

CASE STUDY

THE FERNCUMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

ENTERPRISING FARMERS' MARKETS



BIO FARM
LEARNING PLACE

At The Ferncumbe Primary School, farmers' markets have, for some time now, been important events on the school calendar and in the children's curriculum, bringing together the different strands of their Food for Life work.

So how have they integrated farmers' markets into the children's learning and the school calendar? And what are the benefits to the school?

Sometime ago, The Ferncumbe embraced Food for Life's School Farmers' Markets project – it was thought to be a means by which to enhance and provide a focus for the growing at school. Hosting farmers' markets has done that, and more.

Their farmers' market journey began with a Mother's Day themed market. The coordinator at the time was nervous that the daffodils the children had planted wouldn't be ready on time, not enough customers would turn up and her efforts and those of the children would be lost. Nothing could have been further from the truth! The market was heaving with people, all jostling to buy the daffodil their child had grown, buy some pea plants from the Year One stall or fresh eggs from a local school's stall. It was a huge success.



The Ferncumbe continue to have two markets per year, one in the summer and one in the spring. These dates are set a year in advance so help to inform what is grown in the garden. The summer market follows on from their Sports Morning and Family Picnic, so the customer-base for the market is present. They sell plants that they have grown, including tomatoes, potatoes, peas, beans, lettuce and peppers, and make between £150 and £200 per market.

Growing and selling their own produce also gives them the chance to bring in other learning opportunities such as thinking about the 3 P's – packaging, pricing and presentation – all essential when trying to make a profit! This real-life enterprise project provides opportunities for pupils to calculate costs of production and profit margins, demonstrate their design skills in promoting the markets, handle money, engage with their customers, and more.

Farmers' markets have provided a real focus for growing at The Ferncumbe. The children are involved in the whole market preparation process from preparing the beds, planting and watering the crops they plan to sell, to researching packaging ideas, pricing and developing recipe ideas to give away with their garden produce. Science, DT, Maths, computing, literacy and even languages are taught through the market planning process. Even their German lessons in Year 5 and Year 6 are given a market focus for learning vocabulary - a great cross-curricular link!

From past experience, The Ferncumbe finds that some things sell better than others. Potatoes go down a storm with parents (especially when they're presented in a brown bag and tied with a label made by the children!). Also, daffodil pots in tissue and ribbon around Mother's Day always make popular gifts.



With the help of Food for Life, they have built a relationship with lots of outside producers from the local area who come and sell their produce too. This usually includes vegetables, cheese, bread, honey, preserves and pickles and sausages. Pupils help their visiting producers to unload their goods and to set up their stalls at the market.

The Fercumbe is a small school, so a concern about attracting enough customers in the first instance was very understandable. By engaging the whole school in the preparation of the market, and with each year group having its own stall,

The Fercumbe ensure that all parents hear about the market and are keen to attend to support their children's work. Year 5 take the lead with assisting local producers on market day with setting up their stall and serving customers whilst other year groups make, grow and bake for their stalls.

In addition, the local community are also invited, with leaflets being delivered by the children during the week leading up to each market. One year, they left a message and some tomato plants with neighbours as a thank you for putting up with any inconvenience caused by all the extra parking nearby for the market. It did the trick as they had a return letter with a photo of the flourishing plant... one very happy and touched neighbour!

With initial uncertainty about foot-fall at their market, The Fercumbe did not charge local producers a stall fee at their first market. They suggested to stallholders that, should they sell particularly well, a donation to the school would be gratefully received. As the market was so well attended, this proved very fruitful as some stallholders donated more than the £5 that Food for Life recommends as a stall fee.

The money raised at each market is ploughed back in to the school's Food for Life work. Decisions about how it is spent are made by the School Council and have included spending money on fencing to keep the chickens off the growing beds, to stop them eating the produce!

Further future plans are to extend their growing area to grow more produce to sell and create their own packaging maybe. The learning opportunities are endless!

TOP TIPS:

If you are considering putting on a Farmers' Market, contact Food for Life:

- to book yourself on the next Farmers' Market training session
- for a list of local producers to contact
- for dates of other schools' markets for you to visit