



Country Trust

Where children learn and grow



Summary evaluation report

Farm Discovery, Food Discovery &
Countryside Discovery Residentials

2018-19

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The Country Trust

With the help of supporters and funders, we bring food, farming and the countryside alive for around 19,500 children each year through three key programmes: Farm Discovery day visits to real working farms, Countryside Discovery residentials and Food Discovery programmes.

Our mission

We share a vision with others in our sector that ALL children should have an inspiring educational experience of the working countryside, however The Country Trust's particular mission is to focus on those children least able to access it.

*"We found that .. high quality, out-of-classroom learning influenced how children behave and the lifestyle choices they make. It shows the potential for school trips not just to change individual lives, but the lives of whole communities."*¹

The children we work with

One in four children in Britain lives in poverty, defined by the EU as follows:

"Children living in relative poverty are excluded from the activities and opportunities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people."

We focus on primary schools with a greater than average percentage of children from low income families and therefore eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), as well as schools and groups providing for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, young carers, vulnerable and refugee children and their families.

Our outcomes

We address poverty of experience and opportunity.

This is the difference we want to make across all our programmes:

- Children, their parent helpers and teachers are more knowledgeable and more aware of food, farming and the countryside.
- More farmers are able to share their love and passion for what they do.
- Children are more engaged with formal education as a result of increased 'real world' and interactive learning experiences.
- Children are better able to make informed decisions about the food that they eat.
- Children feel more responsible for their own and the wider environment.
- Children have more opportunities to develop and display non-cognitive skills, to experience patience, wonder and success.
- Children feel more at home in the countryside and greenspace.
- More teachers see the potential of countryside as a learning resource and feel more confident to use it to enhance their teaching.

How we gathered feedback

Farm visits - end of visit surveys for all teachers, recorded quotes from children and teachers.

Residential visits - before and after Survey Mechanic surveys for children and post-visit surveys for teachers. Structured feedback session with children during the residential, recorded quotes.

Food Discovery - feedback gathered from teachers after every session and at the year end, pre and post programme surveys for children, children's quotes recorded.

We have once again analysed our qualitative feedback using a light touch thematic approach and the NatCen Framework.

¹ Peacock, A. (2006). *Changing minds: The lasting impact of school*

trips. <http://eenclb.pbworks.com/f/Changing+Mind+s+Study.pdf>

Executive Summary

We can say confidently that in 2018-19 we provided more children experiencing disadvantage with opportunities for high quality, experiential learning. Working with our wonderful network of farmer hosts we can provide consistently high quality, impactful experiences for all children, whether they are part of a mainstream school group, a visit for newly arrived refugee families or have complex needs. Opportunities that are high on enjoyment, but full of wonder and learning, are jam-packed but give children space to breathe, offer challenge but feel safe and enable children to succeed, may take place within a single school day but can have a lasting impact, take place outside the classroom but are used by the majority of teachers to enhance curriculum learning. We are delighted that we are building teacher confidence across all our programmes to use the countryside as a resource to enhance their teaching and see this as an indication of sustained impact.

We continue to help schools to close the attainment gap for children from low income families through providing rich and diverse experiences, and opportunities to develop character and resilience. At a time of unprecedented budgetary constraints, thanks to our supporters we are able to continue to offer these opportunities at low or no cost to schools/parents.

At a time of great change in agriculture we are enabling farmers to tell their story, and children to make more informed decisions.

We are proud to be a learning organisation and have a clear set of recommendations on which to focus our attention in the coming year.

“Just being outside frees the children, helps them breathe.” Northstead Primary

Farm Discovery Day visits

There were 577 farm visits for 19,528 children from around 270 schools and 20 family, refugee or young carer groups during the 2018-19 academic year (an increase of 50 from the previous year). 92% of teachers/leaders returned feedback forms, an increase of 4% from the previous year. 83% of these forms included qualitative feedback.

Our aim was to:

- evaluate the quality of these visits
- determine the impact they have on the children, families and teaching staff who take part
- analyse feedback against these **6 simplified outcomes**:
 1. Give children an experience they would not normally have had.
 2. Help children gain confidence in the countryside.
 3. Give them a better understanding of how and where their food is produced.
 4. Increase their interest in learning through their enjoyment of the activity.
 5. Give reluctant learners the opportunity to engage.
 6. Increase teachers' confidence in using the countryside as a learning resource.

Key Findings

Quality

- 99% of teachers and leaders rated the communication and information received prior to the visit as 'very good' or 'excellent'.
- 99.6% of teachers and leaders rated the visit as 'very good' or 'excellent' in terms of organisation and delivery.
- 98.5% of teachers and leaders rated the visit as 'very good' or 'excellent' in terms of health and safety.

Impact

- All teachers agreed that their farm visit was an experience their children would not normally have, with nearly a

quarter choosing to give qualitative feedback on how important the visit was for their children.

- Over 99% of teachers agreed that their pupils have a better understanding of how and where their food is produced as a result of their visit.
- 96% were given the opportunity to tailor their visit to their chosen area of the curriculum and 77% chose to tell us the specific links they were making.
- All teachers agree that reluctant learners had the opportunity to engage whilst on a visit.
- All teachers agreed that the children's enjoyment of the day increased their learning.
- All teachers agreed that their pupils gained confidence in being outdoors and in the countryside as a result of their visit.
- After their visit 99.3% of teachers felt more confident in using the countryside to enhance their teaching (the remainder stating that they were already confident).

“Contact prior to the visit ensured it was accessible to all the children (lots of SENDsory, visual learning) as some are SEND/EAL.” South Street

“Outstanding - very well organised. The best visit I've ever been on - the attention to detail was second to none.” Westwood Primary



“I am sure this will be a trip that they will remember for the rest of their lives. Some of them have never been into Newcastle

(city centre) let alone come to a farm like this, or even know such a place exists.”

Welbeck Academy

“Learning objective was 'where does food come from' and this was clearly met.”

Buryfields Infant School

“I feel like I'm in touch with the earth and the sky.” Pupil from Northstead Primary



“I've never seen the children use their imagination like this.” St Lawrence's

“The raindrops on the grass looked like pirates' treasure (diamonds).” Pupil from Lidgett Green Primary

“Confidence is soaring because of our visits. They are blown away, look at the wonder.” Ingram Road

“One of the concerns I had was because of the different teaching environment how any challenging behaviour may spoil the experience for others. I felt that Jo helped to understand and support this as she presented a calm but firm response to behaviour which threatened to become disruptive. All the other people involved were also patient and helpful towards the children.” Portway Juniors

“Families definitely want to come back. Families have enjoyed the day and the non-English speaking have had the opportunity to discover the country and some new words.” Refugee Action

“An opportunity to bond as a family unit and to experience something they wouldn't have been able to before.”

Barnardo's Stronger Families

Food Discovery

This evaluation covers a total of 54 classes in 25 schools across England, around 1575 children in all, a 22% increase on 2017-18 numbers. In total we delivered 370 Food Discovery sessions, 51 of which were farm visits.

Key Findings

- As a result of Food Discovery, over 71% of pupils say that they would like to eat more fruit and vegetables from now on.
- 90% of teacher respondents agree that Food Discovery sessions enable children to make more informed decisions about what they will eat.
- Food Discovery prepares pupils of all ages for independence, increases their self-confidence and over 41% of pupils tell us they go on to cook a Food Discovery recipe at home.
- 100% of respondent teachers state that taking part in Food Discovery provides their pupils with new experiences, and pupils themselves registered 6205 'first' experiences in their feedback. We can be confident that we are addressing a significant need for those pupils from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 100% of respondent teachers believe that taking part in Food Discovery provides significant opportunities to contextualise classroom learning and contributes in part to closing the attainment gap for those in receipt of Pupil Premium.
- Every teacher used Food Discovery to link back to the curriculum, using it as a real-life platform for learning. At the end of the year 91% of respondents gave examples of the (wide range of) connections they had made.
- 71% of pupils report they have learnt that they enjoy spending time in the countryside, an increase from 18% at the start of the programme, and 81%

who have been to farms with Food Discovery would like to return.

- 87% of respondent teachers agree that taking part in Food Discovery helps children feel more responsible for their own and the wider environment.
- 51% of teachers commented in (unprompted) qualitative feedback on the impact Food Discovery had on non-cognitive skills like self-confidence, teamwork and communication.
- 96% of teachers reported an increased use within their own practice of one or more of: cooking, tasting, gardening or learning outside the classroom activities as a result of seeing the impact of Food Discovery.
- 99% of sessions are rated by teachers as 'very good' or 'excellent' in terms of management and organisation.
- 100% of sessions are rated as 'very good' or 'excellent' in terms of pupil enjoyment.

"It's so good to see the progress they have made since the beginning of the programme. They talk about the different foods they have used and tried and now have a wider range of foods they know they like."
Miss Watson
Teacher



"Parent helper talked about how excited her daughter was at growing plants at home inspired by Food Discovery sessions- she has a tray full of seedlings which she looks after and watches grow." CT
Coordinator report

Countryside Discovery Residentials

924 children took part in a Country Trust Residential in 2018-19, a 5% increase on last year. 26 schools and one non-school group, visited Norfolk, Suffolk and Yorkshire and were accompanied by 127 staff. Participation in our online surveys increased for lead teachers but decreased for children.

Key findings

- Teacher perception of children's enjoyment as 'excellent' has risen to 91% - an 11% increase on last year.
- 100% of teachers agreed that residentials widened children's experiences, with crabbing, pony trekking and the night walk featuring most regularly in the children's feedback of things they did for the first time on the residential.
- 100% teachers agreed that residentials improved children's wellbeing, and highlighted relationship building and teamwork as areas that regularly saw improvement.
- 100% of teachers agreed that residentials enabled children to have fun. Enjoyment is acknowledged as a key component of learning.
- 100% of teachers agreed that residentials help foster children's independence and 80% felt that the residential had met that need fully.
- 92% of teachers rated our on-site organisation, and the quality of our activities as either 'excellent' or 'very good', a 15% increase on last year.
- 'Fun' 'awesome' 'calming' and 'inspiring' were the four top words used when pupils were asked to describe their countryside adventure with us.

- 60% of our pupils from Yorkshire had never been away from home before. Anecdotal discussions with our London based children revealed many stay with relatives within London but this represented their first independent trip outside the family.
- Activities which offer novelty (a first experience), a feeling of success and an aspect of challenge are the most popular experiences amongst pupils.

"I think Norfolk will be very exciting and fun even though it is in the countryside."
Pupil, Woolmore school, London

"Incredible experience for children who live in the city to be exposed to a more rural lifestyle." Teacher, Solebay, Suffolk residential

"I've never tasted beetroot before, I think I'll try it again." Pupil, Harry Gosling Primary, London

"They never stop talking about the experiences. Having worked at the school for many years I still see ex pupils and they usually mention the residentials as one of the best things they did at school."
Teacher, Merlin Top Primary, Yorkshire

"One child told me he wanted to go back to Hautbois because he liked not having computer screens everywhere and he liked having his meals on time because that never happens at home. I think many of the children enjoyed the comradery of the trip and it was great for their self-esteem." Teacher, St Paul with St Luke's C of E Primary, London



Family groups and non-school groups

Building on the success of last year's visits, three of our Coordinators led 20 visits with non-school groups; 8 visits for refugee children and families, 6 visits for families within Barnardo's Stronger Families programme, 5 visits for groups supporting young carers and 1 visit for an all-access out of school group, SELFA (Skipton Extended Learning for All). With funding from the Rothschild Foundation, we were also able to provide a coach to take families from our Food Discovery schools in Aylesbury to an Open Farm Sunday event.

Spending time together outdoors has provided opportunities for families to bond, with both parents and children gaining from the visits. Parents have the chance to see a different side of their children, they can build happy memories together, and through meeting other families have the potential to start to build a support network. Young carers are able to be children and experience a little freedom.

"They got closer to each other, had a fun time with the animals and enjoyed learning." Refugee Action

"These trips never fail to impress, Suzanne and the Country Trust get our utmost thanks and John the Farmer was a real fine host. It provided us all with a welcome break and gave many young heads a chance to clear." Stockport Young Carers



"I think the parents enjoyed it almost as much as the children. Lots of photos were taken of their children feeding pigs, walking goats and just revelling in being outdoors. There was space for the children to run about and they have something to write about when the school term starts. New experience for most!"

Barnardo's Stronger Families

Sustained impact

Teachers responded to our question as to whether our visits had increased their confidence in using the countryside as a resource to enhance their teaching with an emphatic yes, often followed by the word definitely! This gives us confidence that the impact of our programmes will be sustained.

"Having observed the way the children responded to the experience we would feel more comfortable utilising outdoor learning." Ward Green Primary

We were very encouraged to see even more evidence this year of the many and varied links teachers are making between our programmes and the curriculum. By the end of the year 91% of Food Discovery respondents were able to give examples of the links they had already made.

"This was great, it links in with our curriculum topics next week, what a fantastic lead in." Northgate Primary

"Builds children's vocabulary and enables us to go back to school and further expand on what they have learnt." Harper Bell SDA School

"I felt attention was taken to link to our school ethos and the way we learn."

Westwood Primary

"The children have learnt a great deal for a new topic of learning! Incredibly engaging activities, lots we can replicate in the classroom and during forest school." Cramlington Village Primary

“Life lessons are learned by having a go.”²

Character and resilience are now seen as important traits that will help disadvantaged children to achieve their potential, closing the gap in development, attainment, health and wellbeing caused by poverty.

Trying new things and learning from failure help young people to grow into confident, resilient and happy adults who have the skills and knowledge to make positive contributions to the societies in which they live and the world around them³. Ofsted has recognised this and will now be assessing how schools support children, ‘to develop their character - including their resilience, confidence and independence - and help them know how to keep physically and mentally healthy’⁴.

“We always refer to Food Discovery when we are trying new things and finding things difficult.” H David, teacher, Thornhill

“These children have never walked so far and they haven’t moaned.” Hovingham Primary

The breadth and richness within children’s school experience is particularly important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds because they are much less likely to have such exposure elsewhere.

“I felt quite emotional because it’s really such an out-of-that-everyday experience for them of something they’d never normally do. A real farm.” Shepherds Down Special School

However, research has identified that the ability of schools to provide this breadth is

limited by staff time, capacity, availability of funding for extracurricular activities and access to information on what works⁵. At the same time, the number of children experiencing disadvantage is projected to increase in future years, potentially hitting record levels⁶.

How we can help

We are confident that every child has the opportunity to learn and grow whilst they are with us. Connecting children, their teachers and parents with the people and the land that sustains us can have a deep and lasting impact.

“(Farmer)David has an excellent manner with the children which allows them to be confident to ask questions and be curious.” Hudson Road Primary

Our programmes and activities vary in length from a day to a year, children may be immersed in the countryside for a few hours or a week. However, all our activities provide children with the opportunity to do things for the first time, to be challenged and very importantly to succeed. Feedback from children and teachers strongly suggests that we have a positive impact on knowledge (*what I know*), experience (*what I have done, seen, felt, how others have treated me*) and attitude (*how I might approach things in the future*).

Our evaluation gives us the confidence to conclude that we are well placed to help schools, and other groups provide high quality, rich and diverse experiences to those children least likely to encounter that breadth elsewhere in their lives, importantly at no, or low cost.

² Damian Hinds May 2019

³ Social Mobility Commission State of the Nation 2018-19: Social Mobility in Great Britain

⁴ Point 28 in the Education Inspection framework

⁵ Developing character skills in schools Summary report August 2017 NatCen Social Research & the National Children’s Bureau Research and Policy Team

⁶ Institute for Fiscal Studies, Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK, www.ifs.org.uk/tools_and_resources/incomes_in_uk

Firsts, challenge and success, knowledge, experience and attitude

Farm Discovery

“The most important aspect for most of the children was having the freedom to run around in an orchard and choose and pick an apple to eat. I think this was wonderful to watch and many children felt that this was the best part of the day.” Mile Cross

“Who’d have thought strawberries start as flowers.” Pupil, Mold Alun

“I’m going to tell my dad that I made butter!” Pupil from Northern Parade Infants

“It’s so good, they can get stuck into such a range of activities that allow them to gain confidence and take safe risks to raise self-esteem.” Loddon Junior

“Tasks were run excellently and gave the children opportunities that they would not normally experience, ‘fishing’, ‘fire making, using maps, as well as being able to explore the outdoors safely.” Brynteg C.P. School

Food Discovery

The class teacher said “They [the children] have learned so much in such a fun way without realising they were actually learning! They are talking about things [seeds and herbs] knowledgeably as though they have known about them for ages. It’s great to hear them.” CT Coordinator from a session at James Knott primary

“It has opened their eyes to the variety of vegetables that are available as they only have a very limited idea of what is available.” Anne Leveroni, North Denes Primary

“Farmers are a big thing for humans because if we did not have fruit and

vegetables we will all be morbidly oboist and we will die quicker.”

*(What I felt when trying new food)
“Proudness because I ate a carrot.”*

“When I go home I want to make soup. I might not make this soup but I want to make soup. I might put random things in it but I can cut up vegetables now so I can do it.” Pupil, St Lawrence’s

(What have you learnt?) “That nature is as important as our lives.”

“One particular child who is extremely fussy with food and reluctant to try anything, asked to try 2 of the fruits during the session. He was extremely pleased with himself.” S Rees, teacher, Thornhill

Residentials

“My favourite activity was crabbing because it was really my first experience.” Pupil, Woolmore, Suffolk Residential

“My favourite activity was horse riding because I find it very scary to get on and go up hills and down hills.” Pupil, St Clare’s, Yorkshire residential

“It gives children from the city a totally new experience to anything they may have done before. It takes them out of their comfort zone and challenges them in multiple ways, in a safe and exciting environment.” Teacher, Solebay Academy, London, Suffolk residential

“I can’t believe I’ve tried sweet cicely, it’s so cool.” Pupil, Greatwood, Yorkshire

“This trip provided opportunity to be outdoors. Also, some children with autism were extremely anxious about going on this trip but our hosts Lee and Mark did their utmost to include them and join them in when they were having difficulty.” Teacher, Merlin Top, Yorkshire residential

“Children are much more confident and independent. Relationships are strengthened between peers and adult and children.” Teacher, Harbinger, Norfolk residential

“The visit helps develop the children's independence and confidence ahead of the transition to secondary school.” Teacher, Woolmore, Norfolk residential

“I liked den building because I learnt how to build dens and how to survive if your lost in the wild.” Pupil, Solebay, Suffolk residential

Language and communication

60% of children attending our Yorkshire residentials (and responding to our survey) had never been away from home before. Knowing that for many children, the experiences we provide are rare, it is our responsibility to ensure that every visit and activity reaches the highest standards.

Evaluation of feedback in previous years highlighted the way in which our visits and activities can inspire children to communicate - verbally, in written form, or for some children through behaviour, facial expressions or sounds.

“Baa moo.” (from a girl who hadn't made those noises before) Park Lane Special School

“Children who don't normally say much at school are walking around animated and saying that they love this farm.” Whitefriars

“The teacher [from Unity] addressed the whole class: “Has it helped you write about something, because you have experienced it?” There was an immediate show of at least half a class of hands.” CT Coordinator

“Many of the tricky/disengaged children were entirely on board today and perhaps some of the very best in there in terms of skills, knowledge and behaviour.” From Coordinator's session report, Thornhill

With support from Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation this year we have been piloting a focus on language and communication to train our Coordinators to help children:

- learn at least two new words on each visit
- have opportunities to talk to and listen to each other
- have opportunities to ask questions, to explore, for information and to learn.

“Our pupils have had a fantastic time interacting with others that they wouldn't normally attempt. It was great to see children asking such interesting questions and being engaged in ways they wouldn't normally be.” The Spires

“I've never been on such a leafy path, it's really noisy.” St Christopher's

The letter below is from a pupil to the farmer he visited. The pupil normally writes on a laptop as he has significant learning needs. Due to poor behaviour in school, he did not have access to this but he hand-wrote the letter despite his normal reluctance.

Dear Mr + Mrs Morris Date: 27.06.18

I am writing to you to say
THANK YOU for letting
me on your farm.
It was great I loved
the tractor ride
and all of the
animals. I liked misty
I liked feeding her
and I liked the sausages they
was amazing.

Never
change
your
farm is
perfect

P.S it was amazing.

From
your sincerely

“Your scale isn't high enough to express the significance of this visit for our children and staff.” Tang Hall Primary School, York

Areas for development in 2018-19

- Supporting teachers to share best practice and extend the impact of our activities and programmes.
- Continuing to strengthen the resilience of our delivery team and the effectiveness of our administration and information management, particularly the information we provide to teachers.
- Increasing pupil, teacher and where appropriate, parent participation in our Food Discovery and Residential surveys.
- Increasing use of the visit report by our Farm Coordinators to support reflection, individual and organisational learning.
- Ensuring our host farmers' voices are heard, including providing more opportunities for hosts, Coordinators and teachers to come together to share ideas for inspirational visits.
- Continuing to implement our health and safety programme with our host farmers.
- Continuing to develop our understanding of our longer-term impact.

"I've never stroked animals before." Pupil, St Andrew's C of E Primary



"Our aim is to open their eyes - noticing and wondering are a big focus for us." Teacher, St Clare's, Yorkshire Residential

We are very grateful to our funders and supporters, farmer hosts, staff and volunteers who make our Farm Discovery, Food Discovery and Countryside Discovery programmes possible.

The Country Trust is a registered charity no. 1122103 and is a company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 6436266

President: Duke of Westminster