



The Willows Primary School

Growing Outside

Tuesday 20th April 2021

Weather: A bright spring day.

Growing Outside

Children: Year 5

Year 5 Allotment Project - Farming.

This week was the start of Year 5's Allotment Project. I asked the children to think like farmers. To begin they had to pair 6 items I had left on the table. Corn with breaded chicken, grass with beef burgers and haricot beans with a tin of baked beans. Chickens eat corn, cows eat grass. Haricot beans, along with tomatoes are turned into baked beans. It is important everyone understands how our food reaches our plate and where it begins.



As well as growing crops for us to eat, farmers grow crops for animals to eat such as the corn for the chickens.



We discussed 2 different types of farming.
Arable - Only crops are grown on the farm
Pastoral - Farming aimed at producing livestock e.g. A dairy farm.

I showed the children a Google map of the school. They could see exactly how much land, the school had. Everyone could show me the quad on the map. This was a small rectangle in the middle of the school. I took the children out onto the field so we could look at the land better. When a farmer decides what they will use their land for, there are many factors to consider. As we walked around the field I asked them to have a think about what we could do with the land, if the school was a farm.

Did they have enough room for livestock? We would need double the space as the animals would need to graze. We also need a field with grass growing, ready for when they have eaten all the grass on one field.

Was the ground suitable for crops? Does the field get water logged? Different crops also like different types of soil. They would also need to consider the weather such as cloud cover and the wind.



The children had some fantastic ideas.

- Extra windows could be added to the school buildings, and they could be used as greenhouses.
- The forts could be taken down, and the parts used to make poly tunnels.
- Poly tunnels could be placed on the concrete areas behind the school, such as behind the dining room. We could use large planters inside them.
- Cows could be kept on one side of the field,

leaving the other field empty to grow grass.

- The concrete playgrounds could be pulled up, and turned into grass for livestock or ground ready to plant crops.
- Lots of the children wanted to plant apple trees and have an orchard.

We also discussed the differences between organic and non organic farming. Organic farming can be healthier but provides less crops for the growing population.

So many fantastic ideas for alternative uses for the school. The majority of children agreed that planting crops would be the best use of the land.

Now we needed to plant some crops of our own.

Tool Safety! Back in the Quad there had been an accident! One of the vegetable beds had caution tape wrapped around it! What had happened? The children found a pair of secateurs open on the soil, a spade in the ground and a severed finger (fortunately it was fake)! The children made guesses at what had happened. We discovered that someone had been using the secateurs, dropped them in the bed and someone else chopped their finger off with spade whilst they were digging.



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➤ I explained to the children that when we use garden tools we have to be very safe, or real accidents like this could happen. I showed them different tools for the garden. We all discussed how to use them and what could happen if we used them incorrectly. Tool safety is very important. These are some of the things we discussed.

- No running with tools.
- No swinging tools in the air.
- Don't leave tools on the ground, always put them away.
- Be aware when other people are working around you and don't use hand tools near someone using larger tools, such as spades and rakes.

The quad is quite large but we don't have a lot of growing space. The children suggested using large pots and placing them around the paved areas. This is a great idea, but it could cost the school a lot of money in compost and pots.



I talked to the children about recycling, and how we can use containers from food such as grape punnets and meat trays if washed out. Another fantastic idea is vertical gardening or a wall garden. You can build trellis or another structure to attach bottles, with our vegetables planted in.

I showed the children pictures and different ideas of how to cut a milk bottle. They worked in pairs to design their bottles. Unfortunately the scissors wouldn't cut the bottle for one group so the children used trays instead. We can transfer any seedlings to milk bottles if needed next time I visit.



Next we looked at the seeds. We had a great selection. Spinach, peas, runner beans, French beans, salad leaves, cucumbers, pumpkins and many more. The children decided they would like to plant their favourite. It would also be nice for the school to have a variety of plants growing. The children chose tomatoes, pumpkins, lettuce, broccoli, various beans, peas, peppers and cucumbers. Whilst some children sowed their seeds, other children watered the garden and topped up the potatoes with more compost.



Everyone also made sure to give their seeds a drink of water. I explained that some of the plants will need to be planted in the ground or moved to larger pots as they grow. I asked the children to start collecting any large bottles we could use to plant in.

What a fantastic start to the allotment project. Year 5 worked very hard and had some great ideas. Well done everyone!

Dawn.