

PRESS RELEASE
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Tower Hamlets school experiences “field to fork” for the first time

Fourteen pupils from Solebay Primary Academy swapped their classrooms for clods and crops this week, as they travelled from their school in Tower Hamlets to Chatham Green near Chelmsford to learn about farming, food, and how the bread for their sandwiches started out.

They soon learned that their visit, which was arranged by national education charity The Country Trust, was no ordinary one. The Chatham Green project uses 400 acres of Strutt & Parker Farms land to create a ‘living classroom’ for around 3000 schoolchildren each academic year. It is run by the Wilderness Foundation, which helps to reconnect people with their natural surroundings through hands-on experience.

“We live in a world where children are in danger of growing up disconnected from nature, particularly when they live in the city,” says Sue Harrison, Education Officer at the Wilderness Foundation, “With the amazing habitats here, children have the opportunity to see for themselves the variety and scale of what we grow, and to understand the importance of respecting and looking after nature.”

Sharon Roberts, Farm Discovery Co-ordinator at The Country Trust, agrees: “We believe it’s really important to provide young children from disadvantaged urban areas with opportunities to learn outside the classroom, and this visit has been an excellent way of showing them first-hand the pleasures of the open countryside.”

For the children of Solebay, it was a great way to get outdoors and find out more about how their food goes from field to fork, as they learned how a field of wheat could be hand-crushed and made into flatbread. They also participated in den-building using material they foraged from the surrounding woods.

Janet Baker, Principal at Solebay Primary, says: “Our ethos is all about giving every child equal access to opportunities and life chances, and trips like this do just that. For inner city children, seeing what is outside their everyday experience opens their eyes to the wider world of opportunity.”

The project is funded by Bayer, as part of its Agricultural Education programme aimed at encouraging young people to engage with and learn about agriculture and its place in their lives. Other programmes include the Youth Ag-Summit, where young delegates discuss the biggest agricultural challenges faced today, and the Baylab plants Student Labs, which give teenagers the chance to conduct experiments such as extracting rapeseed oil in professional labs.

Dr Stephen Humphreys, Food Industry Manager at Bayer, said: “This is our fourth year sponsoring the Chatham Green project, as we think it’s really important not only to show children where their food comes from, but to also explain how modern farming can help to feed a rapidly growing global population. “We’re delighted to see Solebay Primary Academy visit - it’s important that children from the cities, who may not get as many opportunities to stand in a field of wheat or learn how UK farmers are helping to feed us all, can enjoy this wonderful experience.”

If you would like to know more about the work of The Country Trust or become a supporter, please go to www.countrytrust.org.uk

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Bayer: Science For A Better Life

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The Country Trust

Founded in 1978, The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that brings the working countryside alive for those children least able to access it, whether through disadvantage or disability. Every year we support hundreds of volunteer farmers and landowners to welcome thousands of disadvantaged children from all backgrounds and faiths onto their farms. The Country Trust has three main strands of activity: farm discovery (day visits to real working farms); countryside discovery (residential visits to the countryside); and food discovery (year-long programmes exploring every aspect of growing, cooking and even selling food).

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The Wilderness Foundation

The Wilderness Foundation UK (a charity registered in both England & Wales and in Scotland) was founded in 1976, previously using the name of The Wilderness Trust. Our mission is to harness the positive power of wilderness to change lives and the positive power of humanity to save wilderness.

All of our programmes and activities are built around our three main areas of focus; Improving Lives for at-Risk Youth, Conservation Education and Leadership Training. We believe in balancing the needs of nature and people to create a viable and sustainable future for a growing population. We introduce people and children to nature, we change people's lives through nature, and we teach people how to love the natural world.

Paradigm Trust

Paradigm Trust is a Multi Academy Trust, formed in September 2013, when the two founding schools, Old Ford Primary Academy (OFPA) and Culloden Primary Academy (CPA), converted to Academy status. In September 2014, Solebay Primary Academy (previously called CET Primary School Tower Hamlets) transferred to the Paradigm Trust and Ipswich Academy in September 2015.

Forward-Looking Statements

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