

The Meadow



Parent Handbook

Welcome to The Meadow. We're delighted that you and your family have joined our self-directed, consent-based home education community. This handbook will guide you through our values, principles and daily operations. It's designed to be a resource for you, ensuring that we work together in a spirit of respect, collaboration and mutual growth.

Our Vision

At The Meadow, we believe that education is a personal journey, unique to each individual. Our aim is to create an environment where children can explore their interests, develop their strengths and grow into their best selves, all within a supportive and nurturing community.

Core Principles

o **Self-Directed Learning**

We trust that children have an innate curiosity and desire to learn. At The Meadow, the young people choose their activities and projects, following their interests and passions. Our role is to support and facilitate their learning journeys, allowing them to explore freely without the constraints of a traditional curriculum.

o **Consent-Based Education**

Respect for personal autonomy is at the heart of everything we do. We encourage students to make choices about their education and respect their decisions. This approach fosters independence, responsibility and mutual respect. By honouring each child's autonomy, we create a space where they feel safe to express themselves and engage deeply in their learning process.

o **Freedom to Play**

We recognise the profound impact of play on a child's development. Play is not just a break from learning; it is learning. Through unstructured play, children reset their nervous systems, heal and prepare themselves for deeper, more meaningful learning experiences. We provide ample time and space for free play, trusting in its power to unlock creativity, problem-solving skills and emotional well-being.

o **Community and Collaboration**

Learning is a communal experience. We cultivate a supportive environment where families, facilitators and children collaborate, share ideas and grow together. We value each member's contribution and believe that a strong, connected community enhances the learning experience for all. Learning how to be part of a community is a key aspect of our philosophy.

Community Practices

o **Opening and Closing Circles**

Each day begins and ends with a community circle. These gatherings are compulsory as they are vital for building a sense of community and belonging. The opening circle sets the tone for the day, providing a space for children to express their intentions, share thoughts and connect with others. The closing circle offers an opportunity to reflect on the day, share experiences and appreciate each other's contributions. We always start promptly to respect those who are there on time- please make every effort to arrive 5 minutes early to avoid disrupting this important connecting moment.

o **Participation in Pack down**

At the end of each day, we come together to tidy up our space. This shared responsibility teaches children the importance of contributing to the community and caring for our shared environment. Pack down is a practical exercise in teamwork and respect for our space and each other. This is also compulsory. We tend to pair children up with an older one to body double and support them in this sometimes challenging task. It is wonderful to see the progress children make from resistance to enthusiastic participation over the course of their time here.

o **All Community Meetings**

Three times a year, we hold all-community meetings for parents to attend. These gatherings are essential for bringing everyone together, fostering a sense of unity, and ensuring that we are all aligned with our community goals. During these meetings, we discuss our progress, address any concerns and share plans for the future. Your presence and participation are crucial for the success of our community.

o **Parent Participation**

Parents are an integral part of The Meadow. We welcome your participation in various roles and encourage you to share your talents, whether it's teaching a skill, sharing job experiences or supporting the running of our group. Before applying, each family should consider what they can contribute to The Meadow. This collaborative effort ensures that we have a diverse range of offerings that enhance the learning experience for all children and support the smooth operation of our community.

o Communication and Feedback

Open and honest communication is essential. We encourage everyone to share their thoughts, ideas and concerns. Listening is just as important as speaking, and we strive to create an environment where everyone feels heard. Regular feedback from families is crucial in shaping our community. We hold periodic meetings to discuss our progress, address concerns and plan for the future. Your input is always welcome and valued.

o Supporting Each Other

Life can be unpredictable, and we're here to support each other through the ups and downs. Whether it's offering a listening ear, helping with a project, or simply being there, our community is our strength.

Daily Life at The Meadow

o Child-Led Offerings

The daily schedule at The Meadow is fluid and dictated by the children's interests and offerings. There are no formal lessons or teaching in the traditional sense. Instead, children engage in activities and projects that they initiate, with facilitators available to support and guide them as needed. This approach allows children to dive deeply into subjects they are passionate about, fostering intrinsic motivation and a love for learning.

o Learning Spaces

Our indoor space is the hall which does have limited flexibility. We create a Quiet Room in the front porch and children can also "book" another area out for more intimate spaces. Outside of that, we have the kitchen for any cooking offerings, the Art Bar for creating and then the main hall which accommodates a number of offerings at once. The acoustics in the hall can be tricky so we try to manage everyone's needs and direct children outside for energetic or noisy games. Our outdoor area is a 7-acre meadow with a football pitch and playground. There is a small section of the wild meadow (known as 'The Triangle') which we are not allowed to play on but can lead the children in an exploratory walk to discover the protected wildlife hiding amongst it. We encourage a healthy balance of risk-taking and do not limit children when climbing trees, just check in if they feel competent and ensure a facilitator is close by. The roof

is out of bounds for climbing and as tenants of the site, we also require all children to respect the space and not damage any part.

- o **Rhythm and Flow**

While we embrace flexibility, a consistent rhythm helps maintain balance. The day's flow includes time for individual pursuits, group activities, free play and community gatherings. This structure is not rigid but serves as a gentle guide to ensure that everyone's needs are met.

The Team

Claire Imhasly, Director, Founder & Lead Facilitator (Every Day)

Jessie Kazak, Director, Operations & Finance (Off site)

Mel McCready, Director (Off site)

Sonja Burniston, Monday Facilitator

Victoria Delgado, Tuesday Facilitator

Bon O'Hara, Monday & Thursday Facilitator

Dean Broderick, Monday & Tuesday Facilitator

Contact Information

General Enquiries: Themeadowbath@gmail.com

The Meadow Phone : 07907 220928 (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 8:30am – 5pm)

Sessions

The Meadow is open 36 weeks a year, mostly following BANES Term dates.

On each day there are at least three members of staff with 18 children.

Session: The Core session is 10am until 3pm

Snacks, lunch & drinks:	Not included except during an offering
Your holidays:	Full fee is charged
Our Holidays:	When we are closed there is no charge
Bank holidays:	We are open as usual
Illness:	When you child is too unwell to attend, the full fee is charged
Closures:	If we close because of staff illness there is no charge.
Extreme Events:	50% fees are charged for any closures related to extreme weather, pandemics or viral outbreaks.
Deposit:	We request a deposit of £180.This will be refunded after you pay your final invoice.

Term Dates for year September 2024/25

Autumn Term 1:	Monday 16th September 2024 to Thursday 24th October 2024
Autumn Term 2:	Monday 4th November 2024 to Thursday 12th December 2024
Spring Term 1:	Monday 6th January 2025 to Thursday 13th February 2025
Spring Term 2:	Monday 24th February 2025 to Thursday 3rd April 2025
Summer Term 1:	Monday 21st April 2025 to Thursday 22nd May 2025
Summer Term 2:	Monday 2nd June 2023 to Thursday 17th July 2025

Outdoor Environment

The Meadow is situated on 7 acres, providing ample space for exploration, play and learning in nature. Our outdoor environment is designed to encourage children to engage with nature while being mindful of safety. We are tick-aware and educate both children and parents about preventative measures to reduce risks. We embrace the philosophy of measured risk, understanding that activities like tree climbing and exploring natural landscapes are essential

for building confidence, resilience and physical skills. By allowing children to navigate these challenges under supervision, we foster a sense of responsibility and an appreciation for the natural world.

Food

Please send your child in with a snack, packed lunch and water bottle. Ideally refrain from food with wrappers to prevent build-up of litter. We currently have no allergies so nuts are welcome. We will update this if that changes at any point.

The Daily Rhythm

9:50-9:55	Children Arrive
10-10:15	Morning Circle: notices for the day, Offerings discussed & agreements
10:15-12:00	Free Play/Offerings
11:00:	Snack time announced
12:00 - 12:30	Lunch and quiet half hour
12:30 - 2:10	Free play/ Offerings
2:10pm	Pack Down
2:30pm:	Closing Circle (Day review and agree Offerings for next week)
2:45pm:	Group Game offering
3:00pm:	Home Time

Communication

The system for communicating is as follows.

1. In first instance, **e-mail all questions** to themeadowbath@gmail.com
2. For on-the-day updates like arriving late, please text the Meadow Whatsapp Family group so everyone can see it

If you have any concerns about your child or if there is anything at home which may be unsettling them, please always discuss this with us. For discussions on the overall development of your child their key person is available to speak to you by arrangement on designated days.

Fees

We are committed to making The Meadow as equitable as possible. Our fees are on a sliding scale from £33-42 per day, according to a family's income. We try to keep fees as low as possible but it's important for us to be able to pay our amazing facilitators a reasonable wage, as well as provide resources for the young people. We ask you to bear the above in mind and also to consider the fee guidelines below when making your decision.

Days Attended	Fee level
1 Day	£42 per day
2 Days	£38 per day
3 Days	£35 per day

Policy Summaries

Full policy documents are available to access on our [website](#) and hard copy available on the request. Please speak with Claire or Jessie

Current Policies:

- [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Child Protection Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Behaviour Management](#)

Safeguarding Children / Child Protection

Everyone employed or volunteering at The Meadow has a responsibility in relation to child protection (CP). In most cases this will be the referral of concerns to The Meadow's Designated Safeguarding Lead. In day-to-day contact with children at risk, staff have an opportunity to note concerns and to meet with parents/carers. Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which someone often in a position of power harms children. It is not the responsibility of staff to decide whether child abuse is occurring but we are required to act on any safeguarding concerns and report it to the Social Care Team. The health, safety and protection of a child are paramount.

Health & Safety

The Meadow will ensure that all areas of its undertaking are subjected to a suitable risk assessment to identify potential hazards and to introduce control measures to eliminate or reduce harm.

It is The Meadow's policy to make provisions for first aid in accordance with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981. All accidents and incidents or 'near misses' with the potential for injury (whether that injury actually occurred or not) are reported and recorded in the incident/ accident book and parents informed.

Concerns and Complaints

Whilst we work hard to ensure we abide by our principles of respect, recognition and positivity we understand that concerns, disagreements and/or conflict can occur between parents and staff. Please see [our website](#) for our full Concerns and Complaints Procedure:

If your concern or complaint is related to safeguarding and you have a very valid concern that a child has been abused by a member of staff at The Meadow then you can contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 01225 396810 yourself. The LADO will then guide the parent through the next steps.

Further Information

Thank you for taking the time to read this Parent Handbook. If you require any further information, please contact the Operations Manager on themeadowbath@gmail.com

