



Country Trust

Connecting children with the land that sustains us all

2022-23
Impact Report

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The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that connects children from areas of high social and economic disadvantage with the land that sustains us all

Foreword - The Duke of Westminster, President



In a society where an increasing number of children are growing up in urban areas, we must work hard to encourage a curiosity about the countryside.

Millions of children miss out on the chance to experience first-hand the natural world that provides our food, water, and clean air. They grow up unaware of the precious life-support system that sustains us all.

The countryside may seem unrelatable for those least able to access it and the agricultural sector alien to those with no experience of it. The Country Trust acts as a bridge, creating opportunities for children to learn about the great outdoors. I have seen for myself how the organisation excels at creating activities that provoke or nurture a child's curiosity. Thanks to your work, only a couple of hours in the countryside can generate such wonder and awe in a child, lighting a fire in their imaginations through new experiences.



As President, I am delighted to see the extent of our work this year. The growth of the Farm Discovery Programme has enabled us to impact teaching practices and connect with more children. I also take great pride that new initiatives like Farm in a Box and the Plant Your Pants campaign have been so well received, capturing the attention of thousands of children all around the country.

I would like to congratulate the whole team for everything you have achieved this year. Through creative learning and enriching experiences, you are empowering so many children to be confident and curious about their natural surroundings and, importantly, you are enabling them to have fun and build happy memories while doing so.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Westminster', written in a cursive style.

About us and our participants



“ Often our children very rarely leave the estate. And to go somewhere else and to be somewhere, experiencing being in the countryside on a farm and there’s tractors going about for them was exciting for them. ”

Teacher,
Morlands Primary

About us and our participants

We are a charity dedicated to connecting the most persistently disadvantaged children with the land that sustains us all.

There is a widespread lack of understanding, even a disbelief of the day-to-day reality of the most disadvantaged in our community, and how poverty impacts access to good food, green space, the natural world and opportunity, which in turn affects diet, health, the ability to participate and the ability to thrive.

Children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds do less well at school. The reasons for this are many and complex. These children will often have fewer opportunities and experiences outside of school to build the confidence and skills to become active learners in school.

Disadvantage also affects diet and health outcomes, and access to green space, with lifelong consequences.

Through hands-on experiences of food, farming and the land, we want to empower the most disadvantaged children, and the adults who influence them, to discover their connection with the land that sustains us all. Our programmes give children the space to

be curious and to develop their self-confidence which can support them to go on to create change in their lives and the world around them so that they, society and the planet can thrive.

We use the Free Schools Meal (EVER6FSM) percentage* to identify primary schools to take part in our programmes - the national average is currently 25.9%.

This year the average EVER6FSM for the schools we have worked with is 44.2% - up 8.8 % points from last year.

We also make provision in our programmes for schools that do not meet our criteria, including:

- SEND specialist schools
- Pupil Referral Units
- alternative education providers.

We also support organisations that provide activities and support outside of school to children and families who are disadvantaged through:

- being Young Carers
- having refugee or asylum seeker status.

*Pupils eligible for Free School Meals at any time during the past 6 years. Recommended as the most consistent and accessible measure to determine disadvantage.

How we help

Our Values



We believe you grow by learning from others



We think the quality of our connections with others has an important effect on who we can be and what we can do



We are active participants in a world which inspires and sustains us



We want everyone to know that their contribution is welcome and valued



We aspire to be child-centred, no matter what our role is

Children experiencing disadvantage have limited life experiences which impacts their ability to thrive. Teachers are their gateway to opportunities.

Our programmes support those teachers working with the most disadvantaged children. We provide expertise and resources to help teachers understand how farming and food can support curriculum delivery, engagement with learning and personal development. After participating in Country Trust activities, 91% of teachers say they intend to use a farm visit next year as a core aspect of their curriculum planning.

The farming and food production industry does not reflect the diversity of the society it supports but needs diversity, innovation and growth if we are all to thrive.

In 2023 we brought together farmers and 55,000 children from communities who have little experience of agriculture, building connections and understanding. Our 'diverse world' Early Years Farm in a Box included letters from a diverse range of farmers and posters celebrating different faith-based festivals. We aim to inspire children by introducing them to people in agriculture from non-farming backgrounds.

Covid has increased the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in English and Maths.

Our Coordinators are trained in facilitating language and communication opportunities. Our programmes are a proven stimulus for language and offer opportunities for real-world maths provoking children's curiosity. SEND children and those with English as an additional language particularly benefit from the practical and sensory learning.

Many schools face a crisis with their budgets, forcing them to reduce or cut out enrichment activities.

We fundraised to provide nearly three times more funding for coach subsidies to ensure farm visits could go ahead. We increased our fundraising to ensure all our programmes could grow to include more disadvantaged children in 2023.

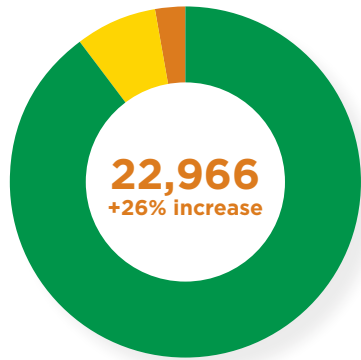
Young children's social and physical development is still affected by Covid, particularly the most disadvantaged.

Our programmes are accessible to all children. Every activity is tailored to the needs of each class/group and programmes are designed to encourage curiosity, confidence and connections. Our Early Years Farm in a Box stimulated learning and playing together, new vocabulary and active play.

More farmers are needed to welcome children to their farms.

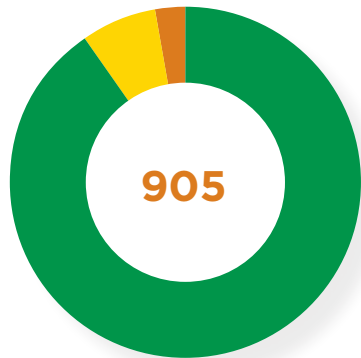
Our survey showed that farmers with financial support offer three times more visits. We are leading the call for Educational Access payments to be widely available within ELMS, the new agricultural support scheme.

2022-23 Highlights



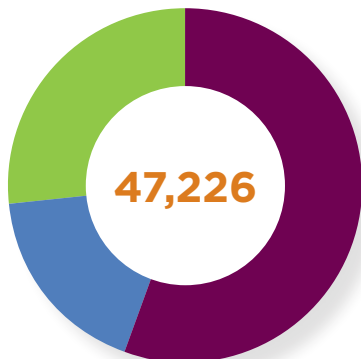
Children on farm visits:

- Farm Discovery: 20,615
- Food Discovery: 1,760
- Residential: 591



Number of visits to farms:

- Farm Discovery: 818
- Food Discovery: 63
- Residential: 24



Total number of children doing remote programmes:

- Early Years Farm in a Box: 26,276
- Plant Your Pants (physical pack): 8,450
- Plant Your Pants (digital pack): 12,500

Total number of children experiencing Country Trust Programmes:

70,192

This year, the average EVER6FSM for schools we worked with:

44.2%

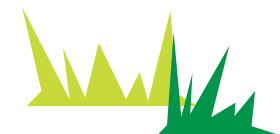
+ 8.8 % points from last year

Total number of farmers worked with:

191

Total number of schools worked with:

1,211



2022-23 Highlights



Teacher impact

- **Over 80% of teachers** who have engaged in one or more programmes agree or strongly agree that they are better equipped to use farming in their teaching after taking part.
- **87% of teachers report** that they were still using elements of farming and the visit in their teaching two weeks after a Farm Discovery visit.
- **Over 90% teachers said** they had learnt something new about their pupils during a Farm Discovery visit.

Pupil impact

- ‘I think farms are important’
 - **86% strongly agree**
 - **12% agree**
(58% strong agreed and 28% agreed in national ChildWise survey 2022).
- **95% of teachers said** children were still talking about their Farm Discovery visit 2 weeks later.
- **95% of children said** they had tried something new.

Welcome from CEO, Jill Attenborough

In the first two years of our current 5 year plan, poverty has increased significantly in the UK and there are now 100,000 more primary age children eligible for our programmes.

+122,060 children

Eligible for Free School Meals in England

- 2,019,509 in 2022-23

- 1,897,449 in 2021-22



Schools, particularly those serving deprived communities, are struggling with their own budget challenges. An indicator of this is that we had to raise nearly three times the amount of funding for coach subsidies this year (£55,000) in comparison with 2019, to ensure farm visits could go ahead.

You could say that poverty and inequality define our era - an outrageous state of affairs that is limiting and blighting the lives of millions of children, and which ultimately limits everyone's ability to thrive. It's driving demand for the limited sources of charitable funding to record levels - making it much harder to plan ahead confidently.

To succeed in such circumstances, it's critical to know exactly why we are here as a charity, what's the problem we are trying to solve and how will we know if we are making a difference? We gather and analyse feedback from every activity and talk to our teachers, farmers and children. We have used this learning to ensure our Theory of Change is completely relevant for the coming year.

It's also vital to look at who else is heading in the same direction and think, could we collaborate? Our Seeds to Supper pilot for teachers in 60 primary schools in the Reach2 Multi-Academy Trust is a prime example of this, as is our work next year with 10 residential centres funded and guided by Ernest Cook Trust under their OWL programme.

I am incredibly proud of our team for stepping up to meet the growing need, and demand, for our programmes this year, including from Early Years providers who received our Autumn and Spring Early Years 'diverse world' Farm in a Boxes very enthusiastically.

Unless we act now, with programmes shaped by a clear understanding of impact, thousands of children will never discover the connection between their own lives and the health of the planet. They won't get first hand experiences of the land, they won't grow, taste, explore, feel awe and wonder, they won't bump into the big ideas that will shape human history for millennia to come: neither they, nor we, will thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill Attenborough'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.



Credit: ©Niccolò Caranti

“The Country Trust has prepared an enormously significant call for a change in our education system that has Nature studies embedded in it from the earliest years of our lives. The proposal is not just compelling, but also moving.”

Sir Partha Dasgupta (Emeritus Professor, Frank Ramsey Professor Emeritus of Economics University of Cambridge).

Author of ‘The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review’.





The Problem

The human race is dependent on the natural world for survival. However, there is no consistent provision (resource or structure) for every child to discover the land that sustains us all and to explore first-hand the fundamental connection between the way we live, our own health and the health of the planet. Therefore, children, particularly the most disadvantaged, are ill-equipped to grow to actively contribute to, and benefit from, a thriving society and planet.

Activities



Intermediate Outcomes

Children (& adults) who engage with The Country Trust:

- are able to imagine a wider range of future possibilities
- are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt
- have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them
- are more confident to try new things
- are more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the land that sustains us all
- are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the land that sustains us all

Parents who engage with The Country Trust:

- Feel more confident to encourage/ support their children to try new things

Teachers who engage with The Country Trust:

- place greater value on food and farming education
- are more confident to use food and farming experiences to support pupil learning

Longer Term Outcomes

Children (& adults) who engage with The Country Trust:

- demonstrate a greater belief in their own agency
- are more likely to choose/pursue outdoor hobbies/interests/careers related to food, farming and the land that sustains us all
- are more likely to make (or want to make) informed choices about food, farming and the land that sustains us all

Teachers who engage with The Country Trust:

- seek out and use more real-world learning experiences in their teaching

Overall Aim

Through first-hand experiences of food, farming and the land, The Country Trust aims to empower children, particularly the most disadvantaged, and the adults who influence them, to discover their connection with the land that sustains us all, to be confident, curious and create change in their lives and the world around them so that they, society and the planet can thrive.

Our programmes: Farm Discovery



“

The children have had a real insight into real farming life. It was extremely informative and engaging. We've been able to see our children behaving differently in this environment - social skills, exploring and investigating. Children were using new vocabulary in their play after engaging with hands-on experiences.

”

Zoe Miller, Wellhome Academy

Our programmes: Farm Discovery

818 visits
20,615 children
415 schools
10 non-school organisations
191 farmers

Farm Discovery is a day visit to a working farm for a class or group of children. Our Coordinators (experienced practitioners) work with teachers/group leaders and farmers to create a tailored, safe and inspiring day. Children are positively impacted by a Farm Discovery visit: making connections between their lives and farms; building their confidence through new, enjoyable and interesting experiences; cultivating their curiosity through the variety of topics and activities on the farm, all nurtured in a child-centred, supportive environment. Visits can be focused around the curriculum or personal development, objectives that are discussed in detail during a teacher pre-visit.

91% of teachers say they intended to use a farm visit next year as a core aspect of their curriculum planning

97% of teachers agreed they felt better equipped to bring elements of farming into their classroom teaching as a result of a visit

94% of children said they had done something they had never done before

95% of teachers said children were still talking about the visit 2 weeks later

99% of children agreed that farms are important - showing they have made the connection between farming and all of our lives

“ I enjoyed learning that nature has natural treasures, so you don't have to have money to see nice things. ”
- Child

“ I remember when I had never sat in a tractor but now I have. ”
- Child

“ I really like the way we ground wheat and it was satisfying the way we made flour and it really trained my arm a lot and that is why I loved it so much and I liked it when we sat in the field silently. ”
- Child

Case Study: Grangetown Primary



Stephen Jackson, deputy head at Grangetown Primary, explains why they decided to send nearly all their year groups on Farm Discovery visits last year.

“Our school is in an area of high deprivation of around 80% pupil premium, one of the highest in the country. Life experiences and the future opportunities are the main two areas that we were always focusing on - our children can live in a bubble and there’s not much else out there - that’s been the biggest eye opener since coming out of COVID in particular.

When our CT Coordinator sent all the details of farm visits we just jumped onboard because we want to give our children any opportunities and experiences. We’ve sent our years 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6s. The feedback has been incredible from the farmers, the people who run the visits, and from teachers coming back.

For our children to be going to these real working farms has been unbelievable. Not only the life experiences, but also future opportunities for the children that they may not have even considered

themselves, careers in this area that they may have. I think our SEND children have really enjoyed the visits too because of the sensory elements and the practicality of it all.

All the teachers went on pre-visits, and you know how successful these visits were going to be because the teachers came back so enthused, so invigorated by what was going on. And obviously [they feed into] our science sessions and things. We’ve got those lived experiences now of what we’re teaching, and we can always relate to those. We’ve got the practical life experiences, we’ve had writing opportunities based on the farm visits for the children’s creative writing, retelling what happened. That’s really supported the teachers. And I don’t think many of the teachers have really been on working farms, so they’ve gained an experience that they can share with future classes. And the more we go on, then it’s only going to get better because they can plan in more.”

Our programmes: Food Discovery

A photograph showing several children in a kitchen setting, wearing white aprons and using knives to chop fresh herbs and vegetables on a white cutting board. There are green bowls, a plate of chopped ingredients, and a glass jar filled with herbs on the table. The scene is brightly lit, and the children appear to be engaged in a hands-on learning activity.

“ Participating in the project has enormous benefits for children involved - mentally, physically including sensory, academically and acquiring life skills and an appreciation of where food comes from and choices that can be made.”

Teacher, Hollickwood



Our programmes: Food Discovery

34 full programmes
3 Taster programmes
63 classes in 37 schools
1760 children
540 sessions
33 with parent helpers
26% of teachers said 'hard-to-reach'
parents had attended a session

Food Discovery programmes fully immerse children in all aspects of growing, cooking, tasting and sharing food. With the support of a dedicated Coordinator, schools connect Food Discovery and discussions about the environment and the wider world to the Key Stage 2 curriculum.

Children are introduced to new and varied foods and are given the opportunity to explore food in a safe, encouraging space by: learning to cook cheap nutritious recipes; growing vegetables, herbs and fruit; exploring the commercial aspects of food by visiting a working farm and running their own playground market; and preparing a Harvest Feast to be enjoyed with family, friends and farmers. The programme opens up a world of food exploration, building vital life skills, fostering a life-long curiosity in food and the food system, which enables them to make informed decisions about their own health, and the health of the planet.

73.5%

of teachers said that all of their pupils wanted to talk to each other about what they were learning and doing and the other 26.5% said that most did.

+97%

of teachers reported observing all or most of the pupils trying new things in Food Discovery.

Food Discovery increases teachers' confidence:

- in using farming in the classroom: there was a 55-percentage point increase in agreement with the statement 'I am confident in using elements of farming in my teaching' from 24.5% before the programme to 79.5% after the programme.
- using food in their teaching (+30 % points),
- leading food growing sessions with pupils and using the natural world in their teaching (both increased by 23% points).

Case Study: Food Discovery Longer term impact



At Holy Trinity Catholic Primary, we carried out interviews with pupils who had taken part in Food Discovery one year ago to learn more about how Food Discovery had continued to impact their relationship with food:

“I remember when we made a salad with the Country Trust, I took it home and had the recipe and we had it for our tea. My dad even ate it, and he doesn’t normally eat different food. He loved it. I made it again and I showed my whole family how to make it and we were talking about what we can add to it to make it even nicer.

Me and my dad cook together now. It’s mad because before, when I wasn’t at school, I liked to watch the footy or listen to music in my room. When we go shopping for food, we look at more fresh stuff and talk about what we could make with it. We made scrambled eggs with onions and green herbs the other day. It didn’t work the first time but the second time, it was boss! I like cooking. So does my dad, now.”

Child A - Year 5

“I loved the time when we grew stuff in school because I’d never done it before. Our garden has all pavements, so we didn’t grow anything. I have a disability sometimes that makes me use a wheelchair. It annoys me and gets me down but when I was growing food, it made me feel stronger, like in my mind and my body. I loved it. We have some pots that we grow a bit of salad and some herbs in now, but I’d love to grow more stuff because I like how it makes me feel. Maybe I’ll have my own garden one day to grow my own food that I like to eat.”

Child P - Year 5

Our programmes: Countryside Discovery Residentials



“

We had such a fantastic time on this residential...They gained such an independence and freedom over the 4 days they were in Suffolk and they built memories that they'll take with them on in their journeys. Hopefully this experience will ensure they want to continue to get out there and explore the natural world.

”

Solebay Primary Academy Teacher

Our programmes: Countryside Discovery Residentials

22 Residentials
591 children
18 schools

All Country Trust residential experiences aim to allow children to experience both farmed and natural countryside spaces unique to the area that the children are visiting, supporting children to develop connections with the land that sustains us all. We run our Countryside Residential programmes in Yorkshire, Suffolk and Norfolk. These are 2, 3 or 4 night residentials which are organised and supported by our Coordinators and include:

- accommodation and travel booked and managed by our team;
- a farm visit;
- new for 2023 - baking bread for breakfast the following morning;
- a range of countryside activities.

Our residentials provide many children with the experiences which they have missed out on over the past few years due to Covid, like staying away from home and developing their independence skills. But more than this, children who have never left their towns and cities reap the benefits of the specific support and structure which we and our partners can provide, enabling them to build their confidence and understanding of how to 'be' in the countryside.

89% of children said that they thought that farms were important

95% of children said they did something for the first time

“ I learnt that during night in the countryside you can see the stars really well. I have found out that it is quite enjoyable out side of the city there is so much nature and lots of thing to do. ”

- Child

“ I found out that poly tunnels could change temperatures because its facing south and could grow crops inside even in winter. This is where I belong. ”

- Child

Our programmes: Farm in a Box

“ We ... set up a small world/ farming themed tray. They loved it! They played with it all day, making up stories and discussing their ideas and knowledge about the farm. ”

Louisa Riley, St Paul's CofE Primary

Our programmes: Early Years Farm in a Box

Kindly funded by: **ARDIAN**

1000 Autumn boxes to 743 settings

397 Spring boxes to 308 of the Autumn settings (ordering was conditional on providing feedback for the Autumn Box)

33-percentage point increase in teachers' agreement with 'I am confident using elements of farming in my teaching'

100% of respondent teachers/specialists would recommend EYFIAB

67%

of teachers said that they had observed most or all of their children communicating about what they had learnt in some way

99.5%

of teachers reported that they had observed their children engage independently with the activities in the box

In 2022/23 our Farm in a Box was for Early Years children. It was a box full of resources and activities enabling children to discover the diverse world of food and farming through sensory play and investigation, and seeing real farmers, their stories and crops.

The youngest children in our society have been drastically affected by Covid19. Language and communication development have been adversely impacted as have personal, social, emotional and physical development, with those in the poorest households having suffered the most. Children from deprived backgrounds often lack opportunities and access to different toys, resources and experiences. Early Years Farm in a Box provided fun resources which were developed to be used in a structured way in the safe and encouraging setting of a school or nursery. The resources in the Box were designed to be reuseable, and to be a continuing source of ideas, inspiration and confidence for teachers.

“ The children loved the adult initiated activities and they were then observed engaging in independent play exploring farms and how they support the wider community! ”
- Stacey Lindley, Roly Poley's Nursery

“ The children at Catherine Infant school come from very deprived family backgrounds. As a result of this the children really appreciated looking and tasting new things that they would never come across in their own lives. ”
- Alpa Kachhela, Catherine Infant School

Our activities: Sustaining our impact

We know our programmes make a difference to many children. We also know that teachers have a huge influence on those children who experience the most disadvantage. We want to support teachers by helping them to help their pupils benefit as much as possible from our programmes.

Farm Discovery pre-visit for teachers

These enable teachers to see the farm, meet the farmer, complete their Risk Assessment and, with our Coordinator, consider how pupils can get the most from the visit, as well as being better able to prepare their pupils for the visit.

Farm in a Bag

With funding from Farming in Protected Landscapes, some of our Farm Discovery Coordinators have been trialling Farm in a Bag. A Farm in a Bag is given to teachers during their Farm Discovery pre-visit. The bag is filled with 5 activities and resources based around the senses which support teachers to prepare pupils for their visit. Teachers reported that the Farm in a Bag enabled their pupils to know what to expect on the farm, supporting their emotional readiness for the visit, as well as equipping them with vocabulary. Children who had a Farm in a Bag seemed more confident on the visit: they were more likely to want to speak to the farmer and more likely to get hands-on with the natural world. We would love to expand Farm in a Bag over the coming year.

50 Fantastic Ideas for Farm Activities

We are looking forward to promoting the release of this book, written by one of our Programme Managers, and published by Bloomsbury, especially to support those working with younger children.

Residential in a Box

Thanks to funding from the Ernest Cook Trust we are currently working on Residential in a Box to support teachers and children to prepare for the Countryside Discovery Residential.

Food Discovery CPD

Where there is funding our Food Discovery programmes can contain an element of training for teachers to support both their knowledge and confidence. However, just taking part in Food Discovery offers teachers opportunities to learn, and provides inspiration for how to integrate food, nature and hands-on learning into their practice.

REAch2 Partnership

Discovering Food from Seeds to Supper

Thanks to the Bernard Sunley Foundation we were able to explore how we could use our expertise from Food Discovery to support teachers more remotely, and developed our 'Seeds to Supper' programme for the REAch2 Multi-Academy Trust - see the next page for more detail.

Our activities: Case Study - Discovering Food from Seeds to Supper

Kindly funded by:



In partnership with:



Drawing on our 10 years of experience with Food Discovery, we created a support framework and resources to support REACH2 in delivering their ‘Seeds to Supper’ promise*. Discovering Food from Seeds to Supper was aimed at building teachers’ confidence and saving them time, channelling their attention to exactly what they need to succeed. We also highlighted ways the curriculum could be explored through food whilst bringing some extra fun...and a bit of dirt, into the classroom!

A total of 57 school staff subscribed from 53 different schools to receive a classroom wall planner and stickers and pea seeds to grow, and three digital handbooks sent via email throughout the year, along with video resources and a Twitter feed sharing opportunities and resources from other organisations.

Communication was the biggest challenge throughout the project: ensuring that information reached the right people, at the right time and that school staff would have time to digest the information. Future direction for this work may look at integrating Country Trust materials into curriculum materials provided by MATs to their schools, so teachers will engage with materials as part of their subject planning rather than as an additional project.

“ We have enjoyed using the Country Trust information. It has been really useful with hints, calendars and tips what to do next. The information has been really clear about what needs doing so even if you are not a gardener you are able to know what to do and what to look out for... One issue we have come across is timing and making sure people have enough time to implement parts of seeds to supper within their usual curriculum as well but I think that at the moment is more us getting to grips with it and knowing when to do things throughout the year. ”
 - Teacher
 Veritas Primary Academy



*REACH2, the largest primary-only academy trust in the UK with 61 primary academies, has a programme called 11 before 11: 11 experiences which all pupils will take part in during their time at a REACH2 academy. This list includes the ‘Seeds to Supper’ promise, providing their pupils with the opportunity to grow something that they can then prepare and cook.

Our activities: Soil campaign

We think every child deserves the chance to discover first-hand the connections between the food they eat, their own health and the health of the planet. Soil is a precious resource and yet it is being lost or degraded across the world. It is critical for life: as well as producing 95% of our food, good soil purifies water, mitigates flooding, combats drought, stores carbon and is even a source of new medicines. According to a Childwise survey, 27% of primary school children have never or hardly ever played or dug in soil. That's why we came up with a pilot nationwide campaign Plant your Pants (PYP) to get children and adults hands-on with soil!

Burying a pair of underpants, and digging them up a few weeks later, is a tried and tested technique that's been used by scientists the world over. It's a brilliant way of making the invisible life of the soil visible - the healthier the soil, the more disintegrated the cotton pants are once they are dug up a few weeks later.

Kindly funded by:



**Plant
Your
Pants!**



Plant your Pants 2023 Highlights:

- 300 physical PYP packs for eligible schools
- Digital packs for other schools and general public
- c.19,000 people engaged with soil
 - 1095 public registrations
 - 8450 school children through physical PYP packs
 - 12,500 school children through digital packs
- An interactive map for participants to log the burying and digging up of their pants.
- 4 'hub' schools took part in PYP but with the added bonus of a soil scientist to work with them, and a soil themed Farm Discovery visit. Read a hub school case study on the next page.

“ I will remember planting our pants. Digging in the fields and finding so many worms. Looking at how soil is made up by collecting some and shaking it up with water. ”
- Child

What next:

We took on a lot for our pilot year! But we learnt a lot, and while feedback was great, there wasn't as much of it as we would have liked. So, in 2024 (subject to funding) we have three aims: simplify the public campaign by making it easy for everyone to see for themselves the life in the soil, make more of soil across our established programmes and work hard to get more feedback so we can get even more people passionate about soil in 2025.

Our activities: Hub School teacher interview

Kindly funded by:



Two year 4 teachers from Morland Primary School talk about their Plant your Pants experience.

“We read through the Plant your Pants information and thought, Yeah, that looks fun! That links in with our topic on rocks and soil and farms and growing. Let’s get out there and plant our pants!

We had already looked at the four different rock formations and we were reading a book about a pebble and how it gets smaller and smaller, and what soil is and we’d been out and looked at soil and seen that it is broken down rocks and bits of decayed stuff. It was great to have some actual experts - having them talk about the different textures and how they hold water and things like that was really valuable.

On the farm it was the size of the field, and also how very different the soils were. We planted our pants in the woods at school, we’ve got very sandy soil. Whereas when we were at the farm, it had been very wet and there was so much mud on our boots we could barely move with

the clay. And it was just the vast size of everything and the fact that the soil at the farm was so different from ours - the children were getting stuck in and it didn’t matter if they fell over as they had wellies on. And Farmer Alice was encouraging them to get stuck in. And they were finding big worms and it made the school experience as kind of the serious bit and then at the farm they were like ‘we’ve done this before, now we’re putting into practise what we know’.

What they found so fascinating was that a soil scientist is a job. We’re at the back of the Council estate, it’s a deprived area, and a lot of parents who’ve never worked, and for the children to actually meet a real-life scientist who was getting paid for playing with soil...they were like, ‘wow, there are jobs like that out there’ and that was possibly one of the greatest things about the project. I’ve got three or four of them who are already saying I want to go to college and do geography.”

Our Influence: Policy

Our Vision

Food, Farming and Countryside opportunities and experiences are available to ALL children, especially persistently disadvantaged children.

Why?

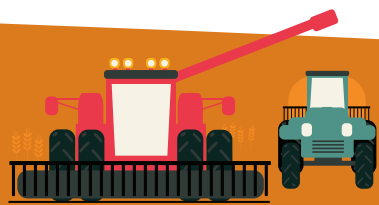
The human race is dependent on the natural world for survival. However, there is no consistent provision (resource or structure) for every child to discover the land that sustains us all and to explore first-hand the fundamental connection between the way we live, our own health and the health of the planet. Therefore, children, particularly the most disadvantaged, are ill-equipped to grow to actively contribute to, and benefit from, a thriving society and planet (as identified in our ToC)

To achieve our vision, we will work with policy makers to help ensure:

- Every child has the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from
- Every child has the chance to discover the connections between the food they eat, their own health and the land that sustains us all
- Every child can develop the confidence and curiosity to explore the natural world

How?

We will demonstrate the difference food and farm opportunities and experiences make especially for the most disadvantaged children - helping to join the dots between government departments, especially health, education and agriculture.



Our Influence: Policy

Our priorities:

At a time of fundamental change in our agricultural support system (post Brexit) to ensure that as many farmers as possible are supported to welcome children to their farms.

Status: Educational Access payments (Ed1) are now included in Mid Tier Countryside Stewardship and CS+. We have also been successful in raising awareness of Ed1, and in enabling farmers to add Ed1 retrospectively to their CS agreements. Inclusion of Ed1 in the Sustainable Farming Incentive is our next objective.

To ensure that the importance of firsthand experience of food and farming is included in all relevant new government strategies and policies.

Status: Firsthand experience has been absent from all new relevant government strategies and policies. We continue to raise our voice about this. We are part of the Fair Education Alliance, The Food Education Network, Sustain, the Outdoors for All Working group, the Nature Premium Steering Group and the Access to Farms Network.

To ensure that food and farming experiences are included within 'cultural capital'.

Status: Teachers are starting to talk about Country Trust programmes in this way and occasionally our involvement is mentioned in an Ofsted report. We have more work to do to gather and present evidence.

“ A HUGE thank you for...a fantastic trip to the farm for our school. It was run excellently and the communication running up to it was very good. The children were all engaged, activities good for the cohort and perfect for our children's needs. Thank you also for the pre-visit - this made a big difference. It was an excellent visit for our children's **cultural capital**. ”
- Matt Barker, The Stable School

Partners and supporters

We are supported by a diverse range of funders, supporters, project partners and passionate individuals.

Many partners have enabled us to grow and innovate e.g. AGCO Agricultural Foundation, A Hume, Ardian, Clarksons, Digital Spirit, Dove's Farm, Frontier Agriculture, Impax Asset Management, Müller, Oxbury Bank, Riverford Organic, Rural Solutions, Troy Asset Management and Warburtons.

Some have supported us both financially and as critical friends e.g. Aurora Trust, Bernard Sunley Foundation, Bruno Schroder Trust, Ernest Cook Trust and Westminster Foundation.

Some are particularly focused on education e.g. Ernest Cook Trust, Alistair Bryce-Clegg, REAch2.

Some share their expertise and champion our cause e.g. our President and Vice Presidents, Professor Mick Waters.

These are just a few of the many organisations and individuals who make our work possible. We would like to thank all our supporters for their encouragement and commitment to our mission.

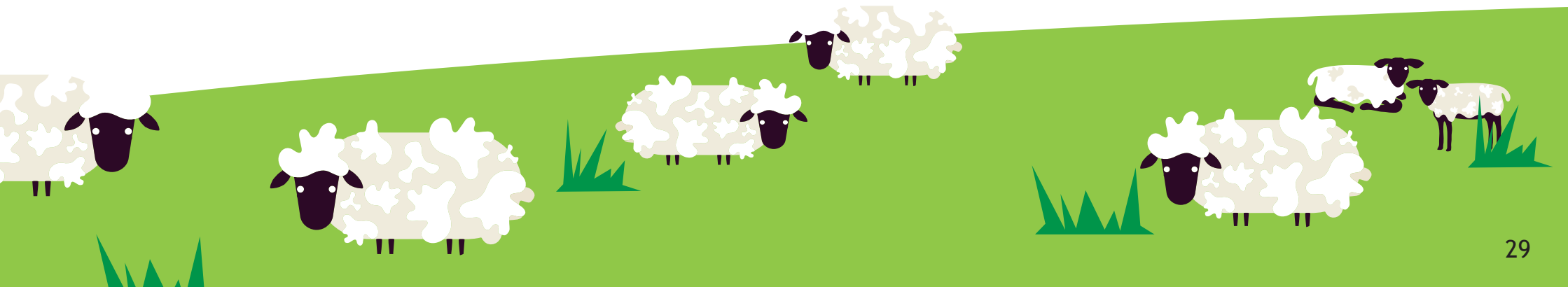


Looking to the future: 2024 plans

This will be year 3 of our 5 Year Plan and another step towards our ambition to bring food, farming and countryside experiences to 120,000 children from disadvantaged backgrounds each year by 2027.

Our aims:

- At least 55,000 children taking part in our core programmes
- A second year of our Soil Campaign with 30,000 people taking part
- To deepen the connection with soil through all our programmes
- Collect evidence that we are reaching children in the most disadvantaged areas
- Collect evidence that we are consistently achieving our outcomes
- Increase our use of Farm in a Bag to enhance Farm Discovery
- Seek transformative gifts to enable us to continue to grow to meet demand and need
- Improve and extend the capabilities of others through partnerships
- Support teachers to sustain the impact of our visits through pre and post provision of resources and support, blending physical, digital and e-communications
- Ensure that the importance of food and farming education is seen and heard by policy makers particularly focusing on the Sustainable Farming Incentive
- Ensure that our foundations of income, technology, leadership, governance, financial and information management underpin our growth





Country Trust

To support our work visit:
www.countrytrust.org.uk

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