

**PRESS RELEASE
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Bringing the wonders of the countryside alive for city children

Thanks to a donation from specialist caterers Caterlink to educational charity The Country Trust, children from three London schools have enjoyed farm visits to learn about where their food comes from.

Every year dynamic education charity The Country Trust brings the working countryside alive for nearly 25,000 disadvantaged primary school children through day visits to real working farms. Now, thanks to support from Caterlink, specialist caterers within schools, colleges and universities, children from Kentish Town Church of England Primary School, Brecknock Primary School and Holy Trinity-Primary School in Camden, North London have enjoyed fabulous farm visits to teach them about food, farming and the countryside.

Caterlink, who provide the lunches for all three schools with a focus on local, seasonal food wanted to help the children understand where the food on their dinner plates really comes from. The visits have meant that for many city children, who have never ventured further than their immediate London streets, they have experienced the sights, sounds and smells of a farm and country life for the very first time.

Children from Kentish Town Church of England Primary School and Brecknock Primary School went to Clothall Bury Farm in Hertfordshire where they learned about the wheat growing on the farm, as well as other types of grain - such an important part of school meals from pasta to pudding! They had a wonderful tour of the farm including walking through a fabulous bluebell wood in full bloom. All the children got to climb into the cabin of a huge tractor and were told about the different types of machinery used on the farm to help grow the crops. At Chatham Green Farm in Essex, children from Holy Trinity Primary School explored some of the vast wheat fields on the farm and were able to follow the story of field to fork by making and eating their own flatbread. The final part of the day was enjoying a bug hunt in a nearby field, bringing to life the importance of biodiversity to farming.

Carl Brennan, Class teacher at Brecknock Primary School said *"I would highly recommend the experience for children of this age, particularly those in London schools who do not have the chance regularly to immerse themselves in nature!"*

Sharon Roberts, Country Trust Farm Discovery Coordinator said, *"We are so grateful to Caterlink for their support, without their help visits like these simply wouldn't happen. For many disadvantaged children, just being out of the city and in the countryside, even for only a few hours, can be thrilling and exciting as well as helping them to expand their horizons. It is connecting what's grown in the countryside with what children eat for their school lunch that Caterlink are helping to fund."*

Penny Richards, Caterlink's Divisional Director, said *"Through the Caterlink Foundation we are delighted to support this important initiative. We pride ourselves on providing school meals with a clear provenance trail using fresh regional produce from locally based suppliers. As such, we are delighted to work with the Country Trust to enable pupils from a number of our schools in Camden to experience "life on the farm".*

To find out more about The Country Trust and to make a donation so that more visits like these can happen, go to www.countrytrust.org.uk

Editors' notes

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About 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 3 main strands of activities:
 1. Farm Discovery - day visits to real working farms
 2. Countryside Discovery - residential visits to the countryside
 3. Food Discovery - yearlong programmes exploring every aspect of growing, cooking and even selling food
- The Country Trust focuses on working with the following:
 - Primary age children from schools with an above average percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals
 - Schools catering for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
 - Looked After Children and Pupil Referral Units
- In 2015 The Country Trust enabled
 - 18,079 children to go on a farm or estate visit
 - 6,650 children took part in farm led assemblies and food and farming workshops
 - 1,113 children took part in Food Discovery Programmes
 - 918 children went on 29 Residential visits
 - 361 children with Special Educational Needs took part in Countryside Adventure days in Hampshire.
- The Country Trust currently works with schools in and around London, Essex, East Anglia, Hampshire, Birmingham and the East and West Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West, North Wales and Northumberland.

What we do

- We make it easy and safe for children to visit farms and for farmers to share their knowledge and passion.
- We bring urban and rural communities together, increasing communication, respect and understanding of the countryside as a place of possibilities but also a place on which livelihoods depend.
- We facilitate children's cultural understanding about the life and work of the British countryside through visits and talking with those who live and work there.
- We enable children to experience the wonder of the countryside:- open space, breathing space, the people who live and work there, habitats, farm animals and wildlife.
- We enable children to understand the possibilities of food, what a variety there is, why and how it grows, who grows it and where, what it tastes like, why all this matters.
- We introduce adult role models who nurture and take responsibility for crops and animals. People who often work in strong family units.
- We bring two interdependent but disconnected communities together for a stronger future. Our school community includes many urban children and a significant number of children from ethnic minorities.
- We can help schools to meet the new Ofsted common inspection framework which now includes a judgement on 'personal development, behaviour and welfare'. Ofsted states that the first-hand experiences of learning outside the classroom can help to make subjects more vivid and interesting for pupils and enhance their understanding. It can also contribute significantly to pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

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