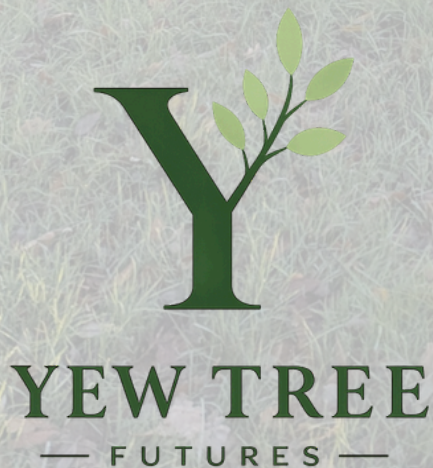




Student Handbook

A Therapeutic College for
Young People Aged 14–25

Welcome to Yew Tree Futures

Starting college is a big step. It can be exciting, but it can also feel a little overwhelming. We understand that everyone arrives with different experiences, strengths, interests and challenges.



At Yew Tree Futures, we do things differently.

We believe that learning happens best when you feel safe, understood and valued. Our college combines academic learning, vocational opportunities, therapeutic support, outdoor education and preparation for adulthood to help you build the future that matters to you.

Whether your goal is employment, an apprenticeship, supported living, further education or becoming more independent and confident, we will work alongside you to help you get there.

Most importantly, we want you to feel like you belong here.

What Makes Us Different?

- ✓ Farm-based learning
- ✓ Small and supportive environment
- ✓ Daily therapeutic support
- ✓ Individual programmes
- ✓ Preparation for adulthood

About Yew Tree Futures

Yew Tree Futures is an independent special school and college for young people aged 14–25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).



Based on our 45-acre working farm in Woodchurch, Kent, learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom. During your time here, you may learn in our teaching spaces, life skills suite, around the farm, with our animals, or in our Woodland Wellbeing Cabin.

Rather than expecting you to fit into a rigid curriculum, we build your programme around:

- Your EHCP outcomes
- Your interests and strengths
- Your future aspirations
- Your wellbeing needs
- Your learning style

No two students will have exactly the same timetable because no two students are exactly the same.

The people who created Yew Tree Futures also helped establish Yew Tree Farm School and have many years of experience using animals, outdoor learning and strong relationships to help young people thrive.

We know that education hasn't always been easy for everyone who joins us. You may have found large classrooms overwhelming, struggled with attendance, or felt that previous settings didn't fully understand your needs.

That's why we've designed Yew Tree Futures to be different.

Our approach is therapeutic, nurturing and individualised. We will take the time to get to know you, understand what matters to you, and support you to develop the confidence, independence and skills you need for adult life.

What Will I Learn?

Your programme will be personalised to help you achieve your goals.
Depending on your needs and aspirations, you may work towards:

Core Skills

- English and maths functional skills or GCSE
- Real world application out on the farm
- 1-1 or small group tuition



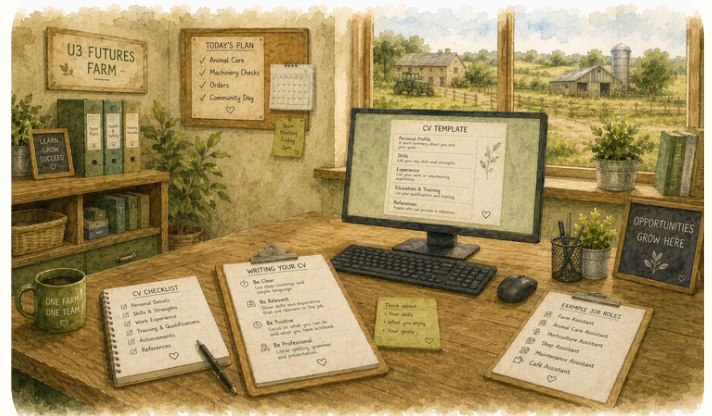
Personal Development

- NCFE Personal and Social Development
- Wellbeing and emotional literacy
- Independent living skills
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Community projects



Employability

- NCFE Employability Qualifications
- Interview skills
- CV writing
- Workplace expectations
- Enterprise activities



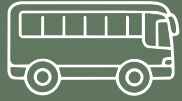
Vocational Qualifications

- City & Guilds or BTEC Land-Based Studies
- BTEC Animal Care
- Equine qualifications
- Occupational Studies
- Horticulture
- First aid qualifications



Preparation for Adulthood

Everything we do helps prepare you for life after college.



- Independent living
- Money management
- Cooking and nutrition
- Travel training
- Community access

- Relationships and communication
- Self-advocacy
- Health and wellbeing
- Employment skills
- Decision-making and problem-solving

Our dedicated Life Skills Suite has been designed to help you develop the practical skills needed for greater independence, whether your future involves independent living, supported living, further education or employment.



The Life Skills Suite includes:

- A fully equipped kitchen where you can learn to plan, prepare and cook meals.
- Laundry facilities to help you develop skills such as washing, drying and caring for your clothes.
- A dining area where students can share meals and practise social and communication skills.
- A comfortable living room space where you can relax, play board games and take part in activities with your peers and staff.
- Office and study space where you can complete coursework, research future opportunities, apply for jobs and develop independent working skills.

Community Learning

Preparation for adulthood skills are then practised in real-life situations through regular access to the local community. Every week, students take part in a dedicated Community Day, providing opportunities to develop independence, confidence and employability skills beyond the college environment.

Community learning opportunities may include:

- Travel training and using public transport
- Food shopping and budgeting
- Planning and accessing leisure activities
- Visiting local services and facilities
- Developing social confidence in community settings
- Exploring career options and future pathways
- Meeting local employers
- Visiting workplaces, colleges and training providers
- Accessing work experience and volunteering opportunities



By combining practical learning on site with real-world experiences in the community, students are able to build the confidence, knowledge and independence needed to make successful transitions into adult life.

Work Experience & Employability

Work experience is a key part of life at Yew Tree Futures and an important part of preparing for adulthood.

Placements are carefully chosen around your interests, strengths and future goals, helping you explore different career pathways and develop the skills needed for employment. Opportunities may include:

Animal care
Farming and land-based industries
Horticulture
Hospitality
Retail
Community projects
Volunteering
Supported employment opportunities

We understand that work experience can feel exciting for some students and daunting for others. That's why placements are tailored to your individual needs and abilities and can be built up gradually over time.

You will never be expected to access work experience without the support you need. Where appropriate, college staff can support you during placements, helping you develop confidence, learn new skills and overcome any challenges that arise. As your confidence grows, support can be adjusted to help you become more independent.

Our aim is not simply to find you a placement, but to help you discover what you enjoy, what you are good at and what you might like to do in the future.

Enterprise & On-Site Opportunities

Alongside external placements, students also have opportunities to take part in enterprise projects based on the farm. These may include running a community cafe, growing and selling farm produce, supporting events and taking part in other small business projects.

These opportunities allow students to develop valuable employability skills such as customer service, hospitality, teamwork, communication, problem-solving and handling money, all within an environment where they already feel safe, supported and confident.

This can provide an excellent stepping stone towards employment and community-based work experience opportunities.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

At Yew Tree Futures, mental health support is part of everyday college life. Every student has access to their own Clinical Psychologist throughout their time with us.

You will have a weekly session with your psychologist during term time. Your psychologist is someone who will get to know you, understand your experiences and help you develop strategies to manage challenges and build confidence.

Therapy That Feels Different

Because we are based on a farm, therapy sessions can take place outdoors, in our woodland wellbeing cabin, around the campfire, or with our therapy dogs, ponies, and horses nearby.

Your psychologist will use different approaches depending on your needs, including CBT, EMDR and mindfulness. Many students find that being outside and around animals helps them feel more relaxed and comfortable during therapy.

Our Woodland Wellbeing Cabin is available throughout the week.

Alongside your scheduled sessions, there are regular opportunities to drop in and access support when you need it.



You don't have to wait until things become overwhelming before asking for help.

Understanding Your Story

During your first term, you will work with your psychologist to develop a psychological formulation.

This is a personalised document that helps us understand you as an individual, and identify the best ways to support your wellbeing, learning, and independence while you are at college.

Who you are

Your personality, strengths, interests, and what makes you unique.

What's important to you

Your goals, values, relationships, and the things that matter most in your life.

Your experiences

Key life events and experiences that may have shaped how you see yourself and the world around you.

What has helped in the past

Strategies, support, routines, and approaches that have worked well for you.

What you find difficult

Situations, environments, or challenges that can affect your wellbeing or ability to learn.

How we can best support you

Practical and emotional support strategies that help you feel safe, understood, and able to thrive.

The document is developed collaboratively, meaning your views and experiences are at the centre of the process. It is not a test or assessment, and there are no right or wrong answers.

Once completed, the formulation can be shared with relevant staff (with your consent) so that everyone working with you has a better understanding of your needs, strengths, and preferred ways of being supported. This helps us provide consistent, person-centred support across college life.

Your formulation is a working document and may be reviewed and updated over time as your needs, goals, and circumstances change.

My College Day

The college day runs from 9:00am to 3:00pm,
Monday to Friday.

One day each week is a Community Day, when students leave site to take part in community-based learning, work experience, volunteering, travel training, leisure activities or visits linked to future goals.

When you first join us, we understand that you may need time to settle into college life. If needed, an individual transition timetable can be arranged, with the aim of gradually building up to full-time attendance.



Morning Arrival

When you arrive at college, you will be dropped off in the college car park and welcomed by staff.

The day begins in the Life Skills Suite, where you can make yourself a cup of tea, settle in and have breakfast with the group.

Each morning, we have a morning briefing. This is where we talk about the day ahead, including:

There are usually five learning sessions throughout the day. Each session lasts around 45 minutes, although some subjects may be taught as a double session so there is enough time to complete practical work properly.

Every student has an individual timetable because your tuition, therapy, qualifications and future goals will be personal to you.

Learning usually takes place in very small groups or through one-to-one support. Sessions may happen in the Life Skills Suite, around the farm, in the Woodland Wellbeing Cabin, in practical outdoor learning areas, or out in the community.

Your timetable may include:

- English and maths tuition
- Life skills
- Therapy and wellbeing sessions
- Vocational qualifications
- Animal care
- Land-based learning
- Employability
- Independent study
- Project work

My College Day

Break and Lunchtime

Break time and lunchtime are usually spent together as a college community, although quiet space is available if you need time away from the group.

During breaks, you may be able to:

- Spend time with peers and staff
- Use the independent study space
- Access a computer for research or coursework
- Play board games or puzzles
- Have some quiet time if needed

End of Day Reflection

At the end of each day, we come back together for a reflection session. This is a chance to:

- Complete your student journal
- Reflect on what has gone well
- Think about anything that felt difficult
- Finish any work you need to catch up on
- Practise independent study skills
- Talk to staff about next steps
- Access wellbeing support if you need it

Lunch is provided for students, and there is an opportunity for everyone to sit down and eat together. This is part of how we build a calm, supportive and welcoming college community.

Monday		Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:30		Morning Briefing + Breakfast			
9:30-10:15	Core Skills	Core Skills	Core Skills	Core Skills	Community Day
10:15-11:00	Life Skills	Horticulture	Personal Development	Woodwork	
11:00-11:15		Break			
11:15-12:00	Animal Care	Employability	Equine Care	Group therapy	Community Day
12:00-12:45	Animal Care	Life Skills	Equine Care	Life Skills	
12:45-1:30		Lunch			
1:30-2:15	Therapy	Equine Therapy	Wellbeing	Animal Care	Equine Therapy
2:15-3:00		Reflection			

Meet The Team

One of the most important parts of college is knowing who the people around you are.

At Yew Tree Futures, our staff take time to get to know you as a person. We want you to feel comfortable asking questions, seeking support and sharing your achievements.



Edwina Grix

Principal / Head of College

The Principal oversees the college and makes sure every student receives the support, opportunities and education they need to succeed.

Clinical Psychologist

Your psychologist is available throughout your time at college and will work closely with you to support your wellbeing, confidence and emotional development.



Abie Alfrey



Amy Grix

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

Your SENCO ensures that every student receives the support, guidance and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.

Operations Director

The Operations Director ensures the college runs smoothly, overseeing day-to-day operations and creating an environment where students and staff can thrive.



Adam Penman

Meet The Animals



Food, Clothing & Technology

Food & Drink

Lunch and snacks are provided each day.
You are also welcome to bring your own lunch and snacks if you prefer.
We ask that students bring a refillable water bottle each day.
Hot drinks are available throughout the day.

Clothing & Equipment

There is no uniform at Yew Tree Futures.
Students should wear comfortable, practical clothing suitable for outdoor learning and working with animals.

We recommend:

- Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers
- Walking boots or wellies
- Warm layers in winter
- Thermal clothing in cold weather
- Sun hat during warm weather

For safety reasons, the following footwear is NOT permitted:

- Crocs
- Flip-flops
- Sandals
- Open-toed shoes

Phones, Technology & Wi-Fi

Students are welcome to bring mobile phones, tablets and laptops to college.

We ask that mobile phones remain switched off and stored away during learning sessions unless staff have given permission for them to be used.

Students can connect personal devices to our secure student Wi-Fi.

We want students to develop healthy and responsible technology habits that support learning, wellbeing and independence.



Respect, Safety & Community

We will ...

We do not believe that behaviour is simply about following rules.

We understand that behaviour is communication.



Be kind



Be respectful



Be safe



Be honest



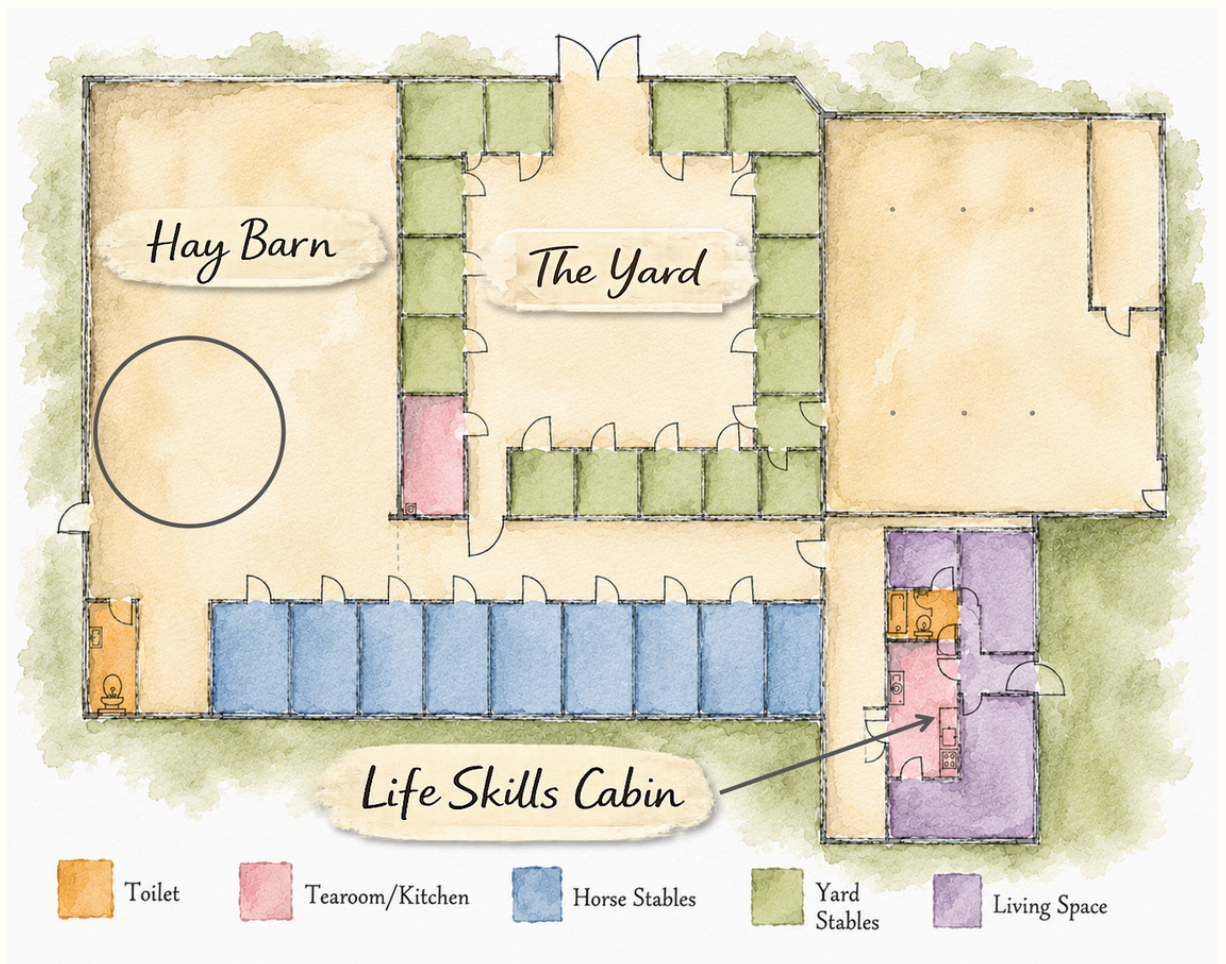
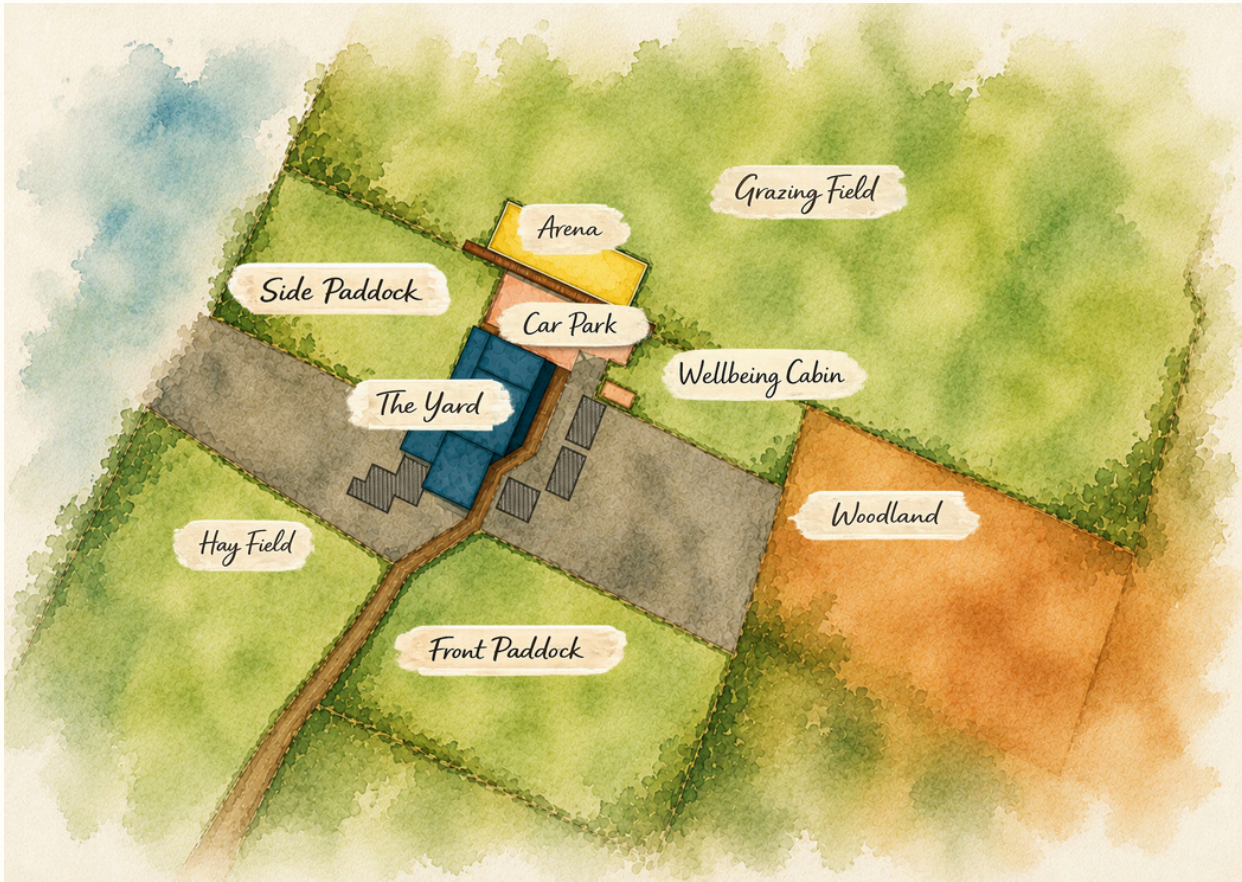
Treat others fairly



When things go wrong, we focus on understanding, repairing relationships and moving forwards together.

Our staff will help you develop strategies for managing emotions, communicating your needs and solving problems safely.

Farm Map



Before You Start

Starting somewhere new can feel exciting and sometimes a little worrying too.

Here's a simple checklist to help you prepare.

My Yew Tree Futures Checklist

- 
- ☐ I have visited the college.
 - ☐ I know how I am travelling to college.
 - ☐ I know what time college starts.
 - ☐ I have met a member of staff.
 - ☐ I know who to ask if I need help.
 - ☐ I have suitable outdoor clothing.
 - ☐ I have a water bottle.
 - ☐ I have saved the college contact number.
 - ☐ I have written down any questions I would like to ask.
 - ☐ I am ready for my first day.

Remember – it's okay to feel nervous. Most students do.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I feel nervous on my first day?

Most students feel nervous before starting somewhere new.

We understand this and will help you settle in at your own pace. You will be introduced to staff, shown around the site and supported to get to know other students.

What if I don't know anyone?

Many students join us without knowing anybody else.

Our staff will help you build relationships, take part in activities and become part of the college community.

What if I am having a difficult day?

Everyone has difficult days sometimes.

You can speak to any member of staff, access the Woodland Wellbeing Cabin, or arrange time with your psychologist if you need additional support.

What if I become overwhelmed or anxious?

We understand that college can sometimes feel challenging.

Staff will work with you to identify strategies that help. This may include taking a break, spending time outdoors, talking with a trusted adult or using techniques you have learned in wellbeing sessions.

What if I don't like classroom learning?

That's okay.

Learning at Yew Tree Futures happens in many different ways. We use practical activities, projects, outdoor learning, animals, community experiences and work placements as well as classroom-based teaching.

What if I need help with my work?

Our staff are here to help.

We will adapt learning to suit your needs and provide support when you need it.

Can I bring my own lunch?

Yes.

Lunch and snacks are provided, but you are very welcome to bring your own food if you prefer.

Can I use my phone?

Students may bring phones to college.

Phones should be switched off and stored away during learning sessions unless staff have given permission for them to be used.

Further information can be found in our student technology policy.

What should I wear?

There is no uniform.

Please wear comfortable, practical clothing suitable for outdoor learning and working with animals.

What happens after college?

From your first day with us, we will be helping you plan for your future.

This might include:

- Employment
- Supported internships
- Apprenticeships
- Further education
- Independent or supported living
- Volunteering opportunities

Your programme will be designed to help you move towards the next stage of your journey.

Looking Ahead

Everything we do is designed to help you build a future that feels meaningful and achievable.

When you leave Yew Tree Futures, we want you to leave with:

- Greater confidence
- Stronger independence skills
- Qualifications that matter to you
- Improved wellbeing
- Real-life experience
- A clear plan for your future



Most importantly, we want you to leave knowing that you mattered here.

You are not just another student.

You are a valued member of our community.

Welcome to Yew Tree Futures.



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