



**Country Trust**  
Where children learn and grow

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## Report and application for The Nineveh Trust

November 2017

We are so grateful to the Trustees of The Nineveh Trust for the very generous donation of £2280 made in December 2016 towards our Farm Discovery visits programme in Kent. Please find below details of how your donation helped, an overview of The Country Trust's work in 2016/17 and our application for support in 2018.

### The Country Trust

The Country Trust is a national education charity which has been quietly transforming the lives of disadvantaged children for nearly 40 years. With the help of supporters and funders, we bring food, farming and the countryside alive for around 25,000 children each year, children from disadvantaged areas, and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. We do this through three key programmes: Farm Discovery day visits to real working farms, Countryside Discovery residentials and yearlong Food Discovery programmes.

### Our Mission

We share a vision with others in our sector that ALL children should have an inspiring educational experience of the working countryside, however The Country Trust's particular mission is to focus on those children least able to access it. Primarily children from areas of urban and rural deprivation, but also children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEN/D) and those facing other challenges that limit their opportunities. We help to address poverty of opportunity, bringing rich experiences - vital for building language, literacy, self-confidence and self-esteem - to children who lead limited and often chaotic lives.

### Our operating context - the need

We focus on primary schools with a greater than average percentage of children from low income families and therefore eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) - the national average is 25.4% using the Ever6 measure. One in five children in Britain live in poverty, defined by the EU as follows: *Children living in relative poverty are excluded from the activities and opportunities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people.* As a result, by the time they start school, children from the poorest families and therefore eligible for FSM, have already fallen behind in language and personal development. As they grow up they are twice as likely to have <sup>1</sup>Special Educational Needs, <sup>2</sup>twice as likely to be obese, <sup>3</sup>three times as likely to have a mental health problem and are <sup>4</sup>just under half as likely to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than children growing up in more affluent homes.

The spending watchdog<sup>5</sup> says schools will have to find £3bn in savings by 2019-20, amounting to budget cuts of 8%, whilst expectations of attainment continue to grow. Head teachers and school governors are having to make very difficult decisions, with the trips and visits that provide vital time for personal development away from the classroom often the first casualty. A 2016/17 report by the House of Commons Education and Health Committees on Children and young people's mental health –the role of education warns that: *"This apparent trade-off between a focus on achievement and on well-being was criticised as a false dichotomy. Rather*

<sup>1</sup> SEN and their links to poverty- Rowntree

<sup>2</sup> Childhood Obesity a Plan for Action HM Gov

<sup>3</sup> Centreforum Commission on children and young people's mental health

<sup>4</sup> [gov.uk/SFR62\\_2016](http://gov.uk/SFR62_2016)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/financial-sustainability-in-schools/>



*than balancing academic achievement, many witnesses felt that well-being increased pupil's capacity to learn, by lessening anxiety, improving confidence and equipping them to deal better with stress"*<sup>6</sup>

This issue is exacerbated for children from low income families where activities and opportunities may not be available at home either. "UK research has shown that there is disparity in children's access to high quality natural environments. All children benefit from opportunities provided by access to outdoor space but these benefits are not equally distributed. Whilst children have universal rights and needs, poverty places severe limits upon the extent to which they can be recognised"<sup>7</sup> With the help of generous funders and supporters, we can help to address poverty of opportunity.

The countryside is a precious, shared asset, managed by a few but sustaining us all and yet 68% of children on our Yorkshire residentials had never visited the countryside before (please see our Residential evaluation report <http://www.countrytrust.org.uk/what-we-do/reports> ) Thousands of disadvantaged children may never discover the countryside, understand how our decisions shape what happens there, and importantly learn that it's their place to enjoy too, without our help to bridge the gap.

#### **Our outcomes**

This is the difference we want to make across all our programmes:

- Children, their parent helpers and teachers are more knowledgeable and more aware of food, farming and the countryside
- More farmers are able to share their love and passion for what they do
- Children are more engaged with formal education as a result of increased 'real world' and interactive learning experiences
- Children are better able to make informed decisions about the food that they eat.
- Children feel more responsible for their own and the wider environment
- Children have more opportunities to develop and display non-cognitive skills, to experience patience, wonder and success.
- Children feel more at home in the countryside and greenspace.
- More teachers see the potential of countryside as a learning resource and feel more confident to use it to enhance their teaching

We offer transformational experiences that enrich children's lives, helping them to learn and grow, building a rich bank of experiences which fuel imagination and vocabulary, increase self-esteem and resilience, enable them to ask questions and make informed decisions about food, and to have fun outside. We teach children life skills - to grow vegetables, and to cook cheap, healthy, delicious meals. We bring together communities who would otherwise never meet.

#### **The difference you made:**

Thanks to the Trustees of The Nineveh Trust, we were able to take x4 classes (110 children) on the following Farm Discovery visits:

Two classes of children from Sunny Bank Primary school, Sittingbourne and one class from Ashford Oaks Primary, Ashford (FSM 48.9%) went on three separate visits to Romshed Farm, Sevenoaks.

The children had a wonderful time learning all about pigs, sheep, cows, chickens, their care and their roles in the food chain. They had the opportunity to get into the pens with the animals and to stroke and feed some of them, including bottle feeding a baby lamb. They watched Sam the sheepdog doing his job of rounding up the sheep which is always a favourite. One group had the amazing experience of witnessing a lamb being born.

<sup>6</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhealth/849/849.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Thomas and Thompson 2004 <https://www.demos.co.uk/files/ACHildsPlace.pdf>



*"We have some children who find it difficult to learn in the school environment- this was a perfect day for them in every way. They learnt a lot about farm life and where their food comes from. I have been a teacher for over 15 years and been on many visits- but this was definitely the best trip I have ever done- thank you!" Teacher, Sunny Bank Primary*



One class of children from Ashford Oaks primary school visited Horlands Farm, Marden

The children had a fantastic time learning all about cows, sheep, pigs and had the chance to feed some of the animals. They got to climb up onto a tractor and work together in a chain to round up the sheep. They got to help out the Farmer, learning about the jobs that they need to do- they helped collect apples and pears at the orchard and spread hay in the barns for the animals.

*"The visit was superb. The children were all engaged and excited by the activities. Each activity was the perfect amount of time which meant the children could experience different aspects of farm life without becoming disengaged. The activities were very hands on which suited the children brilliantly.*

*My class has needs including English as an Additional Language and Special Educational Needs (including autism and select mutism). All children were given the opportunity to join in in ways they felt comfortable. The trip brought out the best in the class and the boy who is usually a select mute was the chattiest I've ever seen him!" Teacher, Ashford Oaks Primary*

