

Farm visits

The great outdoor classroom

Front cover image:
Oakridge School kids
showing muddy hands

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Farm visits – The great outdoor classroom

Using the great outdoors as a classroom is a fantastic way to inspire young people.

By mixing fun with learning, a trip to a working farm can be an incredibly exciting and motivating experience for children, and that's why each year over 150,000 children enjoy the chance to visit one of the thousands of farms that are geared up for school trips.

Farm visits form part of Natural England's One Million Children Outdoors programme which aims to introduce one million school-age children to the natural environment

www.naturalengland.org.uk/millionchildren

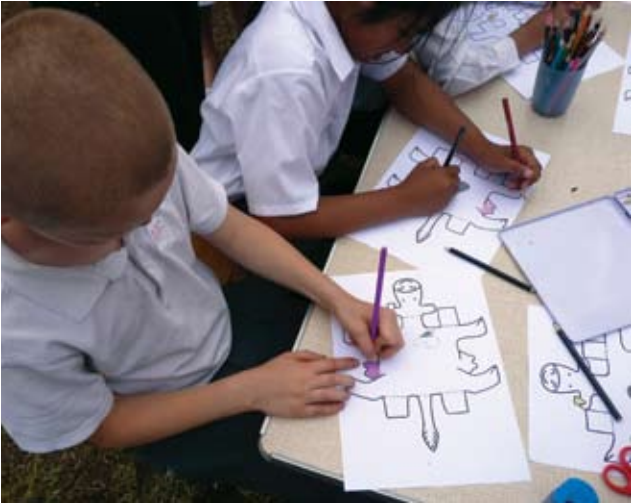
What's involved?

Farms can be an inspirational environment that can really capture the imagination – and the attention – of children.

Pupils of all ages can benefit from fun and educational activities led by farmers.

These activities can help teach about food production, and how farmers help with nature conservation. There may also be the opportunity to handle and feed animals, explore a farm trail, try pond dipping or learn another new skill.

Farmers will be happy to tailor the day to meet your exact needs and it's a good idea to invite them into school to talk to the students beforehand. That way you can make sure you get the most from your trip.



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Curriculum links

From a teaching point of view, the real beauty of a farm visit is that you can use your surroundings to teach so much of the National Curriculum, from science and geography, to literacy and art.

Just a few curriculum-linked ideas include:

- Using the landscape to generate creative writing and artistic ideas
- Conservation studies and finding out how farming has shaped our landscape
- Using nature to teach numeracy, such as carrying out a tree survey or playing 'milking maths' with the farmer's cows
- Finding out about rural history
- Learning about healthy eating and why it matters
- Learning more about caring for animals
- Discovering more about soil types, rivers and other topics on the geography syllabus

Some farms also offer work experience and host sessions for the Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies, a new qualification for 14–19 year olds.

As well as being a memorable day out, farm visits can also help young people with their social and personal development. Just being out in the countryside can be a great experience, especially for those growing up in the city.

Farm visits could also lead to other school projects and spark a deeper interest in the environment, so get involved now by visiting www.naturalengland.org.uk/millionchildren

What is stewardship?

All the farms supported by Natural England are part of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme or Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). Stewardship is a grant scheme which offers payments to farmers who help to enhance and conserve the English landscape, as well as improving habitats and helping to increase biodiversity. Educational Access is one part of this programme.

Many farmers have also signed up to the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS), a training course which covers a range of issues from how to communicate to children, to health and safety.

Safety first

Health and safety is an important issue for all farm visits but it should not be something that puts you off the trip in the first place.

Every farm that works under Natural England's Educational Access scheme must carry out a full risk assessment before they are allowed to take school trips. This includes ensuring there are suitable toilets and hand-washing facilities where required, as well as somewhere sheltered to eat lunch and write up notes.

You can download a free copy of the Health and Safety Executive leaflet 'Avoiding ill health at open farms – advice to farmers (with teachers' supplement)' from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais23.pdf



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Other ways of using the farm

Farm visits are a great opportunity for teachers to broaden their skills by teaching in a new environment. To find out exactly what your local farms can offer, why not arrange to stage your next INSET or staff training day at one?

Don't forget, visits are FREE. All schools need to do is pay for their own transport, and funding may be available to help cover these costs. Contact your local Natural England office for more information; details can be found on our website.

To find your nearest farm, check the Students and Teachers section at www.naturalengland.org.uk

Growing Schools

Farms can also be found on the Growing Schools website, which has been designed to support teachers in using the 'outdoor classroom' as a resource across the curriculum for pupils of all ages.

www.growingschools.org.uk



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