

# INFORMATION PACK FOR PROSPECTIVE FAMILIES

Progressive education in Rutland

Education based on how children learn naturally

Collaborative and outdoor learning for a sustainable future

Supplementary education for home-educated children

# LEARN TREE



## Progressive Education

noun. education

*An educational approach that prioritises hands-on experience over traditional classroom learning. Through group work, community engagement, and following the young person's engagement, the focus is on the development of collaborative group work and social skills, problem-solving and critical thinking, and lifelong learning.*

## INTRODUCTION

Lerntree grew from a programme offered through the Rutland Home Education Group before the coronavirus pandemic, which offered skills and knowledge events, community links, free play and longitudinal projects.

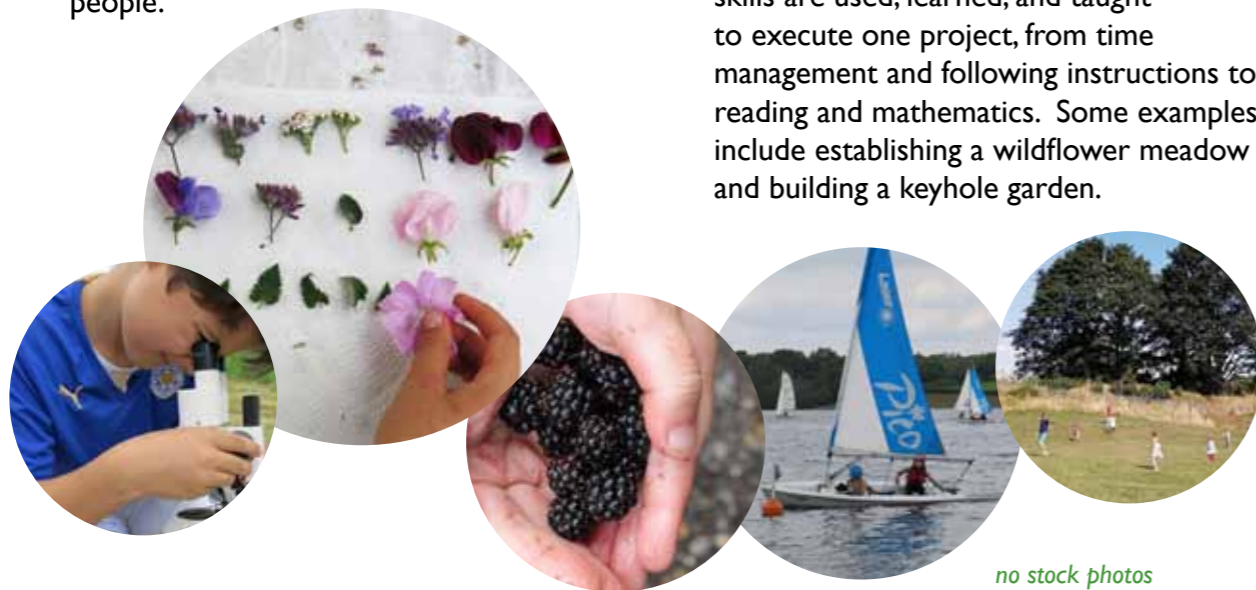
This popular programme has now been reinvented, with the addition of seasonal celebrations and brought together in one place, set in the vibrant market town of Oakham, Rutland.

Lerntree meets the growing need for progressive and personalised education for young people in our local community. It offers outdoor learning, food cultivation, community building, and personal growth opportunities in an environment that promotes well-being and encourages individuals to learn for themselves and share their knowledge with others.

### Community Links

Situated in Oakham, we have access to local resources such as the park, library, museum, nature reserves and local businesses.

Through organised visits, guest speakers and community projects, we head out into the community to understand how things work and meet people in jobs doing extraordinary things. We also invite people to us to run courses, supply local products, share their knowledge and make meaningful community connections. This crossover ensures an authentic community-based education for young people.



### Skills and Knowledge

We provide events and workshops that build skills and knowledge through experiential learning. Group size, developmental appropriateness and environmental impact are considered when planning.

### Longitudinal Projects

Longitudinal Projects run over a minimum of two years. Projects provide multiple learning opportunities and involve learners from the initial stages of project development all the way through. Many skills are used, learned, and taught to execute one project, from time management and following instructions to reading and mathematics. Some examples include establishing a wildflower meadow and building a keyhole garden.

*no stock photos  
all our own photos and memories*

### Free Play

Play is the work of the child. Play is a valued part of the programme, and essential in growing the skills for leadership in both personal and social development. We provide the conditions for free, independent and collaborative play to happen, for all ages and abilities.

### Seasonal Celebrations

Seasonal rituals like the Winter lantern walk and Summer camping connects us to our environment and navigate the natural cycles and agricultural calendar year.



*Rutland Home Education Group programme // Skills & Knowledge: Sailing, Archaeology, Ceramics, Wild Animal Stories, Discovery Art, Osprey Expert Day, Astronomy Talk, "Grubs Up!" Cooking Classes, Hedgerow Planting, Board Games, Scavenger Hunt. // Community Links: Rutland Radio, Oakham Fire Station, Rutland Poppy Project, 'Grow Together' Schools Plant Pot Project, Oakham Police Station, Tesco, Hambleton Bakery. // Long Projects: Castle Meadow, Key-hole Garden. // Crafternoons: Lantern Making, Marbelling, Wreath Making, Birdfeeders, Natural Inks, Seed Balls, Bug Hotels, Natural Dyes.*

Together, we provide an engaging, experiential and evolving curriculum based on ideas, interests, our community and the living world around us.



Rutland offers vibrant and beautiful surroundings for place-based education. Being the smallest county in England means that everything is close and accessible, offering a variety of rich learning landscapes, including Rutland Water Nature Reserve, several ancient woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and farmland. There are also many traditional master tradespeople, local businesses, and a rich local history.

### Weekly Learning Space

Growers Row Shared Garden provides a weekly learning space for Lerntree's holistic, broad and varied programme, with direct access to a wildflower meadow, gardens, woodland, and play areas throughout the year. Growers Row is where we plant and harvest food we will later cook with, hold outdoor workshops, and learn woodland stewardship, all while gaining the physical and mental benefits from time spent in nature.

This incredible outdoor garden is the perfect place for our young people to have the time, space and structure to develop important self-directed and collaborative learning skills.

Growers Row Shared Garden  
Rutland Showground, Oakham  
Rutland LE15 7TW



### Weekly Timetable

#### Full Day

A full day together at Growers Row provides learners with the time and space they need to develop important self-directed and collaborative learning skills. Fresh fruit snacks are provided, everyone brings their lunch and drink each day, unless otherwise arranged.

- 9.30am Gate opens for greeting everyone
- 10.00am The *morning meeting* begins for planning our day together
- 10.30am Active learning or programmed activity
- 12.30pm We all sit down the *midday meal* together

- 1.15pm Active learning or programmed activity
- 3.00pm Afternoon meeting, where we share our *favourite parts of the day*
- 3.30pm Pick up and close the gate

#### Half Day

At the beginning of each half term, families are provided with a plan of upcoming community-based activities. The plan is part of the living curriculum created within the group. Outings include site visits, workshops and fun, based in and around Rutland. We encourage families to car-share.

#### Extra Occasions

Occasional extra days may require meeting outside regular days and hours - for example, seasonal celebrations.



## TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

Lerntree differs greatly from the school model of education we are all so familiar with; there won't be the familiar subjects and tests, same-age classes and a one-size-fits-all curriculum, classroom walls and behavioural management, all with academic focus and values.

At Lerntree we are piloting a new education model called Authentic Learning Environment, with values and learning objectives rooted in the well-being of the of individual, communities, and the environment, coupled with four guiding principles based on how children learn naturally in a meaningful way.

Young people participate in the planning, of the learning environment, acquiring essential skills for independent and team leadership, all in a dynamic and evolving curriculum designed for life skills and well-being.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

### Rhythm of the Day

**Planned refuelling points maintain a smooth journey.** The planned rhythm of the day provides the right balance of activity and connection time that mimics and aids the development of self-regulation, self-care, and self-directed learning skills and significantly reduces behaviour issues associated with dysregulation and being micro-managed.

### Curriculums

**Lerntree works with two curriculums;** the first is the Living Curriculum, which incorporates our **programme of skills and knowledge events, community links, longitudinal projects, and seasonal celebrations.** It embraces the three-dimensional, rich learning environment we live in, while being flexible and evolving in response to the environment and the group's interests.

The second, Personal Curriculums, where young people direct their own learning, play and projects based on what they are passionate about and driven by, at the correct pace for the individual. Ideas, self-management, and intrinsic motivation are life-skills we wish all our young people to develop and take away with them.

### Morning Meeting

**Morning meetings are for plans, proposals, problems, and organising how to use our time together collaboratively in the most productive way.**

The meetings also aid healthy self and social development, where we learn and use our voice, reflective listening skills, growth-mindset vocabulary, make informed decisions, and grow skills in peaceful negotiation and conflict resolution.

Decisions are made in these meetings. Everyone has the opportunity to lead a meeting, and everyone's participation is valued. Some decisions remain with adults, such as issues that involve

safeguarding, administration, and the Authentic Learning Environment principles and values. The adults at Lerntree understand they have a responsibility towards the children to hold the environment for them; therefore, when necessary, adults may make decisions that reflect this responsibility.

### Favourite Parts of the Day

**This exercise provides a time for reflection and gratitude.**

Reflection is an important part of the natural learning cycle. Gratitude enables a growth mindset, a positive perspective on our world, and overall contentment.

Practising gratitude can enhance our well-being by reducing stress hormones and anxiety. Gratitude also helps neutralize negative emotions and increase self-satisfaction, leading to a more positive outlook, mood, and social interactions and improving sleep and immune function.

## VALUES

We Value the Individual and Self Development

We Value the Community, Collaboration and Social-literacy

We Value the Eco-literacy and Circular Thinking

We Value Integration and Holistic Education

Visit [www.authenticlearningenvironment.co.uk](http://www.authenticlearningenvironment.co.uk) for more information on the education model used at Lerntree.

## GUIDING PRINCIPALS

The way we set up and plan the learning environment will;

Follow the unique pace, ideas and interests of the learner

Use real tools, objects, experience, purpose and context

Observe naturally paced developmental stages

Achieve authentic learning states through the relationship

Every one of us is unique in our ideas and interests, which motivates and excites us. We each have our own pace to do things, develop and learn. By working with this combination of ideas, interests and pace, we enable every learner to thrive.

Children naturally move towards authentic real-life learning. We know from our own experiences that learning is richer and more authentic when we join learning with life experiences, real tools and objects in situations that have real purpose and are in context.

Childhood is the time in a person's life when the most physical, cognitive, emotional and social development will occur. With neuroscience and detailed research, we can map the natural sequence of developmental stages and work with these age and stage-sensitive windows that are linked to future well-being.

Authentic learning states refer to the internal state of the learner, when at their most 'absorbent'. The absorbent learner is willing and wanting to learn, and authentic learning states enable learners to take in vast amounts of information, and knowledge and to process and respond to that intake accordingly.



1 1/2 DAYS A WEEK

3 TERMS AUTUMN-WINTER-SPRING

11 WEEKS PER TERM

33 WEEKS SEPTEMBER TO JULY

7 - 14 YRS MIXED AGE GROUP

10 - 15 PLACES AVAILABLE

3 FACILITATORS

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FEES AND TERM DATES ON REQUEST

#### Contact

Get in touch for the latest fees and term dates.

We welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you have.

Please email your queries to, [clarecaro@rootandbranchout.co.uk](mailto:clarecaro@rootandbranchout.co.uk)

## LERNTREE ENROLLMENT PROCESS

The enrolment process enables families to discuss policies and learn how Lerntree can best meet the needs of each family.

### 1. Request a Registration Pack

After reading through the Information Pack, and you decide that Lerntree is right for your child, we ask you to discuss this with your child before requesting a link to the Registration Form. Request to register here [www.rootandbranchout.co.uk/lerntree-registration](http://www.rootandbranchout.co.uk/lerntree-registration)

If no places are available, you can join the waiting list by filling out and sending the Registration Form. The waiting list does not function on a first come, first serve basis, as we aim to maintain a balance of age and gender in the group.

### 2. Half-day Visit

After receiving your completed Registration Form, we may invite your family to visit for a morning (9.30 – 12noon). The purpose of this half-day is for your child and you to get a feel for the space and clarify any questions that may arise. There is no charge for this half a day.

### 3. Application and Consent Forms

If you would like to complete the enrollment process after the half-day visit, you will receive the Application and Consent Forms to be filled in and returned before we can arrange a trial.

### 4. Trial Period, Settle-In & Deposit

Lerntree offers a trial period of 4 consecutive weeks. The trial period is an opportunity for children to get a feel for the learning environment and make an informed choice about whether Lerntree is right for them. We also ask one parent or guardian to stay for the Settle-in Process to ensure a smooth transition. For us, the trial period is a chance to see if the young person will be able to fit into Lerntree life. If any party considers Lerntree or the child an unsuitable match, our mutual commitment ends there. If Lerntree, the family and the child appear to be a good match, then our mutual commitment can continue. A meeting is held at the end of the trial period to share experiences.

A deposit of £200 for every child participating in a trial period is paid when submitting the Application and Consent Forms.

Both parties are entitled to stop the trial at any time for valid reasons. A cancellation by Root-and-Branch Out will result in a proportional refund of the unused weeks. However, there is no refund for a trial period cancelled by the parents. If the trial period results in your child continuing at Lerntree, the deposit will be deducted from the first term payment, with the remaining weeks of the term invoiced separately.

### 6. Confirmation Letter

After the successful completion of the trial period, you will receive a formal notification via email to confirm a place for your child.

### 7. Payment of Fees

The annual fee is split into three equal payments - the term fees. Each payment is due before the term starts and needs to be made at the latest five working days before the start of the term. In the case of a half-term start, then 50% of the term fees are due five working days before the start of the 2nd half-term. Fees are non-refundable.

After a successful trial period (with mutual commitment to continue), a rolling contract with a one-term notice period comes into effect.

### 8. Notice Period for Withdrawal

Written notice to remove a child must be received by [alex@rootandbranchout.co.uk](mailto:alex@rootandbranchout.co.uk) before the first day of term, at the end of which the removal is to take effect. For example, if a family does not wish to attend the summer term, the last date to inform us is the day before the winter term starts. In the absence of proper notice, the fee for the following term must be paid.

### 9. Request of Withdrawal

Root-and-Branch Out reserves the right to request the withdrawal of a child under exceptional circumstances. This action is never taken lightly. These circumstances can be when the behaviour of one child continues to negatively impact the freedom of others or if there persists an ongoing fear for the safety of others and all other options have failed. Removing individuals is only taken when safety becomes an issue or when there is no other foreseeable way to resolve the issue.

*The information in this Information pack is subject to change.*



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Q. Uniforms

#### **Are the children required to wear uniforms?**

There are no uniforms at Lerntree. Instead, we ask everyone to wear practical clothing that considers the weather, what we will be doing that day and where we will be working. These considerations help young people develop skills to dress with situational awareness and freedom of expression.

### Q. Term Time Holidays

#### **Are there any penalties for taking children out in term time?**

There are no penalties. Please inform us in advance of the dates of absence. We appreciate that this is only sometimes possible in emergencies. No refunds are available for taking time out of term.

### Q. Drop Off or Stay

#### **Is it drop-off, or can I stay while my child settles in?**

We insist parents and guardians spend at least four sessions with us to settle in, more if needed. The Settle-in Policy ensures that this transition is smooth and trauma-free.

### Q. Extra Needs, Acceptance and Inclusivity

#### **My child needs extra care in the classroom, how will you deliver this?**

Facilitators are there to meet each child's needs and growing autonomy, with a ratio of one facilitator to five young people. Our small groups and 1:5 adult-child ratio allow all children to be seen, heard, and supported.

We encourage young people to be their 'authentic selves' and grow an identity that empowers. To provide an environment that supports this, we ask for labels and diagnoses to be left at the gate and on the paperwork, and each young person is referred to by their preferred name. Where there are additional needs we cannot meet, we will bring in extra assistance - while maintaining a culture of safety, authentic relationships and unity in our diversity.

### Q. Interests and Resources

#### **Can the children bring things to do with them?**

Within reason - yes and no. Please keep in mind that the learning environment needs to be safe, inclusive, designed to develop active learner skills, and socially, environmentally and developmentally appropriate. That means saying no to poisons, weapons, drugs, gaming devices, pornography, plastic crafts and some board games, for example. We welcome the opportunity to discuss items rationally in a safe space. If you need clarification, ask.

### Q. Motivation and Boredom

#### **What if my child isn't motivated, gets bored or isn't interested in anything educational or taking part in things?**

We know what kills intrinsic motivation, inhibits participation, and how children lose interest, and we understand the depths of boredom. With this knowledge and understanding, we can rekindle intrinsic motivation.

### Q. Consent

#### **What if my child wants to opt out of group activities?**

There are many reasons why a young person may wish to opt out of an activity. We will explore the reasons with them and provide them with a vocabulary to communicate their needs and state their position clearly to others in a non-confrontational way. Opportunities around choice are important when learning about consent, boundaries and working alongside others in partnership.

### Q. Rules

#### **I have read about schools with no rules. Is this the same?**

Lerntree takes a different approach to rules. We have a set of guidelines and policies to help us establish the 'safe space' for optimum learning and development, and that supports our sustainable and eco-literate ethos. When entering the Lerntree, everyone has the opportunity to agree with these guidelines. Working in agreement around rules is an essential part of collaborative learning, social-emotional mobility and socialization.

## Q. Conflict

### **How do you deal with conflict?**

We practice and facilitate peaceful negotiation and conflict resolution at Lerntree. Conflict is simply a mismatch of ideas, points of view, beliefs, and needs. When we practice, young people learn transferable skills and gain confidence when facing conflict.

## Q. Aggressive Behaviour

### **What is your policy on aggressive behaviour?**

People get aggressive for many reasons; nearly all are linked to an active 'survival brain'. We explore the reasons behind behaviour with the person and provide them with a vocabulary to communicate needs, rationalize ideas and state their position clearly to others in a non-confrontational way. Above all, we must maintain a safe space for everyone at the Lerntree. See our Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policy for more details.

## Q. Subjects

### **Do you teach subjects such as literacy and mathematics?**

The holistic learning approach does not compartmentalize learning into subjects, to be taught and measured. Given the right content, conditions, and timing, children can acquire literacy and mathematics skills and knowledge naturally.

We approach subjects as tools. Suppose three or more children show interest in a subject, then we provide a skill-building workshop or experiential learning event to meet that need. This holistic learning approach keeps all subjects joined and in context, which aids the development of 'joining the dots' and divergent thinking, which are transferable skills valued in any workplace.

## Q. Homework

### **Will there be homework?**

No. Time at home is valuable family time.

## Q. Exams and Tests

### **How will you measure their learning?**

We take a giant step away from mainstream school with lessons delivered in measurable doses. At Lerntree, children are never tested or quizzed, with no exams. The holistic learning approach is designed around rich life experiences for multifunctional learning of development, knowledge and information.

A record is kept of the group's experiences, stories and productions. These are documented and published at the end of each term and year.

## Q. Screens

### **What is your policy on screens like smartphones, tablets, kindles, gaming and computers?**

Whether it's interactive games, entertaining programs, social media, or apps with all the answers, "screentime" significantly impacts the developing child and the social environment. Since the first iPhone in 2007, Android smartphones in 2008, the iPad in 2010, and the widespread use of hand-held internet-connected devices, we have seen a great change in human behaviour. Many children are now raised by screens and by adults addicted to screens, impacting children's development on a large scale. We see it in the development of speech and eyesight, neurodevelopment (brainstem and pathways to executive function), sensory and nervous systems, motor and reflexes, and social and emotional development.

We educate healthy tech use, only using tech as tools. On-site, all devices go into a basket upon arrival and are collected when leaving. When we are together on off-site visits and adventures, we ask that screens stay in bags unless needed, necessary or for planned tool use.

Ask your question here...

[www.rootandbranchout.co.uk/lerntree-questions](http://www.rootandbranchout.co.uk/lerntree-questions)



**Authentic Learning Environment**  
Taking education outside the box  
[www.authenticlearningenvironment.co.uk](http://www.authenticlearningenvironment.co.uk)



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