INFORMATION PACK FOR PROSPECTIVE FAMILIES

+INFO
2026/2027

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

LERNTREE

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.

www.lerntree.co.uk

@lerntree

/lerntree

INTRODUCTION

Lerntree grew out of a programme that offered skills and knowledge events, community links, free play, and seasonal celebrations through the Rutland Home Education Group before the coronavirus pandemic.

This popular programme was reinvented 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 opportunities for personal growth 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

Workshops build skills and knowledge through experiential learning. Group size, developmental appropriateness and environmental impact are considered when planning. Workshops can be proposed and run by anyone in the group, creating an opportunity to share knowledge and build confidence in a supportive atmosphere.

Projects

We offer nature-based projects, many of which continue across the seasons. Projects are practical examples of how we work alongside nature and provide numerous learning opportunities, starting from the initial stages of development and continuing through to completion.

Contact

We welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you have.
Please email your queries to, clarecaro@rootandbranchout.co.uk

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 connect us to our environment, navigate the natural cycles and agricultural calendar year.

Social Literacy

We are not born with social skills, they develop. Learning social skills is an important part of childhood. We provide the structure and opportunity to develop social literacy skills by contributing to shared agreements, making choices and decisions, listening and being heard, and establishing healthy boundaries that work for our group.

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

no stock photos
all our own photos and memories

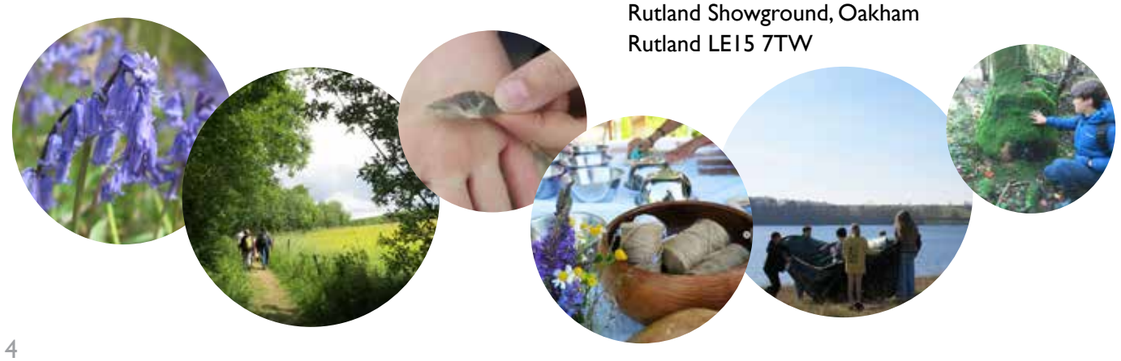
Rutland offers vibrant and beautiful surroundings for place-based education. Being the smallest county in England means that everything is close and accessible, offering a variety of rich learning landscapes, including Rutland Water Nature Reserve, several ancient woodland Sites of Special Scientific 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 Mondays 9.30am - 3.30pm

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

9.30am Greeting in the carpark and together we walk to the gate

9.45am The *morning meeting* begins for planning our day together

10.30am Active learning or programmed activity

12.00pm We all sit down together for the *midday meal*

1.00pm 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 Tuesday mornings 10am - 1pm

Families are provided with a plan and locations of upcoming community-based activities through a group chat. 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 significantly differs from the school model of education most of us are familiar with, with the subjects and tests, same-age classes, a one-size-fits-all curriculum, classroom walls, and behavioural management - all with a focus on academic performance and values.

At Lerntree, we follow an education model called the Authentic Learning Environment, with values and learning objectives that focus on the well-being of the individual, communities, and the environment. The guiding principles reflect how children learn naturally, in a meaningful way.

Young people participate in group planning, acquiring essential skills for both independent and collaborative leadership, all within a dynamic, evolving curriculum. Together we create a culture of mutual respect.

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, projects, workshops, 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, projects and workshops 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 for more information on the education model used at Lerntree.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

Follow the unique pace, ideas and interests of the learner

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.

Use real tools, objects, experience, purpose and context

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.

Observe naturally paced developmental stages

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.

Achieve authentic learning states through the relationship

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.

NUMBERS

1½ DAYS **A WEEK**

3 TERMS **AUTUMN-WINTER-SPRING**

33 WEEKS **SEPTEMBER TO JULY**

£60 **PER WEEK**

Fees Autumn term £660, Winter term £600 & Spring term £720, £1980 per annum (33wks). Fees are paid in advance.

15 **PLACES AVAILABLE**

2 - 3 **FACILITATORS**

7 - 12 YRS **MIXED AGE GROUP**

2026/2027

Autumn Term 2026/2027
14 Sept – 13 Oct
Autumn midterm break (2wks)
2 Nov – 8 Dec

Festive Break (4wk)

Winter Term 2026/2027
11 Jan – 9 Feb
Winter midterm break (1wk)
22 Feb – 23 Mar

Spring Break (2wks)

Spring Term 2026/2027
12 Apr – 25 May
Spring midterm break (1wk)
1 June – 7 July

Summer Holiday (9wks)

Return for 2027/28
13 September

LERNTREE ENROLMENT PROCESS

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

1. **Registering Interest in a Place at Lerntree**

After reading the Information Pack and deciding that Lerntree is right for your child, we ask that you discuss this with your child before applying for a place. If no places are available, your child will be added to the waiting list by filling out and submitting the Registration Form www.rootandbranchout.co.uk/lerntree-registration. The waiting list does not function on a first-come, first-served 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 obligation of a place with this visit. There is no charge for this half-day.

3. **Application and Consent Forms**

If you would like to complete the enrolment 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 four 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. The length of the settle-in period varies, with a minimum of three weeks and longer where needed. 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 suitable match, then our mutual commitment can continue.

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 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 start during term time, payment for the remaining weeks of the term is required three days before the start. Fees are non-refundable.

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

8. **Notice Period for Withdrawal**

To withdraw a child from Lerntree, written notice must be sent to *clarecaro@rootandbranchout.co.uk* before the start of the term of intended withdrawal. For example, to withdraw during or at the end of the Winter Term, notice must be given during the before the start of the Winter Term. Without proper notice, the fee for the next half-term (in this example, the first half of the Spring 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 by email.
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 support, 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 group and the 1:5 adult-to-child ratio ensure that all children are seen, heard, and supported. We enable young people to speak up, hear others, make choices and empower others in the group to do the same - together we maintain a culture of safety, authentic relationships and unity in our diversity. To provide an environment that supports this approach, we ask that labels and diagnoses be left at the gate and on the paperwork, and that each young person be referred to by their preferred name.
Additional needs that we cannot accommodate, will require a further discussion and potential extra fees to facilitate this need.

Q. Interests and Resources

Can the children bring things to do with them?
Within reason - yes and no. We welcome books, tools, games, projects and ideas! 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 Policy for more details *www.lerntree.co.uk/policies*

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, both 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. A photographic yearbook is published at the end of each 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, since the widespread use of hand-held internet-connected devices, we have seen "screentime" significantly impacting the developing child and the social environment. We see it in the development of speech and eyesight, neurodevelopment (brainstem and pathways to executive function), sensory and nervous systems, motor skills and reflexes, and social and emotional development.
We educate for 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.

Q. OFSTED

Are you OFSTED registered?

Lerntree is exempt from OFSTED registration on the basis it is 'supplemental education'; no more than 18hrs a week, for children of school age who are home-educated.

Ask your question here…

www.rootandbranchout.co.uk/lerntree-questions

Authentic Learning Environment
EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET
www.authenticlearningenvironment.co.uk

Root and Branch Out
NURTURING COMMUNITY THROUGH NATURE

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