



## Farmer Time – Vauxhall City Farm

**Chris Platt (pictured right) holds the title Education and Partnerships Manager at Vauxhall City Farm, based in Vauxhall, London.**

As a city Farm, we wanted to share some of the finer details about what they can offer children as part of the Farmer Time initiative, including the similarities and differences between that of a conventional working farm. Vauxhall City Farm (VCF) connected with LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) after a visit from LEAF's honorary president, HRH Countess of Wessex. The Countess believed there may be an overlap, and put LEAF And VCF in touch. Farmer Time seemed like a sensible place to start.



Chris is paired up with two schools, finding time to speak to both schools every week - Grimley & Holt Primary school in Worcestershire every Thursday, and St. George's, Great Bromley in Essex every Tuesday.

**Chris holds strong views about the importance of educating the next generation about food and farming.**

“The pressure being put on the environment by industrial agriculture is undeniable. This doesn't mean that agriculture or farming are bad industries but rather, with some good educational outreach, we can act more harmoniously with nature. The more we spread the word on our food cycles and supply chains etc. the more people can be engaged with the processes involved in producing food. For us at VCF, we also like to offer



pathways into the industry for communities that don't always see farming as a viable career choice - or simply aren't aware of what the industry has to offer. We have a lot of groups that aren't traditionally represented in farming visit us and we like to offer a touch-point where they can find out more about the wonders of agriculture and production and, hopefully, move into it as a career.”

**VCF has a unique selling point that many farms across the country don't have, access.** Being surrounded by such diverse demographics, VCF offer a small piece of agriculture in Zone 1 of one of the worlds largest cities. This enables all walks of life to be able to visit the farm without spending time travelling out of the city to visit. There are bus and train stations within a 5 minute walking distance, meaning there is no need for personal transport either. VCF also work with unique partners for the agricultural industry, such as Kings College London and Fulham Football Club. This diversity within partnerships offers a real link with farming and business, and the connections and similarities between many varied industries.

For further information about this initiative, and how your school or farm can get involved visit: [www.farmertime.org](http://www.farmertime.org)  
Contact: [Tabitha.Salisbury@leafuk.org](mailto:Tabitha.Salisbury@leafuk.org)



**What would you say to any other farmer who is unsure about taking part in Farmer Time?**

“For the amount of input required, it's a real no brainer. Twenty minutes here or there and your own captive audience, talking about something you know inside out - it's such an easy thing to get started in. Plus, the young people are so energised by speaking with someone who works the land or with animals. They quickly understand how vital the work that farmers undertake is, which is all part of the knowledge exchange. Correcting misconceptions is another big draw. Farming is often met with some wariness due to its nature, but as soon as people put a face to the industry and hear the inner workings, they soon realise that it's a humane, essential sector. Even the real 'littlies' understand that and that's really important work for the ag industry to be educating people in.”

**One of the main differences between Farmer Time and other school – farm connections is the continuity and familiarity it offers. We asked Chris why he believes the ongoing connection works, and if a one-off call be as successful and pertinent to the children?**

“The longer the connection the better. The children thrive off the stability and continuity of learning from the same face every week - and I'm saying that as someone with years of formal, qualified teaching experience. The more ongoing a relationship is, the more the knowledge is absorbed, the more classwork/homework can be built around the Farmer Time sessions, the deeper and richer their understanding is. That sort of positivity will only repay itself to the farmer/farming sector. Having a more knowledgeable group of young people coming through will result in greater understanding and public support on farming, greater diversity in the workforce and, consequently, more resilience in workforce and working-knowledge. It's not enough for us to assume that people know where their food comes from, but it is our prerogative to ensure that people are aware so that they make safer, more ethical choices; supporting a vital industry and allowing sustainable farming practices in the UK to flourish.”



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**We asked Chris what he found to be the most rewarding thing about the Farmer Time partnership?**

“For me, it's seeing how engaged the pupils are. They are always so keen to learn about the animals and the processes we go through on the farm. They just want to see and know everything. I get unbelievable questions every week. Why do some goats have horns whilst others don't? What's the difference between an amphibian and a reptile? Which animal is the hardest/easiest to look after on the farm? Can I keep an alpaca? Whatever the topic we always have great discussions off the back of all the questions.”

**What have the children followed on the farm that has been a particular interest?**

“Animal skeletons was a big one. The Year 3 and 4s at Grimley & Holt were studying bones and we tied that in. They had to look at some printouts I sent them and use their knowledge and investigative skills to work out which animals they were. I'd then reveal the real animal here on the farm. We'd then inspect the animals to see how the real thing differed from the skeleton.

I even send them some follow-up resources every now and then. It helps to exemplify their learning and see how much has been retained. It can then inform what we do in the following weeks.”



**Thank you to Chris Platt from Vauxhall City Farm**

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