welcome to the woodland school location. Introduction to the 6 weeks of activity, including information on how to prepare, what to bring, suitable clothing and footwear, and appropriate behaviour in the woods.

Activities:

Identification of forest sounds.

Touch and feel trees, plants, logs
Scavenger hunt.

Week 2. Woodland habitats

Recap on preparation for, and behaviour in, the woods.
Learning about the ecology of woodland, and the animals that reside there.

Week 3: Building structures

Making homes of various sizes: Dens, nests, fairy houses, and mini-beast homes from fallen branches and leaves.
Hide and seek / woodland games.

Week 4: Nature art and craft

A choice of activities from drawing to preparing mobiles from natural materials, leaf and bark rubbing, collages using natural materials.

Week 5: Seasonal activities in the woods.

Discussion of time of year, what happens in natural environments. Searching for signs of the season.
Seasonal activity e.g.

Autumn: collecting conkers, hunting for nuts, preparing log piles for homes for wild animals and mini-beasts.

Winter: Making Christmas decorations with holly and pine cones, or planting trees.

Spring: identification of spring flowers, bluebell walk, listen for birds.

Summer: collecting caterpillars, butterfly or moth trapping, feather collecting, press flowers

Week 6: Closing celebration

Preparation of nature party hats.

Camp fire with cooking, e.g. toasted marshmallows, roasted chestnuts, popcorn.

Feedback from children and forest school evaluation.