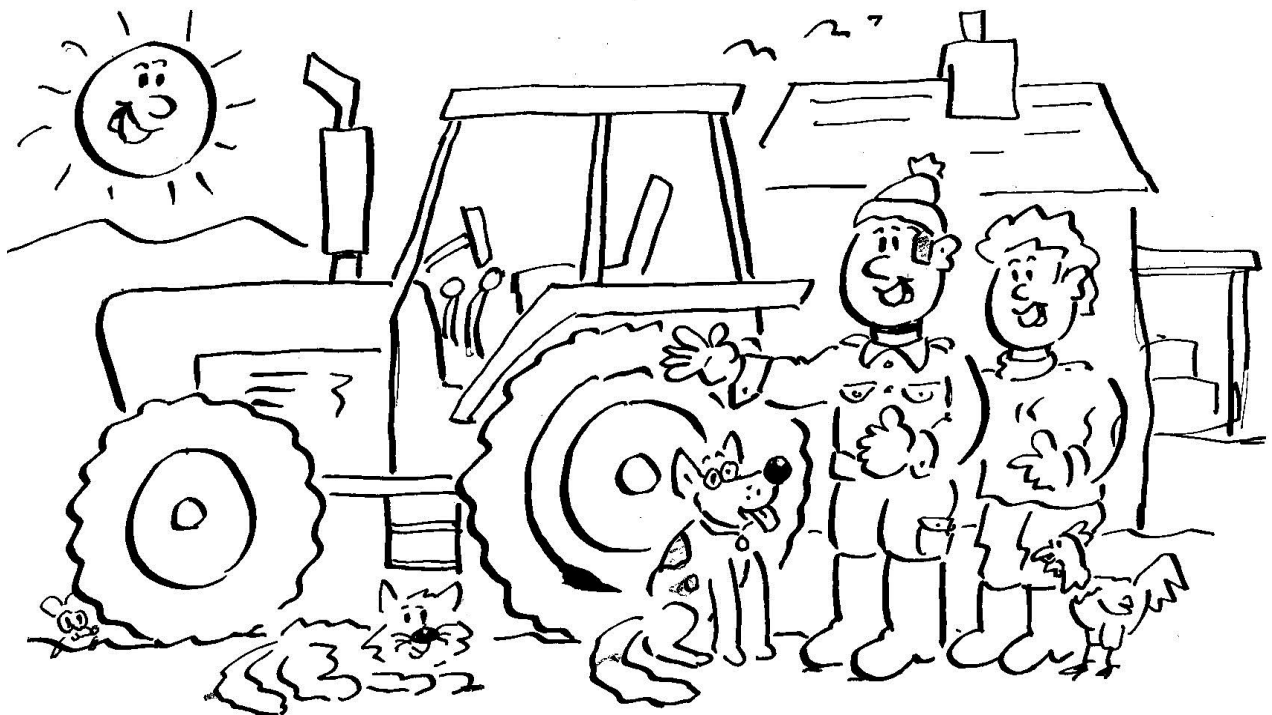




Farming and  
Countryside  
Education

# Farmers Visiting Schools

**A guide to help you get started**

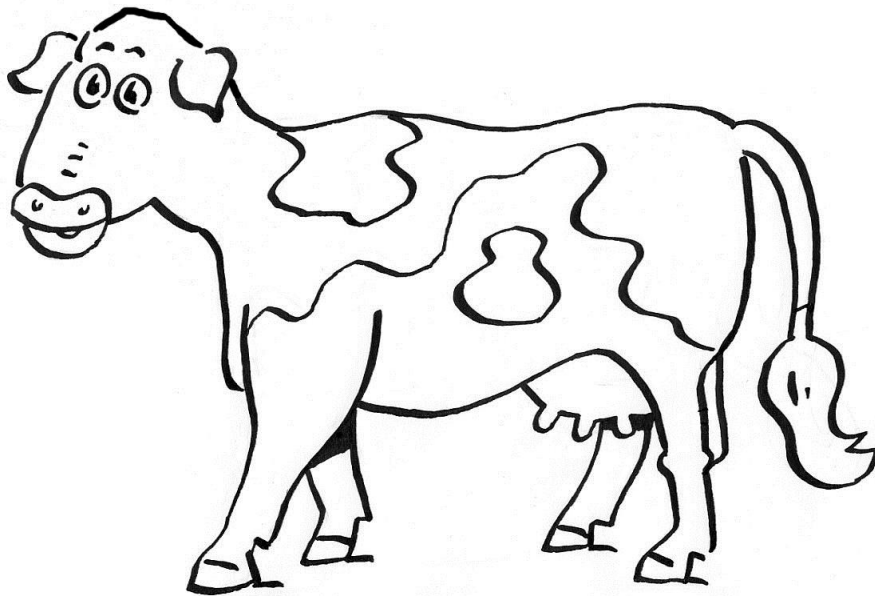


## Introduction

This pack is designed to give you a few hints and tips when visiting schools. You may have been asked to go in to a school already. Or you may like to make the initial approach and offer to go in to a school to do a presentation or help with an activity. Whatever the situation it is important to plan what you are going to do.

The most important point is that everyone is safe and enjoys themselves whilst learning about farming and the countryside. If the session goes well it is highly likely you will be asked to visit again. It is also likely that other schools will hear about what you are doing and invite you in to their school.

Some children may never have met a farmer before and will be delighted to hear about your farm and the work you do. To some children the simplest facts can be a real revelation. If you can engage the pupils and motivate them about the importance of farming and the countryside, it is time well spent.



## Making Contact with Schools

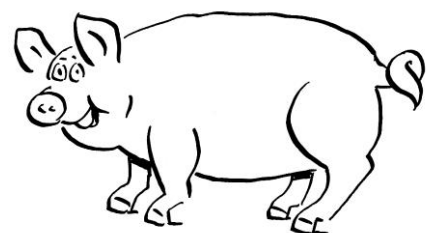
Sometimes a school may contact you. This makes the process a little easier as you can start discussing with the school what they require.

Having said this, many schools are unaware that there are some farmers who are willing to visit schools. In these situations the farmers need to make the initial contact. There are several ways to do this;

- **Personal contacts:** you may know a teacher, governor or parent of a child at a school. Discuss your ideas with these people. Follow it up by speaking to the head teacher or class teacher.
- **Your own children's or grandchildren's school:** talk to the class teacher. More often than not they would welcome the idea.
- **Contacting a school:** if you have no direct contacts you may like to write a short letter to the school followed by a telephone call. Teachers are busy people so always follow up with a phone call to remind them.
- **Farming and Countryside Education (FACE):** contact your regional consultant. They will keep a list of farmers willing to visit schools. If a school contacts them asking about speakers they can then match you up with a nearby school.

There are no rules to say how many visits you should do – this is entirely up to you and your availability. Some farmers visit their local school once a year. Others do several presentations in a year. One visit is better than no visit so don't think you have to do lots.

When contacting a school it is always easier if you know what you can offer and when. If you just offer to "do something" a teacher with little knowledge of farming may not realise the scope of your expertise and the range of things you could talk about.



## Preparing for your visit

Think carefully about what you want to do when you visit the school. Have a plan but be prepared to be flexible. It is worth considering the following;

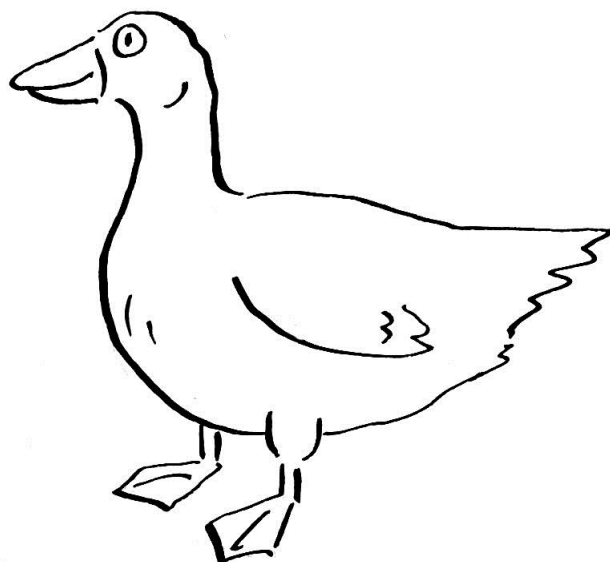
1. **How long is the session?** Your standard activity or presentation may be 20 minutes but be ready to make it shorter or longer. Have some extra questions to ask the children or extra things to show them in case you have spare time. Equally, know how you can shorten your session without making it hurried. Most young children will sit, listen and interact for about 20 – 30 minutes. Any longer and they become distracted. Older pupils can be expected to pay attention for 30 – 40 minutes (as long as it is interesting!)
2. **How many children are you working with?** Is it one class, all the juniors or infants or the whole school? Knowing numbers will help you prepare. You may need to alter things if groups are very large or small.
3. **How old are the children?** You need to know this so that you can make sure you use words they understand, you can appreciate their attention span, and you know how much prior understanding they may have.
4. **Where are you going to do your session?** Will it be in the classroom, hall or outside? Are these locations appropriate for what you want to do and will you have enough space and the right equipment?
5. **How can you engage the children?** Children like to be involved. Ask them questions, take visual aids, give them things to look at and pass around, use volunteers from the audience, build a game or quiz into what you do. Children learn when they feel safe and are having fun. Don't just stand and talk at the children. They will soon become bored and restless. Aim to engage all the children – not just those who are more vocal and answer your questions. Also make sure you can be heard by all the children.
6. **How can you establish the prior understanding of the children?** Discuss with the teacher how much the children already know. If the session is “pitched” too high or low the children will lose interest. Some groups have a wide range of children in them with differing abilities so be ready to explain things in a different way so that all have an opportunity to understand.
7. **How can you make sure everything is safe?** Think about this beforehand and when you are setting up. Make sure everything is safe, particularly if you use visual aids and presentation equipment. If you give the children anything to feel and pass around make sure it is safe to do so.
8. **What equipment do you need?** If you intend to use a PowerPoint make sure the school has the equipment you need in the room they are planning to use. Don't forget to take any of

your visual aids, memory sticks or equipment with you. If you are not familiar with technology, don't worry. Children are just as fascinated by artefacts that you bring in.

9. **What time should you allow?** Make sure you allow enough time to find the school, park and set up ready for a prompt start.

When preparing to go in to the school, make sure you talk with a teacher who knows the children. Get as much information as you can and discuss what you plan to do to make sure it is appropriate. Good preparation and organisation makes the visit to the school run a lot more smoothly.

10. **Never be left alone!** You are not responsible for the children's behaviour. There should always be at least one other adult – usually the teacher – present. The teacher should manage the children's behaviour and will also be able to intervene as appropriate when he/she sees fit. For example, a quieter child might be encouraged to participate or a more boisterous child to be calmer. The teacher knows his/her pupils individually.



## **Session Content**

Most farmers choose a topic they are confident to talk about and then adapt the session depending on the age of the children and the specific requirements of the teacher.

There are many things farmers can talk about:

### **Primary Level**

A day in the life of a farmer

What happens on the farm in ....winter / summer / spring / autumn?

Life cycles

Wildlife on the farm

Where does your food come from?

Foods in season

Sustainable food (food miles, packaging, seasonality)

Spring life on the farm

The list goes on.....

### **Secondary Level**

Science of farming

Farming as a business

Animal welfare

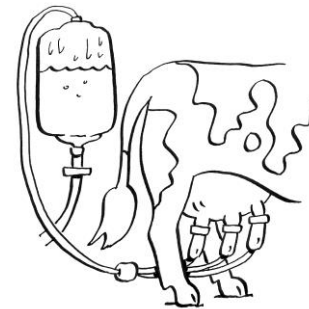
Animal genetics

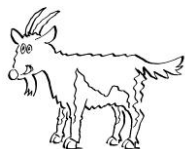
Soil sampling

Sustainable farming practices

Careers in farming

Secondary schools tend to have much more focused topics compared to primary visits. Ask the teacher to send you some bullet points describing basic areas to cover or ask for a copy of their lesson plan or curriculum specification. Your FACE co-ordinator will be more than happy to suggest some ideas. You may like to browse through some of the websites suggested later on in this pack.





### After the session

Once you have been to the school it's good to maintain the relationship. Maybe you might like to email the school photographs of events on the farm or things that happen during the different seasons. This sustained contact will mean that your visit is not forgotten and that the teachers and pupils keep thinking about your farm and the countryside throughout the year.

Many children think farming is something that happens when the sun shines!! Regular updates from a farmer would help them understand this is not the case.

Some schools enjoy their visit from a farmer so much they are then persuaded to visit a farm to see for themselves. This is something you may offer but if not, put them in contact with your local FACE co-ordinator who will find them a suitable farm nearby.

Your FACE consultant may also be able to provide you with some resources for the teacher. Again, this is useful as it sustains the interest and helps the teacher integrate food, farming and countryside related topics into their teaching.

Immediately after your session it's worth asking the teacher for feedback or to fill in a short evaluation form. This will help you decide how successful your visit was and how you may like to adapt it for future sessions. If the teacher is busy after your session and can't fill your evaluation form in leave it with them with a stamped self addressed envelope and they will return it to you.



## **Expenses and costs**

Some farmers charge for their visits, some don't. This decision comes down to your own personal situation. Schools will always be attracted to something that is free or low cost.

## **Safeguarding**

All schools have a responsibility to consider the safety of their pupils particularly when strangers are invited in to the school.

As long as you aren't left alone with the children or are not visiting on a regular basis you do not require any police checks / certification. Do check the school's policy on this before finalising a visit.

## **Taking animals into schools**

If you are considering taking animals into schools consider the welfare of the animal and the safety of the children and school staff. Children enjoy seeing and touching animals but the situation must be well managed. If animals are taken in to schools ensure the correct risk assessments are completed and everyone in school washes their hands with soap and running water after coming in to contact with the animals. Ensure areas in which the animals were kept or viewed are thoroughly cleaned following the visits. Animals should not be taken in to areas where people will be eating at a later time.

It is also advisable to check the latest guidance on livestock movements. This information can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/farm-animal-welfare-during-transportationor>

## **Further help**

If you are keen to work with schools but have more questions, don't hesitate to contact your local FACE co-ordinator. Their details are listed on <https://www.face-online.org.uk/regional-education-consultants> .

From time to time FACE consultants may run training for farmers which would be useful to attend.

If you decided to host school visits at your farm you may also be interested in the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme. This course provides basic training for the host farmer as well as looking at the suitability of the farm as a visit location. More information on CEVAS can be found at <http://www.visitmyfarm.org/cevas-farmer-training>





## Websites

[www.face-online.org.uk](http://www.face-online.org.uk)

[www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk](http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk)

[www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)

