

Farmer Time Case Study

Mixed Farming Case Study



The Farmer

Will Evans is from a family that has a long history of farming in Wrexham. Since the 1700's, Will's family have been producing beef cattle, arable crops, and free-range eggs. Will is not a stranger to communicating the message of farm to fork and the diversity of the agricultural industry as he hosts podcasts on his show 'Rock and Roll Farming'. This weekly show involves showcasing not only the farmers that produce our food but also the many different characters that contribute to the agricultural industry.

Will heard about the idea of Farmer Time and he thought it was a 'simple solution' to show young people where their food comes from. As the initiative supports many of the reasons Will started his Rock and Roll podcasts, he was keen to sign up.

The School

Oaks Primary Academy, part of Leigh Academies Trust, is in Maidstone, Kent. Aoife Mehigan is a year two teacher and is an enthusiastic participant in Farmer Time, managing to make links across her whole curriculum.

Focus on the Teacher – Aoife Mehigan

Where did you hear about Farmer Time?

In March 2018, my Principal received an email about this exciting initiative which she forwarded to our staff. Our class jumped at the opportunity to take part as we knew it would help us deliver our broad and balanced curriculum in Year 2 in an engaging and exciting way for our pupils to learn.

How do you prepare for each session?

Before our very first Skype with Will, I asked the children 'What does a farmer look like?' Pupils drew stereotypical farmers that they might see in storybooks or on cartoons: tweed, caps, straw in the mouth, a sheep dog by their feet and predominantly male. We Tweeted these to farmer Will, the reactions from the Twitter farming community were excellent! When they met Farmer Will for the first time on Skype, the big question was 'Where is your hat?'



We take an inquiry-based approach to our learning at Oaks Primary Academy. Our current enquiry question is 'How do we keep safe?'. With this question and Farmer Will in mind, pupils firstly discussed any dangers that might be on a farm. They wrote questions for Will about how he keeps himself, his family, his animals and his farm safe. The questions ranged from 'How do you keep your children safe when they are riding their horse?' to 'How do you keep the animals safe during a lightning storm?' It has provided the pupils with such a broad opportunity to think about situations that they would not usually spend their time thinking about.

In line with our enquiry question, we have been reading a book called The Hedgehog by Dick King Smith and researching about how hedgehogs keep safe. The children immediately made links to where you might find hedgehogs and wrote many hedgehog questions for Will too. During our Skype, the children discovered that badgers are killing a lot of the hedgehogs on the farm which completely surprised them. They are always making links to our farmer and thinking of questions to ask or ways to relate their own learning to it, guiding this initiative in more ways than I thought.

How is each session structured?

We sit on the carpet with our books and questions and we Skype Will. They tell him about what they have been learning about and we also email in advance to let him know the general line of enquiry too. He will always try to show us around the farm when he is explaining anything to us. He showed us how he keeps safe in his tractor and moving around the farm (gates, fences etc.) Previously, he has shown us a calf being bottle fed in the barn, Storm the horse, all the cattle outside and how the machinery works. We had a farm tour on our first Skype, when we next call, he will be showing us lambs on a neighbouring farm.



What have the children learned so far?

They have learned about:-

- the daily, busy life of a farmer
- the different animals and how they are taken care of
- the animals that live on the farm and what might happen to them
- the journey of the thousands of eggs laid every day
- the life cycles of the different animals
- why some animals are bottle fed
- safety on the farm
- where the farm is located on a map

Has anything surprised you about the initiative?

The ideas behind the childrens' questions always amaze me. They have thought so deeply about everything when preparing for each Skype. Their knowledge of farms and animals in general surprised me as quite a few were unaware of different life cycles, the types of animals found on a farm and the difference between a farm and a zoo before contacting Will.

The Impact

Will is also incredibly positive about the impact of his link to Oaks Primary Academy, commenting that he has noticed how the childrens' questions have developed over time. Since partnering with Blackbirds class, he believes the children have shown a developing grasp of what they have learned, for example after he made the link between cereal stored in the barn to the packets of biscuits on the supermarket shelves.

Will states, "Farmer Time gives us all an opportunity to show children not only where their food comes from, but who produces it too. And who knows, maybe also inspire them to get involved in agriculture in the future!"

Aoife concludes, "Farmer Time is such an engaging, real life learning opportunity for our pupils, where they are all able to work on improving their thinking, social, communication, research and self-management skills - all the approaches to learning we promote in our school through the IB Primary Years Programme."

Finally, Blackbirds class sum up their own opinions on the impact by their comments below

"We get to ask a lot of questions, and the questions will help our brains learn more about farmers."

"It's really fun to have people showing us animals. It was my first time seeing somebody's farm."

"We look forward to it because he answers all of our questions and he has taught us about keeping safe on a farm or if we meet animals on the road."

"We know that shops don't make the food. Chickens on Will's farm lay eggs, a truck comes and they get brought to the supermarket."

A survey out of 23 pupils says 100% love it!



Further information about this initiative and how your school or farm can become involved can be found at www.farmertime.org
Contact: Julie.Neale@leafuk.org

Thank you to **Oaks Primary Academy, part of Leigh Academies Trust and Will Evans,**