

Let nature feed your senses

Research has shown time and time again that it is not just physical health benefits that are associated with visiting the countryside. Visits to farms also provide opportunities to relax, contemplate, find peace and inspiration, thereby improving many visitors' sense of well-being.



Farms also provide a huge diversity of learning opportunities throughout the year. Matt Umpleby, a teacher from Frank Wise Special School in Banbury, has experienced the benefits of farm visits firsthand. 'All children can benefit from visiting farms' he explained. 'They provide a rich and dynamic learning environment, with a wide range of sensory experiences. Farms provide opportunities to learn in, from and about the environment, from teaching about the impact of intensive farming to inspiration for creative writing. My classes all look forward to visiting our local farm!'

Indeed, Matt's pupils clearly have a great time when they visit the Warriner School farm, Bloxham. 'We have done some digging on the farm,' explains James. 'We planted beans and potatoes with the students from the Warriner school, on one visit we went around the farm on a tractor!' Another student, Brieze, enthused about farm animals. 'I love the cows, their babies are called calves'.

A BIG lottery funded project called Let Nature Feed Your Senses sets out to remove the barriers that stop many people being able to get out onto farms. Two charities, LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) and the Sensory Trust, have developed a network of 90 farms and nature reserves across England that offer free,



bespoke visits to the countryside throughout the year. 'All sites have been access reviewed and are set up to give a truly sensory-rich experience, with a range of activities for groups of all ages to get close to nature and understand more it's connections with our food,' explained James Taylor, LEAF project co-ordinator. 'We are especially keen to link special schools with local farms, to enable their students to continue to access farm visits for years to come'.

Many hosts encourage their visitors to 'get stuck in' with farm tasks. One such visit to Broughton Grounds Farm left the group leader in no doubt as to the power of hands on farm visits. 'I can see from their faces, from their body language, that this has really meant an awful lot', Carole Wise from Aylesbury College enthused. 'I would never have said that they would get as close as they've got to some of the animals, particularly in handling the sheep. The group are inspired!'

To find out how you can arrange a free sensory rich visit to a farm or nature reserve near you, please visit www.letnaturefeedyoursenses.org and search under 'find a farm'. Alternatively, please contact **James Taylor** at the LEAF office on **02476 413911**. The project team look forward to working with you to deliver a powerful, sensory rich experience for your students!