

Riding at Chailey Heritage Foundation



Thanks to the kind support of our funders, the riding service has continued to grow and expand in the 2018/19 academic year. With an increasing demand for sessions, we have been able to offer more sessions during the week during school hours and in our after-school club to young people with physical disabilities and complex health needs.

The Team



We now have two fully trained Hippotherapists supporting our therapeutic riding provision as well as our Stable Manager, Michele Quibell.

Melissa Tysh offers riding during school hours on a Thursday. She also runs two after-school sessions on a Monday and Wednesday which are proving to be a great asset to the school time sessions. These additional sessions are available to our residential pupils as well as members of the local community. They are so popular, that Melissa is hoping to run a third after-school session in January.

Nicki Montoya, now qualified as a Hippotherapist, has returned from maternity leave and is running the Tuesday School riding sessions and will be starting Friday sessions after Christmas.

Ella Denyer recently had a baby boy and is off on maternity leave. Ella plans to do her Hippotherapy training next year.

We also have a team of volunteers who help us with every Hippotherapy session, who we rely on to ensure the safety of the riders and the management of the horses. We're very grateful for all their help.

Training

In October, Melissa attended a training/conference course on helping toddlers through Hippotherapy in Prague. We're sure it will be useful for our younger pupils. We have recently been working with other therapists through the South East region group of the Chartered Physiotherapists in Therapeutic Riding and Hippotherapy (CPTRH). Their meetings are open to all therapists who provide therapy using horses. We have met twice at Chailey and most recently, had a presentation from two Occupational Therapists running Riding for the Disabled (RDA) sessions in Epsom and learnt how their RDA group operates and provides therapy for young people. We're meeting again in January when Nicki and Melissa will make a presentation and discuss the work we do. Because our young people tend to have complex disabilities and associated health conditions, they would not be accepted to ride at many other centres across the region. But because we have onsite nurses and experienced team members here at Chailey Heritage Foundation, we are making this fantastic therapy accessible to more young people and want to share what we are doing with others. This has included enabling a child who relies on ventilation equipment to ride, which is a first for Chailey Heritage Foundation.

The Ponies

At the end of last term we said goodbye to Gwen who is enjoying a relaxed retirement, having been a much-loved Hippotherapy pony and given so much to us here.

We still loan Todd who joined us two years ago. Todd is used mainly for Therapeutic Back Riding, where the therapist sits on the horse with the rider to help facilitate their posture. He also has very useful movement to challenge more able riders.

We have a new pony, Millie (pictured right), who came to us at the end of the last school year and has settled in brilliantly. Thanks to the support of our donors, we were able to buy Millie. She is slightly larger than Gwen so her carrying weight ability is a bit higher, which has been great for pupils who were outgrowing Gwen but not suitable for riding Todd. She has good changes of paces and when asked to walk out, the rider really feels the change in her movement which gives more of a challenge to their balance and strength. She is also very good in sensory sessions with pupils spending time around her and learning about horses.



The Sessions

We now have riding sessions running during the school day on Tuesdays and Thursdays. After Christmas we will add Fridays. There are after-school sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays. We are hoping to add an additional session on Tuesdays. In total we have 26 riders riding each week, consisting mainly of day and residential pupils, with extra sessions being offered to suitable riders from the community. This is on a private basis and helps to raise the funds needed to cover the cost of providing these additional sessions outside school hours.

As pupil numbers continue to increase within the school, the service has continued to be in growing demand. Pupils are assessed on a referral basis by one of the Hippotherapists, and if suitable, they are added to the waiting list to join riding sessions the following term. At the moment we are still having to rotate pupils in and out of riding on a regular basis to give everyone who would benefit from riding the opportunity to ride. We would love to be able to expand further to accommodate more riders and reduce the amount of rotation needed as the benefits we see from this form of therapy are so great. On top of that, the children get an enormous amount of enjoyment from being outdoors with the horses. Our main limiting factor is Hippotherapy hours.



We look forward to expanding the service when Ella returns from maternity leave.

In addition to these Hippotherapy and Therapeutic Riding sessions, Michele Quibell, Stable Manager, offers sensory sessions and stable management for those pupils who are not able to ride. In these sessions, pupils get the opportunity to handle the ponies as well as learning about their care.

Spotlight on a Chailey Heritage Foundation Pupil



Hippotherapy and Therapeutic Riding provide many benefits for children with disabilities.

One of the children who began riding in September 2017 at Chailey had never ridden before and had no contact with horses prior to her induction. She has Diplegic Cerebral Palsy, Scoliosis and Autism.

Due to reduced muscle tone in her trunk, we have been working on increasing her core stability and balance. We can do this by having her sitting upright astride the horse and doing things like start/stops, turning, circles and reaching activities which makes the child work her core (tummy and back muscles).

This has improved so much over the last few

terms she has progressed from needing maximal assistance from the side walkers to minimal assistance at the ankles.

She has good understanding and uses spoken language to communicate and we have incorporated some of her school curriculum into riding.

She is now able to identify missing numbers around the arena and has developed a clear understanding of her left and right. She is able to follow a sequence of 6 different instructions and can follow these without prompting, when she began she was only able to follow 3.

In terms of additional development of skills, she is now steering the horse with the use of the reins and using her legs when initiating go. She has started to trot and her core strength has improved dramatically. She has also begun to do a standing dismount and will start to learn rising trot over the next few weeks.

This amazing change has come from her hard work, engagement and enjoyment of the hippotherapy sessions. Changes like this shows how valuable riding is to our young people.

Private Rider Testimonial

"First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to Chailey Heritage Foundation, Melissa Tysh and her team for providing my son, Aiden, the opportunity to take Hippotherapy sessions. Aiden is a very happy five year old that loves his family, school and his horse Millie.

Since he started Hippotherapy a year ago, we have seen a great difference on Aiden's balance and posture. He does not fall as often when he walks and he can walk unassisted in rough terrain like during school forest days. He can walk longer distances and his sitting and standing posture have improved. Now, he is able to sit on the floor with apart legs and place a toy in between them.

Walking up and downstairs was a challenge for Aiden. Now, he takes 'smart' steps when going upstairs and downstairs and walk upstairs without holding the banister.

Last year in school, before he began his Hippotherapy, he could not climb the net on the jungle gym. Now he can go all the way to the top and down without assistance. He can also keep his hands above his head for more than a second or two and now he can raise his arms and throw a ball above his head.

I believe these sessions have helped him emotionally to be more assertive, confident and work on his communication skills. He greets Melissa, Millie and the staff. He has found something that he loves to do and feels he is good at it."

- AB

Volunteer Comments

"I absolutely love volunteering to help the children & young people at Chailey Heritage Foundation go horse riding. I look forward to coming every week.

Michele, Melissa and Nicki are all so kind, welcoming and supportive, and it has been lovely getting to know the other volunteers too.

The best thing about volunteering is seeing how much the young people enjoy it, seeing their happiness & excitement when they come riding. The connection between the children and the horses can be very moving. It is a special and joyful thing to be part of."

- SM



Volunteers Needed



Every riding session is very dependent upon volunteers to lead and side walk. We have a fantastic team who reliably turn up rain or shine to assist the children and young people. We are currently recruiting seven more to help for the new sessions. If while reading this you know anyone who would be interested, please ask them to contact us. More information can be found at www.chf.org.uk/volunteering. We will provide full training!



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