



Farmer Time in Lockdown

Thrussington C of E Primary School, Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2 – Miss J. Berry

Thrussington is a small village school with 73 children on roll. The children are learning so much! Even though we are a small school in a rural area, which even has a farm within walking distance of the school, LEAF's Farmer Time initiative brings real life farming experiences into the classroom. It is inspiring new generation of farmers!

Christopher Foster – Turfbury Flock, Pedigree Texel Sheep

Chris Foster is a self-employed contractor and farmer with his own flock of 300 commercial and pedigree sheep. He contracts for a local farm managing 500 head of livestock including cattle and sheep, and contracts for an arable farm in Lincolnshire over harvest to Christmas. Chris's background is from a mixed family farm in South Yorkshire, and he is a former lecturer and deputy head of department in Agriculture.



The partnership and inspiration of continuing Farmer Time during Lockdown:

Farmer Foster and Thrussington C of E Primary School have been participating in the Farmer Time initiative for 14 months. Over this time, they've had sessions every half term. Whilst schools were closed, Farmer Foster and Thrussington School Foundation Stages, Years 1 and 2 have been thoroughly enjoying a new style of 'Farmer Time'. Farmer Foster sends weekly farm updates in the form of photos and videos to Miss Berry, who then posts these photos to a closed class Twitter page. Once the videos have been posted by Miss Berry, the class members are then free to ask as many questions as they can think of, which are relayed back to Farmer Foster who posts answers on the Twitter page.

The 'Lockdown' pairing idea came up after Miss Berry contacted Farmer Foster to see if it was possible to send photos or videos to share with the class. The class had created a closed Twitter page from the outset when schools closed, for the children to have some regularity and continuity whilst at home. In terms of implementing the idea – it was simple. Farmer Foster simply sends the clips across, with regular updates such as what the sheepdogs (Flossy and Finn) have been getting up to.

The LEAF Education Code of Conduct has been useful, and we've ensured we're following this by making sure Farmer Foster and the class don't have direct contact. Farmer Foster also does not have access to the class Twitter page. All the correct protocol is being followed!

Farmer Time has been incredibly rewarding – the children are loving the regular contact and the variety offered. They have been lucky enough to see a lamb being born, lambs released into the field for the first time, sheep shearing including what happens to the wool after shearing. They also get regular contact with Flossy and Finn (the sheepdogs), alongside Charlie, a lamb they were introduced to at the start of the Farmer Time initiative, which had been abandoned by his mother.



Farmer Foster says: "It breaks up the day for everyone, and whilst I like to be informative and show everyone what we get up to, it's also fun to send short videos of what the livestock have done during the day, funny antics you couldn't make up, or tame lambs coming with you on a walk. These are hard times and I feel it's important students get to see the fun stuff as well as learning more about food and farming."

Miss Berry says the whole class is fully engaged and they have received such positive feedback. Some comments from pupils and parents are below:

- *'Farmer Foster's videos have been really uplifting and enjoyed not only by Thomas but by all of our family. It is reassuring to see that normal life is continuing on the farm. Martha was smitten with TJ the pup and we loved the lambing and shearing videos'. (Thomas - Year 1)*
- *'I know Dottie has very much enjoyed the normality of seeing your videos as well as Farmer Foster's and the developments on the farm. She was so excited to watch the birth and didn't seem fazed by it at all, just really proud to have seen it, I think.'*



- *'I liked the baby sheep, but which one was born first, mummy sheep? The new pup was super cute, and it was funny when he (Farmer Foster) was being a sheep.' (Assume that's when he had the wool on his head.) (Dottie - Foundation Stage)*
- *'It's fun watching the videos of him. I like it when he answers questions' (William - Year 1)*
- *'We have really enjoyed Farmer Foster's contact during this difficult time. Alex and Reuben love animals and this is a way of them having virtual contact. They really enjoy seeing Flossy and Finn and meeting their baby cousin. Another highlight has been seeing the baby lamb being born. Farmer Foster really put a smile on our faces when he put sheep's wool on his head after shearing! Thank you, Farmer Foster!' (Alex - Year 1 and Reuben - Foundation Stage)*
- *'How fantastic it has been for the children to keep in touch with Farmer Foster and see that life on the farm continues. They have learned so much from the videos, especially the lambing one, and really enjoy watching these. They are curious and ask more questions and we learn together'. (Tilly - Year 2 and Hattie - Foundation Stage)*

"Farmer Time is honestly one of the most rewarding experiences and I'd highly recommend any teacher gets in touch to arrange being matched with a farmer. I feel blessed that we were matched with Farmer Foster. The children (and staff) are gaining so much knowledge around farming and food in a fun and interactive way." (Miss Berry, Thrussington C of E Teacher)

Thank you to Thrussington C of E primary school, Teacher: Miss J. Berry and Farmer: Chris Foster

For further information about this initiative, and how your school or farm can get involved visit: www.farmertime.org

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