

# Burwell House

## School Handbook



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## **An introduction to Burwell House**

Burwell House has been offering high quality learning outside the classroom to children and young people for more than 50 years. The modernised 18th Century house and three acres of grounds provide a relaxed, friendly atmosphere for all our visitors.

Burwell House provides a huge variety of high quality opportunities for Learning Outdoors both on residential and day visits. Our courses are planned individually with each school to deliver enrichment not only across the curriculum but to every child's individual personal development.

Our high quality education service is backed up by an excellent team of administrative, catering and domestic staff, all of whom help to create the friendly and homely feel that all visitors experience whilst staying here.

The house accommodates up to 61 children plus staff and we generally only have one school in residence at any time.



### **Contents**

The house and grounds	3
Meals	3
Planning a course	4
Activity contents page	5
Activity pages	6 - 14
Safety, security & sustainability	15
Making a booking and contact details	16

## The house and grounds

### Inside

Inside the main house there is a large lounge area for teaching and relaxing, and a well equipped classroom area. The house is filled with fascinating old photographs, maps and artwork that add to the homely environment. The bright and airy dining room and conservatory provide comfortable surroundings for meals. In addition, there is a fully equipped TV studio, a craft studio and a small souvenir and tuck shop.



7 children's' dormitories range in size from 4 bed to 14 bed, with up to 61 children's' beds in total. All have close access to toilets and showers. For residents with limited mobility we can provide a downstairs bedroom near to our wheelchair-accessible hygiene suite. The staff bedrooms (4 in total - sleeping up to 9 staff) have their own toilet and shower facilities and have tea and coffee facilities. For larger groups additional staff rooms and the Fen are converted into bedrooms.

### Outside



The 3 acres of leafy, self-contained grounds at Burwell House are used extensively during any visit.

They contain a fantastic array of unusual large trees, areas of open grass, pond, orchard and numerous secret paths and hidey holes!

This gives children a safe yet wonderfully exciting environment to explore, play, invent, have fun and let off steam, as well as providing numerous opportunities for outdoor learning.

### Meals

Burwell House has gained a well deserved reputation for the high standard of catering. Schools are provided with a menu planner at the planning stage and choose the menu for their group. The catering team are very experienced in providing for visitors with special diets if made aware of them in advance. **All food served is nut free.**

Children are provided with breakfast and two hot meals a day, unless a group specifically requests a packed lunch.

Mealtimes are an integral part of the course, being served 'family' style, with children taking it in turns to serve the others on their table and taking on as much of the setting up and clearing as possible. They will also be encouraged to try everything on the table and within the supportive environment of the dining room most discover new foods to enjoy.



## Planning a course

Our tutor team work with visiting groups in planning and delivering the course. A planning visit can take place 3 months before the course. This will enable your staff to tour the house and grounds, meet our staff and plan activities to achieve your course aims. If a planning visit is not possible, we can easily plan your course via email. Phone or online meeting.

Our programmes are individually tailored for your group and staff. Burwell House staff can help you select appropriate activities and advise on activity combinations.

During the course the members of staff will guide schools through all their activities and build up supportive relationships with children and teachers during their visit.

The majority of our courses are 3 days in length, running either Monday to Wednesday or Wednesday to Friday. However if you would like a longer stay we are more than happy to help you organise and plan a longer stay. Weekend bookings are also available. Groups usually arrive on their first morning at around 10:00am, and on the last day departure is normally around 2pm.



## Activities at Burwell House

In the following pages we attempt to give a flavour of the activities which are possible at Burwell House. Over many years our highly experienced education team have developed a very wide range of activities covering a great number of curriculum areas. We are continually developing new, innovative and interesting sessions.

Broadly, our activities can be grouped into three areas - **Create**, **Explore** and **Investigate**. However, groups who stay with us find that no matter what activities they select their pupils show increased **confidence**, **independence**, and **decision-making** ability following the visit. We know that our wide variety of activities help create more **motivated learners**, and lead towards **raising standards**.

The majority of activities are included within our fees, however completing a large number of crafts may incur additional costs and any transport or entry fees for offsite activities will be passed along to the group.

Activities may take place as a large group or subdivided into smaller groups. Burwell House staff will teach the majority of sessions and will brief and resource any sessions to be led by school staff during the course.

When Burwell House staff are leading a session, we ask that school staff actively involve themselves in sessions, sharing a co-supervisory responsibility for children. During any self-led activities, meal times, and during freetime and overnight, school staff will have a full supervisory responsibility for the group members, with no Burwell House staff involvement.

## Activity pages - contents

- 6**      **Create** - The TV studio  
This wonderful facility has key links to many curricular areas, especially English and ICT, but is also a great team activity.
- 6**      **Create** - Arts and crafts  
A selection of interesting and unusual art and craft sessions.
- 7 - 8**    **Explore** - Mapwork and orienteering  
The grounds and surroundings make for a fabulous array of map exercises, with key links to Geography, PE and Maths.
- 8**      **Explore** - Bushcraft and Environmental discovery  
These activities encourage nature connection and link to forest school pedagogy.
- 9**      **Explore** - Teambuilding  
Activities to test, encourage and examine team-working techniques and strategies.
- 10**     **Explore** - House history  
The splendid old house, home to esteemed Victorian MP, Edward Ball, lends itself perfectly to investigations into Victorian life.
- 11**     **Investigate** - Local area history  
As well as the Victorian era, there are links to Anglo-Saxon and Roman times.
- 12**     **Investigate** - Local geography  
Burwell provides an interesting UK locality study.  
Local rivers, villages and towns make great sites for geographical investigation.
- 12 - 13** **Investigate** - Environmental science  
In the grounds and local area, through investigation, research, games and through experiential learning.
- 14**     **Playtime and evenings**  
A selection of ideas for fun and relaxing time after dinner.

# Create

## TV studio

Presentation skills, speaking & listening, teamwork, computing, drama.

Our professionally equipped TV studio is an activity unique to this Centre. Under the guidance of our tutor, children prepare, rehearse and film a news broadcast with all children taking part in both presentation and technical production. The performances are recorded and emailed to the school securely.



Scripts are normally prepared at school beforehand and many visitors use this opportunity to link to topics being covered at school - examples have included books, weather, local news stories and Victorian or WW2 history. As well as the more obvious literacy and computing attributes of this session, this is a fantastic teambuilding opportunity.

Please note - this activity is **only suitable for children in Year 4 and above**.

# Create

## Art and craft

Creativity, imagination, new skills and materials.

A range of interesting and unusual sessions which make good use of local materials and staff expertise, providing activities which may not be possible in a school setting.

**Hammers and nails / pin art** Using hammers and nails, children create a pattern on a piece of wood. Then, with wool woven around the nails, a masterpiece is created!



**Batik bags** Using this Indonesian technique, children design and create a motif for a cotton bag. As well as being an interesting craft technique, this can link to work on waste and recycling and the hazards presented by the continued use of plastic bags.

**Corn dollies** Children learn how to make simple corn dollies using traditional techniques with art straws and then create their own corn dolly using real corn.

**Clay tiles** Following research and sketching in the village, children can make a tile of a house, working with clay using various shaping, cutting and joining techniques to represent the textures of the different local building materials.

**Natural sculptures** Based on Andy Goldsworthy's work, children create sculptures in the garden using nothing but natural materials.

**Willow stars** Using willow and other natural materials harvested from our garden, pairs of children build and bind a 5 pointed star on frames. These make a beautiful (and professional looking) hanging decoration.

**The Green man** Learn about the mythological green man - portrayed in sculptures showing a face surrounded by leaves (found all over the UK in churches and on pub signs!). Children use self-hardening clay to create one of their own.

**Enamelling** Children make a keyring using enamelling powders and glass beads to decorate a copper shape.

# Explore

## Mapwork and orienteering

### Introductory activities—Map Walk

**Basic mapping skills - orientation, location, symbols.**

A series of activities introducing children to various aspects of mapwork. Usually done in conjunction with other activities, the children could complete a mapwalk (to reinforce orientation), take part in games to emphasize thumbing techniques, or complete a map symbols relay.

### Orienteering - Around the grounds

**Basic mapping skills, partner work, physically active.**

An excellent first use of orienteering skills (often following an introductory mapwalk) in which detailed hand-drawn maps are used to find checkpoints.



### Compass (8 point) activities

**Compass points, partner work, physically active.**

Using our specially designed compasses, children are introduced to their 8 points. They can then take part in various activities to reinforce their use.

### Grid references - The smugglers mystery

**4 or 6 figure grid refs, local history, partner work, physically active.**

After an introduction to grid references, children follow clues left by a local Victorian policeman and find evidence to identify some notorious smugglers. This can be run as a 4 or 6 figure grid refs course.



### Burwell Fox

**Mapping skills, partner work, habitats, physically active.**

Our most popular and most regularly chosen activity. Using maps to find checkpoints in the grounds, children need to move and act like foxes in order to escape from the 'farmers' (visiting staff armed with skull and crossbones ink stamps).

### Orienteering - advanced activities.

**Advanced mapping skills, intro to Orienteering as a real sport, physically active, partner or teamwork.**

For those who have had significant experience before their trip to Burwell House, or who wish to spend a lot of time using maps, we have a professionally drawn Orienteering map of our site. Using this, children can take part in a lot of different activities, including course setting, relay races and other competitions. It is also possible to use professional electronic timing equipment to really authenticate the experience.



### Mapping activities in Burwell village

**Map skills, local history, geographical understanding, teamwork, physically active, walking.**

Our situation in the centre of Burwell means groups can do mapwork exercises beyond the confines of the garden. This might be mapping work with the whole group (route planning, use of keys, identification of different features, etc) or could involve small, accompanied groups of children leading trails or completing Orienteering challenge activities around the village utilising map skills learned on site.

### Bushcraft and Environmental Discovery

#### Firelighting

**Teamwork, communication, self awareness, risk management**

Children work in small teams learning a little about fire construction techniques and then using flint and steels to create small fires in the garden. This activity can be extended to include some outdoor cookery.

#### Shelter building / den making

**Teamwork, communication, problem solving, creative thinking, imagination**

Children work in small groups using ropes, tarpaulins and poles to create small shelters in amongst the trees and bushes in the garden. This imaginative session can lead to some superb cooperative play.



#### Natural jewellery

**Creativity, imagination**

Children use Elder cut from the Centre garden to make some natural beads. Using peelers children can imaginatively decorate and personalise their beads. Alternatively (or additionally), children can use saws to cut up hazel slices in order to make their own medallions.

#### Earthwalks/Sensory games

**Experiential learning, teamwork, communication.**

A variety of short, fun, experiential activities using the senses to explore the environment of the garden. These include 'Sky eye', 'Smelly cocktails', 'Feel a tree' and 'Natures palettes'.

#### Environmental garden games

**Teamwork, communication, empathy, problem solving, creative thinking.**

We have a range of games that develop environmental awareness and highlight global issues. 'Otter steals Fish' and 'Fire in the Forest' are Burwell House favourites!

# Explore

## Teambuilding

**Problem solving, creative thinking, teamwork, self-awareness, motivation, social skills, empathy, evaluation.**

Teambuilding is always at the heart of any course at Burwell House whatever activities are chosen, but this range of sessions all focus on developing and using good team skills.

**Team challenges.** A collection of short 5 - 10 minute activities for indoors or out, completed as a circus of activities for groups of 5 or 6 pupils to work on. Each of the activities encourages children to work together to solve and complete a simple teamwork task. As the session progresses it becomes possible to really observe improvements and highlight good practice amongst each team.



**The snail game.** Usually the first activity on any course. This game involves exploring the gardens, working as a team to find the answers to hidden questions. It provides an excellent opportunity for children to acclimatise to the gardens at the start of the course.

**The great egg-scape.** Children work in teams to earn feathers in a series of short team challenges activities, selected from a large array of activities suitable for all ages and abilities. In the final task these teams build an 'egg-scape pod' to protect an egg that they drop from the top of the fire escape.

**The Burwell challenge - blindfold trail.** This short activity enables children to guide each other along a blindfold trail which twists and turns through, under and over our trees and bushes. Along the way are some mystery objects to feel and identify.

**Garden games.** Our garden, with its hidey holes and secret pathways, is a fabulous place for all sorts of team games and wide games. During a games session children might be introduced to 'capture the flag' or try to be the best ball smugglers on site!

**Ballistas.** Older KS2 children will love the challenge of building a medieval style catapult to fling sponges across the garden.

**Raccoon circles.** These circles of webbing are a fantastic tool for developing, building and then reflecting on and evaluating teamwork skills, these might be used as an introduction or plenary session to almost any other activity, but can also be utilised to provide a teamwork session in their own right.

# Investigate

## Local history

Burwell village provides a wealth of historical interest including the specific buildings and areas mentioned below. Many of the buildings provide clues to the past, with particularly good examples of Tudor and Victorian period architecture. We have a collection of old maps and photographs which can be used as well as walks out into the village itself.

### **Devil's Dyke (£ if a mini bus is required)**

**Anglo-Saxon, physically active, walking, hands-on learning, landscape interpretation.**

The UK's best preserved Anglo Saxon monument is within a 45 minute walk, or 10 minute minibus ride. A walk along the Dyke and an investigation of some artefacts we are able to borrow can really bring this time period to life.



### **Burwell museum (£)**

**Hands on investigation.**

The local museum, run by volunteers from the village, is home to a range of artefacts reflecting fen-edge life from Roman times to the modern day. Open from April - October.

### **Church visit, St Mary's Burwell (£)**

**Building interpretation, settlement study, religious investigation, walking.**

A 30 minute walk away, our local church is considered to be one of the grandest in Cambridgeshire. Children can take part in a range of different activities which can include climbing the tower, a graveyard investigation, a church search, sketching and brass rubbing.

### **The Fens (£)**

**Landscape interpretation, locality investigation, walking.**

A completely man-made landscape, the Fens have a rich and varied history which can be investigated on different walks through the surrounding countryside. A visit to nearby Wicken Fen (see section on Environmental science) gives a fantastic impression of what this area was once like.

# Investigate

## House history

These activities link to the history of the house.

### **House/garden investigation**

**Historical investigation, map skills, teamwork.**

Burwell House and its grounds contains lots of clues as to its grand past. This investigation is designed to get children observing, measuring, thinking, questioning and using primary and secondary sources of information to discover about the past.

# Investigate

## Geography

### **Burwell village investigation**

**Locality study, geographical investigation, map skills, walking.**

The large village of Burwell provides an interesting locality study. Children can walk around the village investigating many different geographical aspects. They might utilise maps at different scales, investigate building materials and styles, look at the provision of shops and services, complete sound maps, or complete traffic and pedestrian surveys.

### **Reach village study (£ - travel)**

**Locality study, geographical investigation, mapskills, walking.**

The much smaller village of Reach provides a great contrast to Burwell or to schools from town or large village localities (for whom Burwell may not provide enough of a contrast. On a visit here children can investigate the settlement, past and present, through maps, photos and on-the-ground evidence.

### **River Snail (£ - travel)**

**Geographical investigation, river features and processes, mapskills, teamwork.**

The nearby village of Fordham has an excellent river study site. Children can test pollution levels, measure rates of flow, plot cross-sectional river transects and field sketch a good example of a meander. They can also use maps to plot the river's course from source to mouth. This activity involves the children going into the water (and may well involve going over wellie height, so is best avoided in the winter!)

# Investigate

## Environmental science

### **Pond dipping**

**Scientific investigation, habitats, close observation.**

Investigate the life in and around our pond. Use magnifiers, microscopes, keys and identification books to find out more about the lives of the creatures discovered in the watery depths. This can lead to work on food chains, life cycles and adaptation.

### **Nature detectives**

**Scientific enquiry, food chains, observational skills.**

After discussion about the evidence they may or may not discover, children explore the garden or a local nature reserve hunting for evidence of the creatures that live there. Using the information collected, food chains are constructed and children gain an understanding of feeding relationships in habitats.





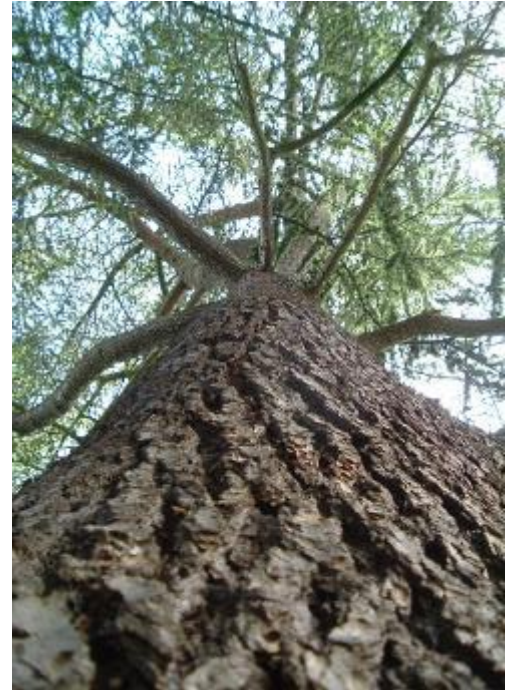
# Investigate

## Environmental science cont..

### **Terrific trees**

**Scientific enquiry, habitats, measuring, teamwork.**

Children investigate various aspects of the trees in our garden utilising a variety of measuring implements and techniques. The might include investigating height, girth, species, canopy spread and age of our magnificent trees.



### **Wicken Fen National Trust nature reserve (£)**

**Scientific investigation, habitats, landscape history, walking.**

We explore the Fen landscape on the walk to Wicken, usually enjoying a packed lunch on arrival. The children can undertake various activities led by Wicken Fen and Burwell House staff, including pond dipping, minibeast hunts, boardwalk and Fen cottage.

### **Weather station and associated activities**

**Scientific investigation, water cycle.**

Our high tech weather station can be used as the focus of a session looking at weather and climate. This can include data interpretation, microclimates investigations, the water cycle game, making weather instruments and filming a weather forecast in the TV studio.



### **Environmental games**

**Scientific enquiry, drama, teamwork.**

A series of environmental games in which the children can learn about different aspects of our natural world. Children can attempt to make soil, work as a team to build a tree, create a giant food web or can learn about energy transfer in food chains in the energy game.

### **Minibeasts**

**Scientific enquiry, close observation, use of keys.**

Explore different habitats in the grounds to find minibeasts. Use keys and ID books to find out more and to gain a better understanding of adaptations to varying environments.

## Playtime

We strongly believe in the power of play, and encourage all visitors to make the most of the fantastic play opportunities in the gardens of our house. There is a fantastic amount of safe space to run, hide, explore and invent games - without the need to resort to ball games (if given a football, we find that children rarely use the potential creative space available).

In addition we have a Scrapstore Playpod in the garden, for visitors to make use of a wonderful variety of repurposed 'junk' for creative play. As well as enhancing our site, this also showcases this fantastic resource as something schools might want to install on their own site. For more information visit:

[www.playpods.co.uk](http://www.playpods.co.uk)



## Evening activities

Burwell House education staff do not run sessions in the evenings, though are happy to leave detailed session notes and make equipment available if required.

Many schools choose to bring the school wet-play box, ask children to bring their own games, organise talent shows, quizzes, bingo or beetle drives, or use the TV and DVD player. It is also possible to write journals, do follow up work, use our tuck/souvenir shop or upload photos to school websites. In addition we find that many children love the opportunity spending some time drawing, painting, sketching, making paper aeroplanes...all the things there's never quite enough time for at school or at home!

**Campfires** A fire pit in the orchard can be used by groups for a really atmospheric outdoor experience, whatever the weather.

Additionally, it is possible to book visiting speakers to run presentations in the evenings. Some ideas are outlined below.

**The Raptor Centre / Animal experience (£)** This group bring in a range of birds of prey mammals, reptiles, insects, arachnids and amphibians for children to closely observe and handle.



**Cambridge Storytellers (£)** With many options for genres and settings of story, this group can provide an evening of interest.

## Evaluating your course

In common with a number of Centres across the UK, we use an online and a paper feedback system in order to collect information from visiting staff and children about the successes of their visit. We strongly encourage all visiting staff to complete this process as it helps us to develop and improve our service.

Data from the children's feedback can be enormously beneficial to our Centre in order for us to gain real understanding as to the power of what we do. This can also very useful back at school, for demonstrating to parents, staff and Ofsted the way in which your residential visit is embedded in school life, and its value towards and beyond the curriculum.

## **Safety, Security and Sustainability**

In all of our work we are conscious of the very great responsibility we bear for the well being of the thousands of children who visit Burwell House every year. We care deeply about providing a high quality, safe experience, and strive to make Burwell House a safe, secure and sustainable place for children to stay. We also believe strongly in the importance of involving children in identifying and managing risk themselves.

### **Risk assessments**

All Burwell House planned activities are thoroughly risk assessed and copies of these are available on request.

### **COVID-Secure Operation**

We have adapted to ensure Burwell House has robust COVID—secure measures in place. We have a COVID-Secure Policy and summary as well as a full risk assessment available on request.



### **First aid**

Burwell House has a large number of first aiders on the staff. Visiting schools are ultimately responsible for any first aid requirements of the children in their care. Burwell House first aiders can advise and support if needed.

### **Fire**

The Centre maintains a comprehensive and regularly reviewed fire risk assessment. All areas of the house are covered by a modern fire alarm and sprinkler system and all school visitors complete a fire drill on the first day of their visit.

### **Insurance**

Burwell House is covered by the centrally provided Cambridgeshire County Council insurance which includes public liability to £50 million. Group leaders are advised to seek advice from their local authority or management body on taking out additional school journey insurance cover, to cover personal losses and absences.

### **Security**

During the first day of a course, visiting staff are shown locking up and security procedures for the house and grounds, and handed the keys. After dinner each night, Burwell House staff will leave the premises, leaving emergency contact telephone numbers with the group leader. These include that of our site coordinator, who lives within the grounds.

### **Child protection**

We take our role in safeguarding all of our visitors extremely seriously. Burwell House has thorough child protection and anti-bullying policies, available on request. All staff undergo an enhanced DBS check and all visitors sign in at the office and are issued with ID badges

### **Sustainability**

During all courses we try to encourage children to think about aspects of sustainability which they will be able to put into practice back at home after their trip. Groups are encouraged to recycle as much as possible and to keep energy use to a minimum.



## **Making a booking**

Bookings can be made over the phone, via email or in person. Once the booking form is returned with a deposit, a booking is secure. Bookings can always be made for the current academic year and the two subsequent years, and certain times of year do fill up very quickly.

### **Prices**

Prices vary according to time of year and size of group. Pricelists are available in a separate document and prices quoted are inclusive of all meals and all tuition.

We offer 1 adult place free for every 12 children *pro rata* or a minimum of 3 adults with other additional adults charged at the children's price. If there are children on the course whose participation depends on getting extra support, then extra adults required to provide this may be free of charge. Discounts are available for early confirmation of booking.

### **Invoicing and cancellation policy**

- Groups will be liable for 20% of the course fee based on projected numbers from 20 weeks prior to the visit commencement.
- Groups will be invoiced for 20% of the course fee at 16 weeks prior to the visit. The numbers confirmed at this stage will be the minimum number charged for at the end of the course.
- Groups will be liable for 50% of the course fee from 12 weeks prior to the visit.
- Groups will be liable for 100% of the course fee from 8 weeks prior to the visit.
- Groups will be invoiced the remaining balance, up to 100% of the course fee after the visit.

## **Contact us**

We hope that the information contained within this booklet has proved useful - further information can also be found on our website. Please feel free to contact us to discuss any aspect of our Centre. If you would like to visit us then we will happily arrange a time to show you round and discuss your requirements.

**[www.burwellhouse.com](http://www.burwellhouse.com)**

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We look forward to hearing from you.