

School Prize-winning Chickens

From eggs to chickens to more eggs at Middleton-in-Teesdale Primary and Nursery School, Co. Durham

Aim

To create real and relevant learning opportunities to introduce children to the concept of life cycles and experience the connection between the food they eat and the animals that produce it.

Action

Foundation Stage Unit incubates hen's eggs, hatches chicks, wins award at local agricultural show, and now our hens are laying eggs for our own consumption.

Outcome

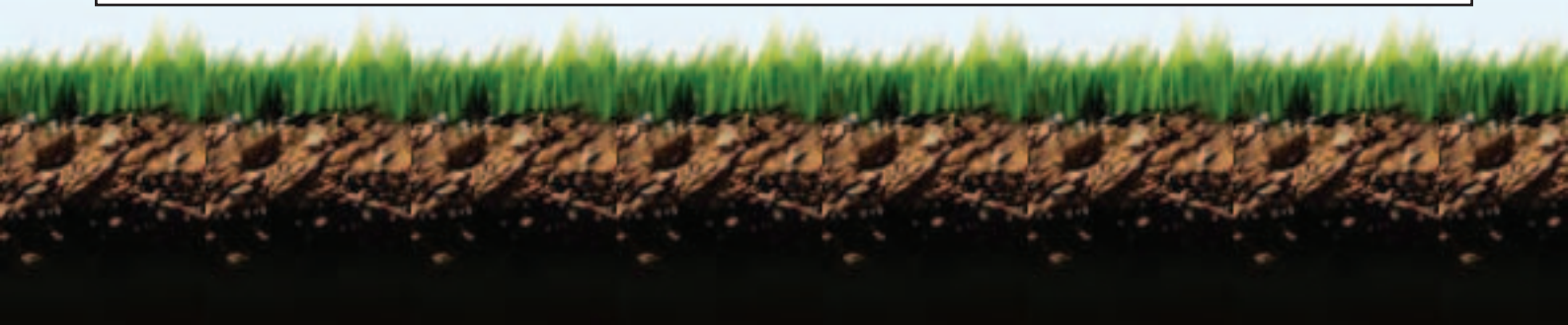
We are the proud owners of four award-winning hens that reside in a luxury coop located in the grounds of our school and are cared for and maintained by the Foundation Stage Unit (children aged from 3 to 5), providing endless learning opportunities for us all.



Hens eggs were donated by a parent from her farm and placed in an incubator. We counted down the 21 days of incubation and were rewarded with 12 chicks. Many hatched during the school day so the children saw at first hand how a chicken comes from an egg



We kept all 12 chicks for six weeks and watched them grow in a specially constructed box in the classroom. We kept them warm with an infra red lamp. . Children even made small houses out of junk modelling for them.



Growing Schools Case Studies



Our hens are tame and the children feel very confident handling them.



Learning how to prepare our hens to enter them for the local agricultural show in September 2009.

Our four hens, Twinkle, Garfield, Obama and Bingo, are the product of a topic on life cycles. We initially intended to observe the 21-day hatching process, keep the chicks for a few days and return them to the farm. However, we didn't realize just how attached we would become to them and what exciting learning opportunities their presence would create. For example, digging experiences outside now have an added purpose finding worms to feed to the hens and our compost bin receives the chicken droppings for added fertilizer to feed our vegetable patch.

In September we entered the hens into our local annual agricultural show. Many of the children at our Foundation Stage Unit attend this event with their families, so we decided to enter our chickens in the Poultry Class, thus giving them greater involvement in the show. With help from a hen expert we prepared our hens for showing. After a thorough clean up and spot of Vaseline on their feet and beaks, we took them along to the show. We were rewarded with 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize, and were awarded a special cup.

In November, just six months after hatching, our hens started to lay their first eggs. It was with much excitement that we opened the nesting box lid to reveal fresh newly laid eggs, 'fresh from the bot!' Our children now enjoy fresh eggs on a daily basis. In the spring we plan to introduce a cockerel to the chicken run and hopefully incubate some of our own eggs, thus completing the life cycle.

It is hard to summarise the learning derived from this project since it is possible to link every part of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and the Every Child Matters Agenda to some part of the experience. The key aim of this project is to give the children in our Foundation Stage Unit the opportunity to connect with the living environment and develop a greater understanding about the cycle of life. It is an on-going project that continues to engage the children during their time with us.

