



Case study

Think Food and Farming

Osset School



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Food from the Garden and the Farm – Ossett School, West Yorkshire



Summary

Aim To increase awareness of the issues around food, farming and the countryside.

Action Establishing a school garden, and increasing contact with local farmers and food businesses.

Impact Positive response to garden from students and staff, increased understanding of farming issues, and effective use of cross-curricular working which will be extended.

Background information

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Osset School is a secondary, mixed, comprehensive and a specialist technology and sports college. It has 1713 pupils aged 11 to 18. We are a healthy school, committed to developing a healthy lifestyle. A questionnaire to KS3 pupils found that only 17 percent grow food at home or on an allotment, but 32 percent would like to do so; only 29 percent regularly cook at home, but 70 percent would like the chance to do so. Most students felt they knew what they had to do to have a healthy diet, but wanted to know more about food production.

The Project

Objectives

- For students to grow produce in school. Also for at least some students to communicate their learning experiences to family and the wider community by growing food at home.
- To raise awareness of where food is sourced, what foods are produced locally, and how food gets to retail outlets.
- To explore issues around food, farming and the countryside, such as organic farming, food shortages, food miles, sustainability and the need for diversification.
- To learn more about diet, health and nutrition, with the aim of improving students' lifestyle and food-buying choices – linked to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda.
- To experience a rural visit, and learn something about farming as a career.
- To develop cross-curricular involvement, particularly in Food Technology, Science and Geography.
- To improve inclusion and community involvement by including parents and the local community, especially feeder schools and partner schools.

How learning was organised

- A focus group was established to deliver this project as a cross-curricular, whole-school initiative. The group consisted of staff from specific subject areas: Geography, Science, Business/ICT, Design and Technology, Enterprise, other interested staff and students. An assembly had been organised prior to this, explaining the purpose and benefits of focus groups and inviting students to join.
- All Key Stage 3 pupils completed an online questionnaire in ICT lessons, to discover their experiences and attitudes in relation to a range of food and farming topics.
- Growing produce in school initially involved a Year 9 Science group. A suitable site was chosen and a budget established, (£700 for 2007-2008, £700 for 2008-2009). Students visited a local school with a garden and allotment for ideas, and obtained some materials free from local companies. The size and scope of the garden was effectively determined by the budget available for materials.



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- To increase awareness of where food is sourced and what foods are produced locally Year 8 used Food Technology lessons to look at local foods linked to the Sainsbury's Taste of Success competition. Year 7 participated in a Stop the Clock half-day looking at rural issues and diversification of farming. Local farmers (and a ferret) were invited into school to work with students – contacts provided by FACE. The students also carried out a 'risk and response' farming game developed by the humanities department. It was hoped that a farm visit could be included during a residential stay at an activity centre already planned for Year 8. In the end, the staff involved were not happy with this, and the visit did not take place.

Achievements

- Students, staff and farmers were all asked to give feedback. There was also an on-line questionnaire for KS3 students to be carried out during ICT lessons but due to IT problems this could not be used.
- A school garden comprising five raised beds has been established and students are generally enthusiastic. Year 9 students have learned about growing veg and seasonality, and also sold some produce to staff. The problems caused by pests, diseases and weather have helped them understand that life is unpredictable and you have to be adaptable. Soil studies in science were linked to a real-life example. The caretaker and technology technician were helpfully involved with advice and practical help eg in building raised beds.
- A scheme has been developed for teaching about local food in Food Technology. Students visited a local rhubarb farm and brought rhubarb back to grow in school. Students are now more aware of the problems facing farmers and that many of these are beyond their control.
- The cross-curricular aspect has forged links between departments especially Humanities and Design and Technology, and working with the Focus Group has been a valuable experience.

Next steps

- Hold a similar event for Year 7 in future years.
- Organise a food-related event to involve the local community.
- After an unsuccessful attempt to work with a local farm shop, there are now plans to work with local restaurants and other organisations.
- Develop selling produce into an Enterprise activity.
- Roll out the gardening project to all students through vertical tutoring.
- Further develop planning and communication so everyone is involved at the appropriate stages.