

A close-up photograph of two young kune kune pigs looking through a wire fence. The pig on the left has a blue ear tag. The background shows a wooden fence and greenery.

KUNEKUNE
PIGLETS
ANDY
PANDY

"The pigs are beautiful"

Grace Garden School pupil



GRACE GARDEN SCHOOL

Welcomes Their New Animals

It is the 9th August... The long-awaited moment has arrived for my farm colleague Malcolm and I to collect our new piglets. With neither of us experienced in pig handling, we were not sure how this adventure was going to play out on this warm summer evening.

After an interesting and peaceful walk around the farm to see the breeder's pigs, which came in all sizes, colours and formats, we were ready to take home the piglets destined for Grace Garden School. "Just pick them up and hold them tight," instructed the lady. This sounded like music into my ears. However, the reality was that both piglets squealed their heads off all the way from their home to the van. Perhaps ear muffs would have been a good idea. Somehow we got them in and enjoyed the piggy mumbling from behind our seats as we drove back to Bristol.

After a similar noisy scenario at Grace Garden School, carrying them to their pen, they received a good scratch and quickly settled into their new home without further protest.

Two months later they are the happiest beings in the world and the children, staff and visitors have totally fallen in love with them. Their names are Andy and Pandy and they are a very special breed of pigs called Kunekune. They love eating grass and do not plough up the ground as much as other pigs do. Additionally, they stay half the size of any other UK breed of pigs. Above all they are good-natured and in particular like being scratched on their tummies.

The feeding and care of the pigs is in the hands of the school children. At 9.30 in the morning we see the pupils and teacher walking down the path with a bucket of pellets and anticipate the excited squeals as the piglets hear the pupils with their breakfast. Picking up the poo in the paddock is not the most popular activity, but the pupils know it is an important part of animal husbandry.

Next October they will be ready to host the boar and in 2023 we hope to have our first batch of home-reared piglets.

The other big change in animal care is that the chickens are now living in a proper chicken house, roaming around our apple orchard, picking up grubs and pecking the ripe apples that fall on the ground.

Like all the animals, they hear the rattling feed buckets from afar and know that food is on the way. The pupils are now so well engaged in the daily routine that they have taken on the responsibility of feeding, filling up



the water, collecting eggs, mucking out the house and checking that the fox hasn't broken in for some supper.

Just a week ago our goats have moved into their new abode, and multiple people have commented "I can live there!" as it has the space and the allure of a palace! Besides the care and feeding routines the goats are walked everyday by the children over the site, to the great hilarity of everyone involved. There are conflicting issues: the goats want to stay and browse those delicious hedges and their walkers want to pull them down the road to make sure they will be back in time for the next lesson. Despite the resistance, several pupils have quickly grown into excellent goat handlers.

More suspicious of the Grace Garden pupils are our cows and sheep that watch the noisy newcomers and their behavior with reserved scrutiny, keeping their distance and preferring to get on with their daily grazing. The new routines, behaviour and noise of the new animals bring a lot of engagement and interest into our school. It is, now, hard to imagine life at Grace Garden School without them.

Peter Van Vliet
Land Manager

What our students think

"Andy has a blue disc on his ear, Pandy has a pink one. Andy has a lighter markings, Pandy is darker and they have little trotters. When you approach them, they often squeal loudly. They get very excited when you shake the bucket and feed them."

**"The pigs are beautiful.
They eat grass and leaves."**

Student feedback, collected by
Class Teacher Sean King



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