

Preparing for your farm visit



Welcome

Thank you for your interest in visiting our farm. We hope that the experience will give your children inspiration and information about parts of the curriculum that are sometimes difficult to teach in a classroom environment.

The visit allows children to see for themselves how a modern farm works, in an enjoyable and safe environment.

This pack will help you to prepare a successful programme tailored to suit the needs of your group.

What is farming?

Farming is the age-old practice of producing crops and livestock for food, fuel and fibre. The origins of human civilisation are closely linked to the development of farming when primitive hunter gatherers were gradually replaced by farmers producing the first domesticated plants and animals.

Modern agriculture is a highly competitive global industry. The UK produces 70% of the food we eat, the rest coming from other parts of the world. It is the first link in a sophisticated chain to prepare and process our food before we buy it in the shops. What a farmer grows depends on individual circumstances such as location, weather conditions, size of the farm, history of the area and market forces.

Farming has created the landscape that we see. It is the hedges and walls that divide fields that give the landscape its pattern, along with areas of trees and the colours of different crops. Even though they do not necessarily earn any money by activities such as cutting hedges and planting trees, farmers are helping to look after much of the wildlife in the countryside.

Many farmers also now operate broader enterprises to include leisure activities and environmental management. Defra provides advice and funding through agri-environment schemes to encourage farmers to follow more traditional farming methods that enhance the landscape, encourage wildlife, protect archaeological and historic features, and improve opportunities for enjoying the countryside. By conserving our countryside in this way we also play our part in the international agreement to maintain the natural diversity of animals and plants throughout the world.

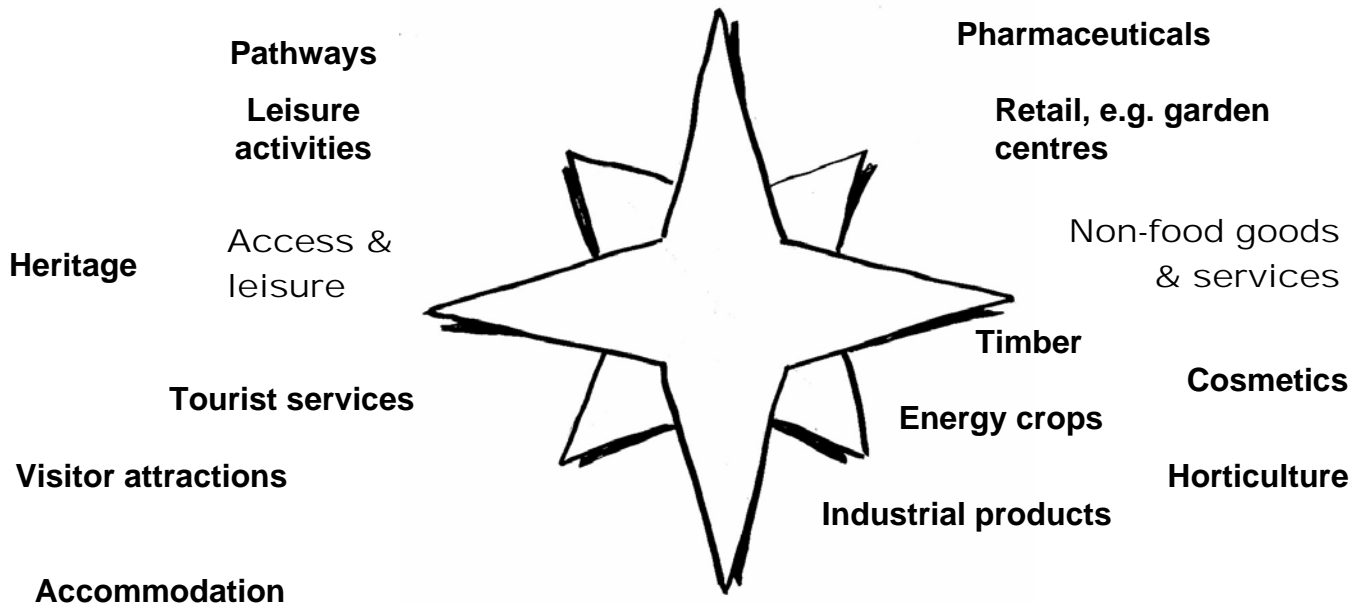
The countryside offers an invaluable teaching resource. The visit can be used to teach all aspects of the curriculum through learning about farming and the countryside. We hope that this information pack will give you ideas to inspire your pupils and get the most out of your visit.

Front page picture: forage harvester at Dart Raffe

Scope of Work

Fruit and Vegetables
Food processing **Retail, e.g. farm shops**
Co-operatives **Herbs** **Dairy products** **Meat**
Drinks and beverages **Farmers' markets** **Speciality products**

Sugar **Food production & services** **Cereals**



Environmental management

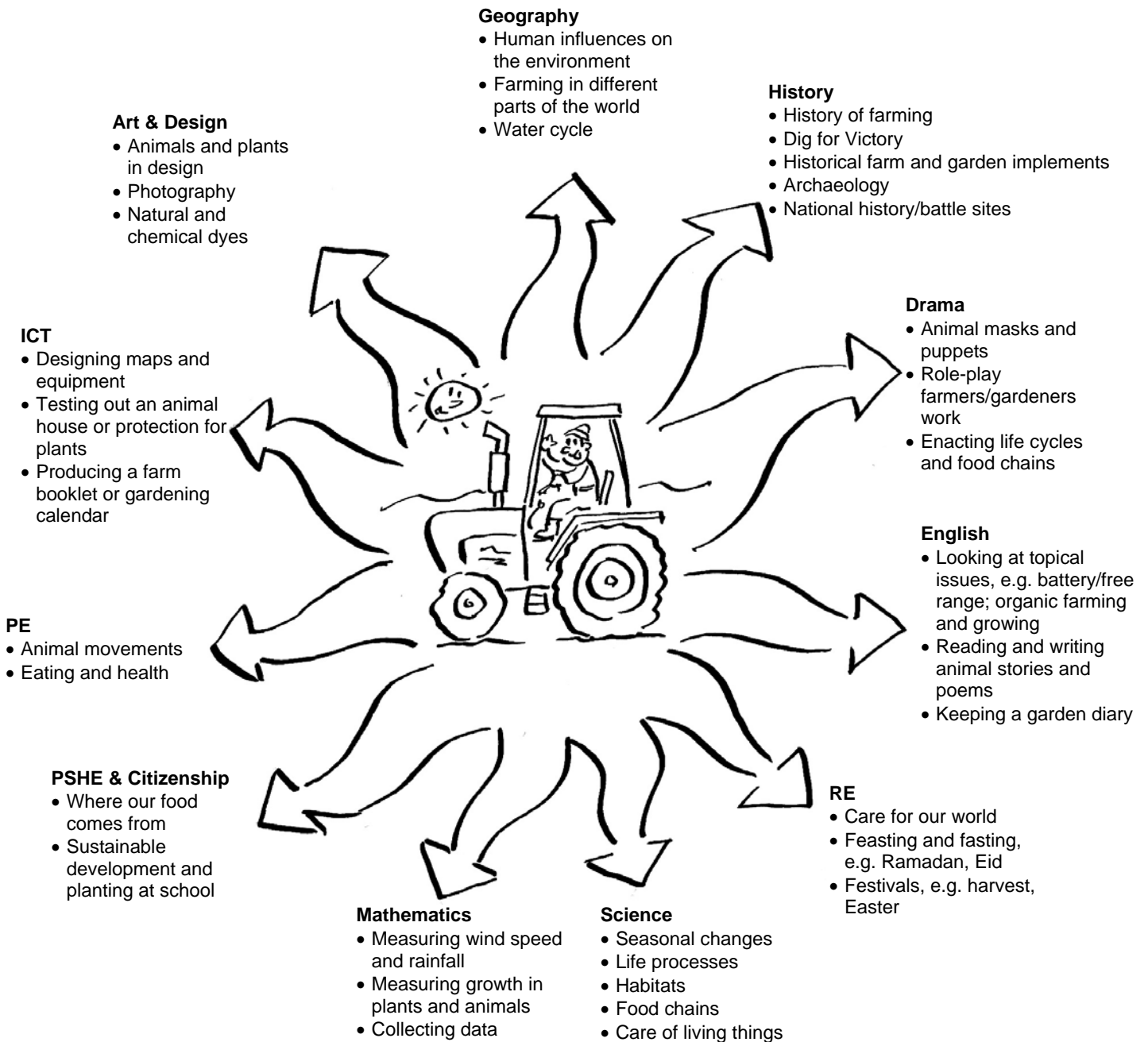
Nature Reserves **Woodlands** **Wildlife conservation**

Archaeological conservation **Habitat maintenance & creation**

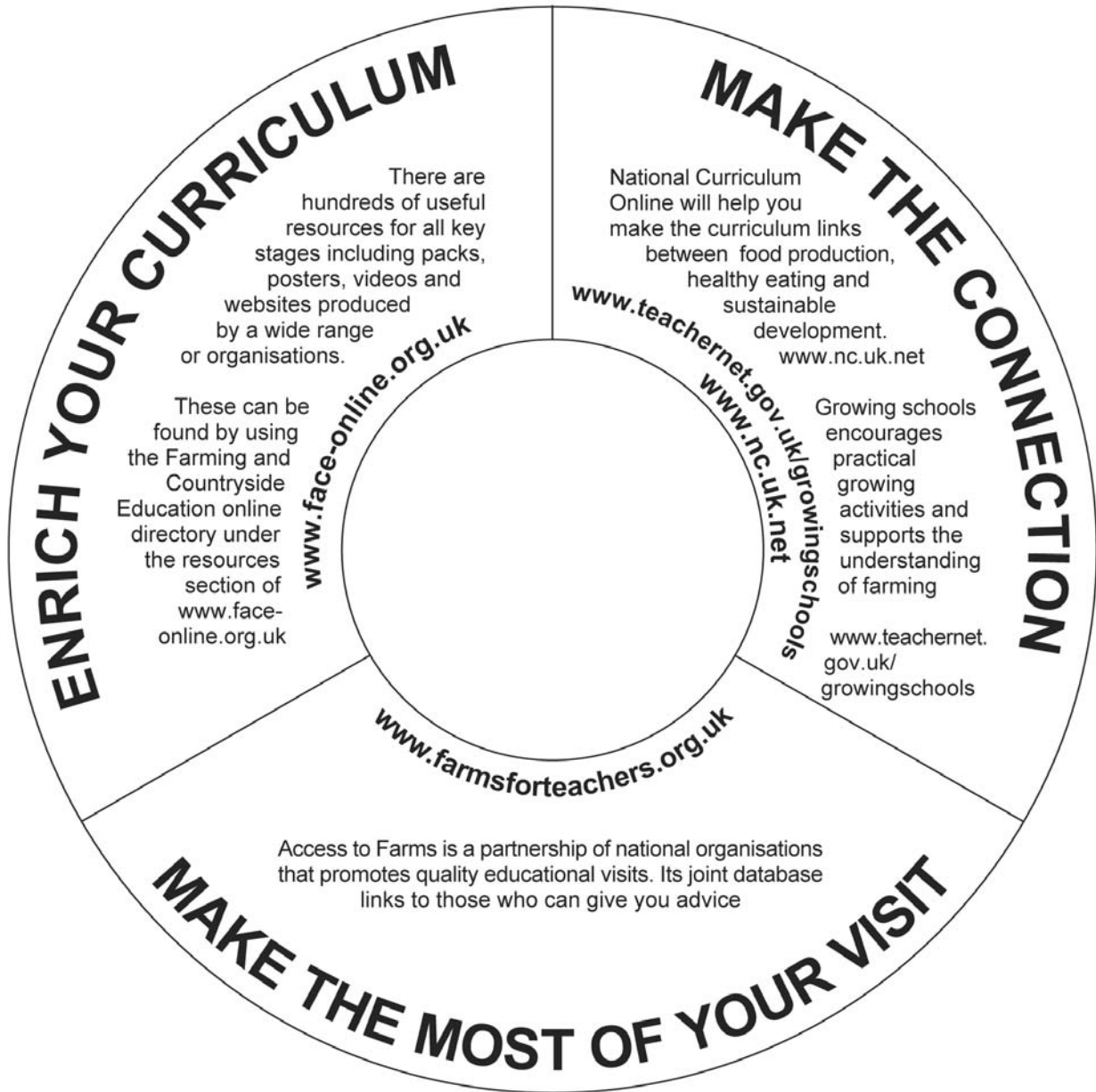
Landscape management

Learning opportunities

There are many ways in which farming and growing can enrich the curriculum. Some examples have been provided by the Department for Education and Skills initiative called *Growing Schools*.



Sources of further information



Here are a few ideas to get you started.

At Key Stage 1 the farm visit can widen the pupils' first-hand experience in a whole range of **visual, tactile and other sensory situations**. Within this are the important messages of **the life cycle** and **seasonal change**. There is a wealth of opportunity for **language development** and **literacy skills**.

At Key Stage 2 the visit can stimulate and excite pupils' curiosity. It also satisfies their curiosity as they begin to **apply their knowledge and understanding** of ideas. Pupils can consider the farm as a good example of **an environment affected by human activity**, think about **attitudes to farming**, the rural environment and the **conflicts of interest** that arise.

They talk about their work and its significance and **communicate their ideas** using a **wide range of language**.

At Key Stage 3 many different subject requirements can be satisfied. For example in history, the adaptation of farm buildings over the centuries can offer first-hand evidence of **social and technological changes**. This readily promotes the skills of **handling and assessing**. Pupils can **investigate and debate** a wide range of **complex issues** and begin to understand the **environmental, social and economic** implications.

At Key Stage 4 farm visits can be used to deliver examination subjects

both academic and vocational. Contact with farmers will help to focus on the real life **application of skills within the workplace**, engaging pupils with **contemporary issues** and focusing on their role as users and consumers.

Things to remember when visiting the countryside

Risk assessment

We advise a pre-visit to our farm, during which you can carry out a risk assessment and become familiar with the site. A copy of the farm's risk assessment is available on request.

Clothing

You and your pupils should wear appropriate outdoor clothing, including sturdy shoes or wellingtons, not sandals.

Behaviour

Teachers/group leaders are responsible for the children's behaviour throughout the visit. The children should understand how to behave on the farm (see guidelines on page 7) and always follow the Country Code (see page 8).

How to behave on the farm

If you walk with your group leader, it is safer and will not frighten the animals.



The animals have a balanced diet so avoid feeding them, unless asked to.

Climbing on walls, fences or animal pens can be dangerous.



Eating animal feed could make you ill.

Do not handle farm equipment or machinery unless permitted to do so by farm staff



The Country Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.
- Guard against all risk of fire.
- Fasten all gates.
- Keep your dogs under close control.
- Keep to public paths across farmland.
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls.
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.
- Help to keep all water clean.
- Take your litter home.
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees.
- Take special care on country roads.
- Make no unnecessary noise.

www.countryside.gov.uk

Health & safety

We comply with Health and Safety Regulations, and details of facilities for handwashing, etc. are provided later. However, it is important that all children and supervising adults are aware of the correct Health and Safety guidelines.

The risk of infection is very small, but disease caused by an infection could be serious. By following simple guidelines, similar to everyday basic hygiene recommendations, the risk can be easily minimised.

The Health & Safety Executive has produced guidelines, HSE sheet AIS23 – Avoiding ill health at open farms – Advice to farmers. The supplement to AIS23 advises teachers and others who organise farm visits on controlling the risk of infection from animals which the children may have contact with during their visit.

All animals naturally carry a range of micro-organisms, some of which can be transmitted to humans, causing ill health. Some, such as the bacterium *Escherichia coli* O157 (*E coli* O157) cause infections which can potentially cause disease, which may be particularly acute in young children.

While the hazard from infection resulting from a farm visit is real, the risk can be readily controlled by following sensible steps which will help make your visit safe, healthy and enjoyable.

Before your visit:

- read and understand the advice in AIS23, and discuss visit arrangements with the farm management. Assure yourself that the facilities provided match the recommendations in AIS23
- decide what the ratio of pupils to teachers/assistants/parents should be, using advice from the Registration and Inspection Unit of your local authority social services department. As a general rule, the ratio of supervisors to children should be 1:1 for children under 1 year old, 1:2 for children between 1 and 2 years old, 1:3 for children between 2 and 3 years old, 1:4 for children between 3 and 5 years old, and 1:8 for those between 5 and 8 years old. If supervision levels are less than this, you should not allow direct contact with the animals for children under eight
- discuss with the supervisors, who may be parents or staff of the school, creche, etc. their role during the visit. They must understand the need to make sure that the children wash, or are helped to wash, their hands thoroughly after contacting animals, and follow the other rules suggested below

- discuss with pupils the rules for the visit, stressing that they must not eat or chew outside the areas in which you permit them to do so
- make sure that pupils wear appropriate clothing, including sturdy outdoor shoes (not sandals) or wellington boots if possible
- check that cuts, grazes, etc. on children's hands are covered with a waterproof dressing.

During and after the visit, make sure that the children:

- do not kiss animals
- always wash their hands thoroughly before and after eating, after any contact with animals, and again before leaving the farm
- eat only food that they have brought with them, or food for human consumption that they have bought on the farm, in designated areas, and never eat food which has fallen to the ground, or taste animal foods
- do not suck fingers or put hands, pens, pencils or crayons, etc. in their mouths
- clean or change their footwear before leaving, remembering to wash their hands after any contact with animal faeces on their footwear.

Check that the children stay in their allocated groups during the visit, and that they:

- do not use or pick up tools (e.g. spades and forks) unless permitted to do so by farm staff

- do not climb on to walls or animal pens, etc.
- listen carefully, and follow the instructions and information given by the farm staff
- approach and handle animals quietly and gently
- do not chase, frighten or torment the animals.

Remember:

- the children are your responsibility during the visit
- you should supervise them during the visit, especially during hand washing, to make sure that each child washes thoroughly. Farm staff may be able to help with this supervision
- allow plenty of time before eating or leaving so that the children do not have to rush.

If a member of your group shows signs of illness (e.g. sickness or diarrhoea) after a visit, advise them or their parent/guardian to visit the doctor and explain that they have had recent contact with animals.

Further information

Extra copies of this information sheet and supplement are available free from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA

Tel: 01787 881165

Fax: 01787 313995

Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk

©HSE