

Our Approach

Farming, Family, Therapy and Legacy

Jamie's Farm uniquely combines Farming, Family, Therapy and Legacy into a five-day residential with a focus on giving children time and space to reflect, renew and determine a new path for themselves. We do this by creating an environment where they feel respected and are given opportunities to display their talents and show responsibility. The farm environment is homely and cosy, steering away from the institutional setup of school and instead encouraging togetherness and an escape from the challenges of normal life. On day one, all mobile phones and electronics are handed in to ensure there is real distance from pressures and distractions at home. Children live and work on site in small groups of 10–12, supported by our experienced staff who focus activities on positive and tangible outcomes. A visit to Jamie's Farm does not end when young people leave. Alongside our core components of Farming, Family and Therapy is our Legacy strand. Through this, we support schools and students when they return, to embed the changes and achieve a greater long-term impact.

Farming



Through the 'Farming' strand of our work, we help children to build self-esteem. Visiting children are vital to the running of our working commercial farms and gain huge satisfaction from seeing the results of their individual and group work.

Rearing livestock

Interaction with our livestock encourages a sense of nurture, confidence, responsibility and achievement. Children begin to see the value of hard work and gain a huge amount of satisfaction from tackling challenging jobs in a new environment. Children also contribute to farm life through activities such as hedging, carpentry, and log chopping.

Gardening

Children help to grow seasonal fruit and vegetables in our extensive vegetable gardens, which is a valuable contribution to meal preparation. This allows young people to get a sense of the food cycle and how putting effort into growing and harvesting food can lead to delicious produce.

Farming community

Children may visit neighbouring dairy and sheep farms, or the livestock market. This helps children to understand the social context of farming and develop trusting relationships with a range of adults.



Family



Through the ‘Family’ strand of our work, children share in each other’s successes and learn how to live in a cooperative group. Children are given a framework and reference point of what a healthy, supportive family can look like. At the start of the week, we set firm boundaries and emphasise our high expectations of them.

Cooking

Food forms a major part of the week at Jamie’s Farm. It enables us to share our cultures, develop our creativity, work as a team, and build confidence. Young people are involved in every aspect of it, including the growing of fruit and vegetables, caring for livestock, food preparation and serving. The adults and children eat together around the table, and everyone helps to clean up



afterwards; the message of looking after others before yourself is central to what we do. All sugary snacks are handed in on day one; instead, we show children the benefits of eating healthily and allow them to realise the resulting changes in their behaviour and attitudes.

Living together

At Jamie’s Farm, staff and children live together, and learn to respect each other and the home in which they live. Everyone contributes to the functions of the family household. Without the distractions of mobile phones and electronic devices there is time and space to reflect; stories are shared in the evenings, we play games together in the yard and on the final night we have a bonfire and teach each other new songs.

Daily walk

A daily walk provides children with exercise and a sense of adventure as they discover the countryside. This is rewarding, as children frequently exceed their physical expectations of themselves, but it also allows them to enjoy a sense of freedom as they expand their horizons. Kicking a ball about, rolling down hills, walking the dogs, or even a swim in the river create wonderful memories for children to take away.



Therapy



At Jamie’s Farm, children come to live, work, play and grow; the therapeutic approach is woven into everything that we do. As children are only here for a working week, we do not engage them in formal therapy but in reflective conversations, individually and in groups. We call it ‘therapy on the hoof’, which incorporates a more informal, non-intrusive approach. With the clarity of distance and away from the distraction of modern technology, children commit to making improvements when back at home.

Group Work

Daily group work encourages children to interact appropriately with one another. We sit down around the table after meals to hear the successes and challenges from all members of the group. Children set goals, and give and receive peer feedback to each other.

One-to-ones

Jamie’s Farm has a high staff-to-child ratio to create strong relationships and an intimate, trusting culture. One-to-one activities with our trained staff allow children to reflect and to vocalise, rather than act out their challenges.

Therapeutic work with horses

Working with these large, powerful but sensitive animals allows children to confront their own parallel issues of fear, trust and attunement. It also affords them the opportunity to form leadership roles and vocalise their own difficulties of dealing with power and control.

Art

We encourage children to express themselves creatively through art, music and drama. We provide reflective, calm spaces for children to engage with creative tasks and informally share their thinking about life, home and school.

Legacy



Bespoke follow up programmes, designed in partnership with schools, include visits by our staff as well as ideas on how to implement elements of our programme back in school. We ensure we always have open communication lines to support new ideas and overcome any challenges that may limit long-term impact.

During the residential

Every Thursday morning of a visit, our School Partnership Manager meets with the Lead Teacher and Jamie’s Farm Therapy Coordinator, to look at what follow-up support each child needs, as well as whole group sessions that could be planned to recreate the family feel of a Jamie’s Farm residential back in school. We look at the key moments when we, as Jamie’s Farm staff, can go into school to reconnect with the children, and in particular, to hold the children to account against the challenges and goals they set themselves on the farm.

The day they return: letters to Head Teacher

The Head Teacher of each school receives a letter on the Friday of a visit. This is so that they can celebrate all the pupils’ highlights alongside them as soon as they get back. It will also detail any key strategies that we believe will help certain at-risk pupils. By ensuring that this key decision maker is immediately made aware of the challenges that the individual pupil has to overcome on a daily basis, we have sought to limit the effect of the occasional post-farm blues that can sometimes affect the child on their return to school. For the pupil, it is extremely powerful to come back to school to a Head Teacher who has already heard how well they got on; it can lead to a profound boost to self-esteem.



The day after they return: letters to parents/carers

On the Saturday, the day after children have returned, the parents or carers receive a letter that has been sent in the post by our Jamie's Farm teams the previous afternoon. This personalised recognition, specific to every child, is designed to support the children to share their successes, their pride and excitement from the week immediately on their return to normal life. This is a great chance to ensure parents are brought into the process. We know that if children change some of their lifestyle habits – for instance in terms of diet, sleep and use of electronics – it can lead to huge benefits. Parents are in a prime position to help effect that change.

One week on

Our partner schools and organisations receive bespoke reports on each child with detailed notes about their experiences at the farm, in addition to suggested interventions or manners of working with them.

Two weeks on

One fortnight after young people have visited the farm they each get sent a postcard with a photo of them in their favourite place at the farm along with a reminder of their strengths and highlights from the week, as well as the challenges they have identified for themselves. For many young people this is a real boost after the difficulties of reintegrating back into school and life have been realised.



Six weeks on

After six weeks, our staff visit the young people back in school and hold a meeting, refreshing the values of Jamie's Farm, but also to hear how they have been getting on against the challenges they set for themselves. We also present the young people with their certificates, often in front of parents and teachers, which detail all the amazing things we noticed about them on the farm. Due to our high retention rate of school bookings and their subsequent multiple visits, a visit in school to one group often involves checking in with our ever-increasing alumni of Jamie's Farmers from previous visits too.

Six months and beyond

We are lucky enough that young people want to visit the farm again and again, and we have put in place a series of work experience placements for Jamie's Farmers when they reach Sixth Form. This involves them getting involved in any element of the farm that could help them in their future careers: for some, this is shadowing our Farm Manager; for others, they are based with our administrative team learning about the communications, fundraising or financial side of the charity. Having been there and done it, Work Experience students often provide the best support to the new cohorts of children coming through our programme.