



It's been a great year on the Ashleigh Farm and although the work doesn't stop over the holidays, the end of a school year gives us the chance to look back on what we've achieved.

Growing



Obviously a large part of our work on the farm involves growing and this year is no different as our children have enjoyed tending to the raised beds which have been a huge success. With funds raised by the farm in the 2016-17 academic year we were able to replace 3 of the original raised beds making a total of 7 large raised beds. These have been worked on by different groups of children throughout the year, however, most of the preparation and maintenance has been done by our Nursery children and the planting up by Year 3 during their work on the Farm to Fork topic. We have already harvested a good crop of potatoes, courgettes, raspberries, strawberries and

gooseberries, however, we have been disappointed with our tomatoes and cucumbers this year. We think this is due to the extremely warm weather recently.

Chickens

This year saw our flock grow when we were made aware of some chickens which could no longer be cared for by their elderly owner. After some careful work to keep the two sets of chickens separate so they could get used to each other, we successfully integrated the two flocks and they now live happily together. We have begun allowing the chickens to roam around the whole farm area during the day meaning the eggs that you buy from our farm stall are truly 'free range'. They obviously enjoy this opportunity as at times they can be extremely difficult to put away at the end of the day. Sadly, we lost 2 chickens due to illness this year, however, the remaining chickens continue to love being on the farm and are regularly laying between 7-10 eggs per day.



Lulu, Chuck and Roody

Lulu (Rabbit), Chuck and Roody (Guinea Pigs) continue to enjoy life on the farm as well. Lulu in particular loves being visited by the children and Chuck and Roody enjoyed being the focus of a Year 2 Design Technology project this year where the children designed and built ramps to help them move around their run. Following last year's annual check-up by the vet we were advised to keep an eye on Lulu's weight and after her most recent check-up I am happy to report she is now at a more suitable weight for a rabbit of her age and breed.

Ashleigh Farm Funding

One of the original goals of the Ashleigh Farm project was that it would run in a way which would mean it could pay for itself (animal feed, bedding, repairs, external visitors). Whilst we have received a number of kind donations from local businesses and organisations this year we are happy to report that this is looking more and more possible and we are excited for the future. We began the school year with a very kind donation of £400 from the Waitrose green token scheme and were then so grateful to be nominated for an Aviva community award from which we received £1000 to go towards the future developments of the Ashleigh Farm site. In addition to this the annual farmers' market set a new record of £721 profit. The constant trickle of egg money taken from our Ashleigh Farm stall on the playground means that the farm has now recovered all the money it spent originally to set up the chicken run and polytunnel and we are beginning to look at how we can move it forward and increase opportunities for children at the school.



The Royal Norfolk Show – The Food and Farming Challenge

This year we were lucky enough to have the opportunity to take the whole of year 3 to the Norfolk Show. This gave them the opportunity to see the huge importance of agriculture to Norfolk as well as knowing where their food comes from and where possible supporting local farmers. As part of the trip we entered a wheel barrow display in the Food and Farming Countryside challenge event. We were thrilled to come away with a second place plaque and rosette at the end after facing some stiff competition from a number of other schools. As part of the judging some Year 3 children spoke to the judges about their 'Farm to Fork' topic and in particular the work they had done on the farm to help care for the animals and grow the produce which was displayed.



Developing the Farm Area

After a very cold and wet winter accessing and working in the farm, the area became increasingly muddy and slippery. As a result, we decided to add a gravel path. We must say a huge thankyou to the team of volunteers that spent three weekends working on it, as well as Longwater Gravel for the generous discount on the

materials. This path not only helps with the appearance of the farm it will dramatically improve the opportunities to use the farm during the winter months. During the summer holidays the farm area will be extended to include the orchard which has already been planted next to it. We then plan to move the runs used for the small animals into this area and include some seating for children to sit and work quietly. As well as this we have made plans to remove two of the older sheds which are currently used for storage and rebuild them as one larger shed which will hopefully be used as a space for children to work as well as storage of gardening equipment.

Can you help?

An important part of the Ashleigh Farm has always been the involvement of volunteers. It is such an exciting project which we believe has huge potential and has only been possible thanks to the work of the many parent volunteers and of course children. We are now looking to grow a new team of Ashleigh Farm volunteers! No specific skills or experience are required, just enthusiasm and a desire to continue the development of this exciting project! Volunteering might involve working with or without children or simply pottering! If you are interested please email kfinch@ashleighprimary.net or speak to Mr Finch directly to let him know particular afternoons you think you are able to help and whether you have already completed a DBS check with the school.