

Shallowford Farm

making the difference

8 weeks of Plymouth Children at Shallowford Farm

September - November 2025



pcip promoting children
in plymouth

Jlp FOUNDATION NATURE FUND

Made Possible by the John Lewis Partnership Nature Fund
and Promoting Children in Plymouth



The biggest thanks to PCiP (Promoting Children in Plymouth) for linking us to Shallowford Farm. From my perspective, I believe that this has been the biggest and most powerful experience we have ever been part of as schools. I have observed pupils transform their sense of what's achievable. - what health routines mean and look like - and how to build more compassionate relationships with their teachers and each other. Their work is a privilege to experience and I must thank you and of course Shallowford as well.

- Dave Sammels, Executive Headteacher of Mayflower Community Academy and Ford Primary School

Autumn 2025 163 Plymouth Children to a Dartmoor Hill Farm

The 2025 autumn term brought 8 groups of Year 5/6 school children from 7 Plymouth schools to Shallowford Farm, with each group staying for 4 nights. For two of schools, Victoria Road Primary School and Keyham Barton Catholic Primary School it was their second visit to Shallowford Farm, but for the other 5 schools, it was their first residential stay at Shallowford Farm, a working hill farm in a quiet valley in the middle of Dartmoor.

The seven schools all have high numbers of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium and Free School Meals and are located in underserved communities within Plymouth. PCiP have been working in partnership with Shallowford Farm to support rural residentials recognising the benefits for children staying on a working farm, building their courage, confidence, and compassion.

Four of the schools were funded by Promoting Children in Plymouth with a 3 way split between PCiP, the school and Shallowford Farm.



The John Lewis Partnership Foundation Nature Trust



Four of the school groups were funded by John Lewis Partnership Foundation-Nature Fund, a one off grant, with some match funding from The Shallowford Trust.

The John Lewis Partnership Foundation's Nature Fund supports the understanding, protection and restoration of the natural world, in a socially just way. In line with the grant criteria, our programme for our Plymouth groups focused on an area of need within UK nature, protecting the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly and their habitat, with an emphasis on access to nature and careers in nature.

Promoting Children in Plymouth

Promoting Children in Plymouth's (PCiP), mission is to eradicate the social injustice, ill-health and misery caused by child poverty in Plymouth. PCiP brings together the public, private and third sectors to ensure that, as a city acting in unison, all remain dedicated to making a difference throughout a young person's early life. The partnership with PCiP has enabled very positive links with Plymouth schools and is an exciting opportunity for future partnerships between Plymouth schools and Dartmoor.

Through PCiP Shallowford Farm has hosted volunteer days for 2 PCiP corporate sponsors, KPMG and KeirBAM, with several more upcoming days planned. As well as providing a very welcome source of volunteers, the volunteer days enables the corporations to share some of the experiences of the groups they help to fund.

'I have been looking for the right way to describe the relationship between KierBAM, Promoting Children in Plymouth (PCiP), and Shallowford Farm. Given the connection with nature and the focus on learning and growth for the children we support, I've landed on this: an ecosystem of support. KierBAM are part of a growing network that brings together KierBAM, PCiP, and Shallowford Farm to help children from Plymouth schools access valuable residential experiences.'

**– Alisha Rodwell, Social Sustainability Coordinator
Kier BAM JV**

Shallowford Farm

Shallowford Farm, owned by the Shallowford Trust, is a working hill farm in the middle of Dartmoor National Park. Shallowford Farm welcomes young people from all backgrounds for immersive day or residential experiences in the safe and homely environment of a nature-friendly working hill farm. Positive change is encouraged by inspiring each individual through new experiences to expand their horizons. Our aim is to provide a space and a programme that encourages and empowers young people to try new things, teaches them the importance of resilience and responsibility, and nurtures them to grow and contribute as part of a community and as stewards of the land.

A very brief history of Shallowford Farm

Shallowford Farm was bought in 1976 by Elizabeth Braund and Rosemary Bird, who had set up a youth club, Providence House, in Battersea, and wanted to provide young people from inner city London with the opportunity to spend time immersed in new experiences and wild places within the stability and safety of a homely working farm environment. Young people from Providence House and other London youth groups and schools have been coming to Shallowford Farm ever since, although, for a time, they stayed in the local youth hostel due to the renovations needed on the accommodation.

In 2022, the newly renovated barn, sleeping 21 people, renovated farmhouse, conference room and new animals barns were opened, and since then Shallowford Farm has been expanding the staff team to offer residential and day experiences to young people across the South West, as well as maintaining the almost 50 year relationship with Providence House.



The Plymouth Schools

School	Funded by	Date	No of students
Keyham Barton Catholic Primary School	PciP and The Shallowford Trust	22 – 26 Sept 2025	19
Marlborough Primary School	John Lewis Partnership Nature Fund	29 Sept – 3 Oct 2025	23
Mount Wise Community Primary School	John Lewis Partnership Nature Fund	6 – 10 Oct 2025	22
Ford Primary School	John Lewis Partnership Nature Fund	13 – 17 Oct 2025	19
Victoria Road Primary Schools	PciP and The Shallowford Trust	20 – 24 Oct 2025	19
Mayflower Community Academy	John Lewis Partnership Nature Fund	10 – 14 Nov 2025	22
Mayflower Community Academy	PciP and The Shallowford Trust		19
High Street Primary Academy	PciP and The Shallowford Trust		20
TOTAL			163

The Programme for the 5 day residentials

The 8 weeks of Plymouth Schools, with the input from the John Lewis Partnership Nature Fund enabled Shallowford Farm to expand and develop the programme to increase young people's access to nature and support employability and skills related to nature. The programme for young people from urban areas, with limited access to nature, enabled access nature in the middle of Dartmoor whilst being exposed to a wide variety of skills and careers in nature. The programme involved sessions with our farmers, a Dartmoor National Park ranger, and on some weeks, with our vet. Our onsite residential warden, with his experience of having grown up in a very urban area of London and coming to the farm as a child and now working and living full time at the farm was used as an example of opportunities for all young people to access and work different environment.

Each week had a morning session with a Dartmoor Community Engagement Ranger, Kats. Kats' sessions explored what the role of national parks as places with many special qualities, with an invisible boundary, a place open to everybody to live in, work in, or visit. The sessions explored Dartmoor's special qualities and seasonal games exploring and having fun in nature, including autumn bingo cards and leaf line races.

Being on a working farm, before each breakfast and each evening meal, our groups fed our pigs and chickens and tended our garden. Whilst the harvest options grew more limited as the autumn progressed, many tasks were needed to get the garden ready for the winter period, to in turn be ready for Spring planting. Our visiting groups also helped our farmer move sheep, which needed quite a lot of team work and problem solving skills. The groups fed the cows learnt about the conservation grazing to increase the population of the marsh fritillary butterfly, a red listed species. The groups learnt to identify the Devils Bit Scabious plant, the only plant that the Marsh Fritillary butterfly will lay its eggs. Each group had an apple pressing session with one student explaining the process to her school assembly:



Making the apple juice has 5 steps – grinding, juicing, washing, apple tasting and putting into containers. There were a variety of apples. We were able to test them by eating them. Once we had finished making the apple juice we tasted it. Then it was refrigerated.

The groups made dens in our forest, made and cooked on a fire, and on the last full day, climbed up to the Corndon Ridge and along to Corndon Tor, experiencing the exhilaration of being high above fields below and revealing in views across Dartmoor.

Each group participated in a night walk, with one student describing the experience to a whole school assembly:



The moon was lighting the long, steep hills. We were on Dartmoor. On the rocks it was a very calm place. On the walk back to the farm, my friend fell into a prickly bush.

An important part of Shallowford Farm's programme is to increase understanding of where our food comes from, healthy eating and the joy of eating meals together. Throughout the eight weeks, there were ongoing discussions about links between farming, food production and conservation. Meals took place in our dining room, with children participating in setting and clearing the tables, and enjoying spending time eating together after busy days outside, and trying new food.

A sample programme

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Arrival to ESF- 12:30pm CONFIRMED	Gardening Feeding animals	Gardening Feeding animals	Gardening Feeding animals	Gardening Feeding animals
-Welcome & Intro (element of Nature connection & careers to be mentioned as aim of the week)	Breakfast			
	Conservation session with Stacey	Outdoor/Nature Connection Session (Dartmoor/ national park focus-with element of Nature careers in discussions)	Conservation session (with element of Conservation/ Nature careers in discussions)	10:00am-10:30am Pack-up and Bedroom inspection 10:30am-11:15am Complete ESF survey forms 11:15am-12pm Free play & final tidies
Lunch				
PPE Allocation Treasure Hunt Short walk (Jordan) Drink break	Broadaford Farming Session (with element of Conservation farming/Nature careers in discussions)	Broadaford Farming Session (with element of Conservation farming/Nature careers in discussions)	Exploring Dartmoor: Long Moor walk Up to Corndon Tor	Departure-12pm CONFIRMED (Packed lunch provided by Shallowford)
17:00-18:00 Gardening Group 1. Feeding animals Group 2 Dinner	17:00-18:00 Gardening Feeding animals 18:00-19:00 Dinner	17:00-18:00 Gardening Feeding animals 18:00-19:00 Dinner	17:00-18:00 Gardening Feeding animals 18:00-19:00 Dinner	
Night walk	Games with David	Free Evening	Evening Games and Final Evening Celebrations and Music by the fire	

Pre and Post Visits

For each of the schools, our programme officer visited the students before their visit, and the teachers of each group came up to the Farm to meet the team, see the facilities and talk about the programme. After each visit, the programme officer and often another member of the team, went back to the Schools for a post school assembly, given the visiting year group an opportunity to share their adventures on Dartmoor with the rest of the school community.

Feedback from Visiting Teachers

'The walking, the pigs (Antony was great showing the children what to do and helped children feel relaxed who were originally nervous), the food 10/10, lovely welcoming staff! Felt very looked after'.

'All of it was very good and the staff are amazing. It's very obvious that they love their jobs and work hard for the kids. This is a truly special project and I am very grateful our kids got to experience life here for a week. Thank you so much'.



'Really engaging activities which were miles out of our children's comfort zones. Many don't have gardens, very rarely have a home cooked meal, live on screen time and 'do' very little outside of school. They also have very little self-managing skills and expect/are used to someone doing everything for them'.

'10/10 i LOVED it, it was great I loved the starry night. It was great getting to look at the stars and think that all the little dots were planets and stars'.



Measuring Impact

Our pre and post survey results for changing views on nature showed an increased interest in nature:

How much each participant agreed with each sentence

Pre visit	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I enjoy looking after plants and animals	6.8%	15.4%	77.9%
I treat nature and the environment respectfully, ie not littering, recycling	2%	15.4%	82.7%
I sometimes talk about nature and the environment with my friends and family	20.2%	28.8%	51%
I like learning about nature and how food is grown	7.7%	20.2%	72.1%

Post visit	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I enjoy looking after plants and animals	2%	12.1%	85.8%
I treat nature and the environment respectfully, ie not littering, recycling	2%	10.1%	87.9%
I sometimes talk about nature and the environment with my friends and family	12.2%	28.8%	51.5%
I like learning about nature and how food is grown	8%	14.1%	77.7%

The John Lewis Partnership Fund measures impact through Connections, which happen when the Partnership gives time, money, space or goods to support people in the community via charity or other social impact activity. A direct connection is defined as one connection per beneficiary. In this grant, a connection was every child, and adult who attended, but also connections through the post visit assemblies.

Where to from here?

As each of the eight groups boarded their bus home, their teachers asked to come again and so did the students.

We would very much like to welcome each school back to Shallowford Farm. We are excited and grateful for ongoing discussions with Promoting Children in Plymouth about funding options for some of the schools, including continuation of a 3 way split between PCiP, the school and The Shallowford Trust for a few of the schools. The Shallowford Trust is committed to continuing to look for funding opportunities for the other schools to enable them to return and to continue the very positive collaborations with all the schools. We would also like to explore follow up day visits to the farm for the visiting students, in different seasons, to very much build on their learning and understanding of farming and conservation through the seasons.

One new side project that evolved from the visit from one of the schools, Keyham Barton Catholic School, and a collaboration by a funder, Kier BAM is a new project based on the PCiP Plymouth Kitchens. Following a successful application to the North Yard Community Trust, Shallowford Farm has run 2 successful one night residential stays for families identified by Keyham School to come to the farm to as a family group, to cook, and eat together, for young people to share their experiences with families.



Thank you

A huge thank to The John Lewis Partnership
Nature Fund and Promoting Children in Plymouth.

From The Shallowford Trust

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