



Welcome to the farm!



Contact details

The Warriner School Farm
Bloxham,
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Grid reference: SP437467

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Booking a visit

In the first instance, please telephone the farm. Visits provided under our HLS Educational Access Agreement are free but you will need to organise and pay for transport.

How to get here

The Warriner School is situated at the North end of the village of Bloxham on the A361 between Banbury and Chipping Norton. Banbury is best accessed from junction 11 of the M40.

As you approach Bloxham from Banbury: you will come to the 30mph restriction sign as you are about to enter the village. Turn left (signposted Warriner School and Bloxham Grove). Once on Bloxham Grove Road, ignore the first gateway into the school on the right hand side unless you are travelling in a coach – if so, proceed to the school bus bays and park there. For minibuses and car drivers, continue for about 100m along the road and you will come to The Warriner School's main entrance – it is a one-way car park, with the entrance through the second turning. Do not turn into the car park, instead take the track at a right angle to the road, alongside the astro turf sports area. In dry weather park on the grassed strip beside the farm track, close to the farm buildings. In wet weather park in the farm yard itself.

If you approach Bloxham from the South, drive all the way through the village passing the church, shops and public school. The Warriner School is at the edge of the village. Drive past the school and turn immediately right, (signposted Warriner School and Bloxham Grove). Once on Bloxham Grove Road, ignore the first gateway into the school on the right hand side unless you are travelling in a coach – if so, proceed to the school bus bays and park there. For minibuses and car drivers, continue for about 100m along the road and you will come to The Warriner School's main entrance – it is a one-way car park, with the entrance through the second turning. Do not turn into the car park, instead take the track at a right angle to the road, alongside the astro turf sports area. In dry weather park on the grassed strip beside the farm track, close to the farm buildings. In wet weather park in the farm yard itself.

IMPORTANT – turning space in the farm yard is very restricted – please do not bring large vehicles onto the farm premises.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COACH DRIVERS: follow the directions above, until you turn onto Bloxham Grove Road. Take the first entrance on the right, (about 25 yards, once you have turned off the main road) and park in the bus bays. The children can then walk from the bus bays to the farm by following the school road round to the left, past the school buildings and mobile classrooms and ending in the farm yard.



NB If you use a Sat Nav, you may well be given incorrect information for the very last bit – you need to turn on to Bloxham Grove Road, NOT onto Chipperfield Park Road!

What you can do on the farm

A typical 'standard' visit:

On arrival, Marie will greet the group and take them to 'The Hive', the Farm's resource room, which will act as their base for the day. If the children are having a snack, this is the best time to do so, to keep breaks in the visit to a minimum. Before going out onto the farm, the group will also be given a brief health and safety talk.

The tour of the farm usually begins with the animal house, visiting the indoor pigs and goats and having an opportunity to milk 'Gertie', the wooden goat. This is where we can discuss milk products and introduce the idea that livestock are also kept for meat and discuss the different kinds of meats we produce. We may go into the workshop to see the collection of historic implements displayed there and talk about how they would have been used, as well as having a chance to look at and talk about the tractor.

If there are any animals in the yard, we will visit them next. Depending upon the time of the year there may be cows and calves in the open-fronted sheds, ewes and lambs in the lambing barn and the donkeys in the stables.

Our fully-furnished turn-of-the-century shepherd's hut is parked in the yard and gives visitors a fascinating insight into the life of a shepherd over 100 years ago.

The chicken house is a popular stop, where all the children will get the opportunity to find out lots of interesting facts about 'Henrietta' and her friends and the ways that they avoid being preyed upon by sneaky 'Mr Fox'! Weather permitting, we may also go and visit the beehives and, if it is the right season, look at the crops growing in our arable field. While we are there, we can talk about the uses of cereals and what other crops are grown on farms in this country and in other parts of the world.

These activities will generally take up most of a morning, especially if you have had a break for a snack. If your group are staying for the whole school day, you will be able to have your picnic lunch outdoors in our Orchard Classroom or indoors in The Hive if the weather is not suitable. Following your picnic lunch, you can choose from a selection of other activities which are available to complete your day at the farm. These can be tailored to suit your particular learning objectives/ study topics or can be chosen from a number of workshops that we offer on a regular (sometimes seasonal) basis. (See below).

Some of the other activities we can provide on the farm:

- Woodland walks
- Pond-dipping & freshwater habitats
- Mini-beast hunts, habitats and identification
- Harvest visits with breadmaking and/or tasting
- Dairy farming and butter making
- Natural dyeing
- Themed visits e.g. 'Charlotte's Web'
- Drawing and painting / environmental art
- Printmaking using natural resources
- 3D projects using a range of media
- 'Darwin Days'
- Bird nestbox & feeding station construction
- 'All About Bats' and bat box construction
- 'Bug Bedsit' construction
- Biodiversity workshops
- Orienteering or scavenger / 'treasure' hunts
- Map making
- Owl pellet dissection, food chains
- Recycling & composting
- Shelter building / teambuilding
- Campfire cookery
- 'Maths is fun on the Farm' sessions
- 'The Outdoor Orchestra' – making music with farm implements
- local history visits, examining the development of the landscape
- 'Fun on the Farm Using all Five Senses'
- 'How to Become a Wildlife Detective'
- Investigating bees and their products

Do ask if there is any other particular activity that you would like us to offer as we are very happy to organise new workshops.

Facilities:

Education

All of our visits are educational. A good introduction to farms and what they are for is given in our standard farm tour. The programme of specific workshops covering food, farming, land use, environmental issues, sustainability, rural crafts and biodiversity look at different aspects in greater depth. Working together with schools and community groups we aim to promote an understanding of healthy food and where it comes from.

Our purpose-built resource room ('The Hive') in the Warriner Centre for Rural Education (WCRE) is suitable as a meeting point, for eating packed lunches or for wet weather activities and is situated as you enter the farm site on the edge of our Conservation Area.

The Orchard Classroom is an ideal area for picnicking, with bench seating, litter and compost bins and a small grassed play area.

Toilets for both sexes are situated in the WCRE and the main farm buildings. The disabled toilet is in the front lobby of the WCRE and there are accessible cubicles in both the ladies and gents toilets in 'The Hive'. Hand-washing troughs are situated in the WCRE lobby and in the main farm buildings next to the farm office.

Equal Opportunities

The farm is open for pre-arranged visits to visitors of all age groups and of both sexes. Our policy is to cater for all visitors, irrespective of their disadvantage, ethnicity, or religion, with support or special facilities being offered where necessary. Visits can be easily arranged to allow disadvantaged visitors the opportunity to gain as many experiences as is feasible, taking their individual needs into account.

All of the livestock housing and areas situated close to the farmyard are accessible to wheelchair users, as are the conservation area and the ponds. During periods of dry weather, it is also relatively easy to access some of the closer paddocks with both powered and manual wheelchairs, pushchairs and walkers.

If there is an emergency, all staff, pupils and visitors at the farm will congregate in the area of playing field behind the farm office, next to the entrance track to the farm.

Farm profile

History:

A mixed 116-acre farm, we opened in 1971 with 40 acres, as part of The Warriner School - a state secondary school in North Oxfordshire. As a purpose-built educational resource, The Warriner School Farm aims to provide practical, relevant and realistic experience of farming, land use and the rural environment.

We have a full range of livestock, grassland (including four ancient ridge and furrow fields), arable land, growing wheat, barley and peas as well as grass in rotation. There is a planted woodland area and various ponds and water habitats.

Our horticultural areas include poly-tunnels, fruit trees, soft fruits, beds and plots. We have a small collection of horse-drawn vehicles and vintage and modern farm machinery.

Our conservation demonstration area comprises a wildlife pond, a purpose-built raised dipping pond and an established hazel coppice.

Soil:

A mixture of clayey loams and Cotswold brash. Alluvial clay on the water meadows.

Landscape:

Gently rolling managed countryside with a number of ancient ridge and furrow field systems, a small wooded shelter belt (ideal for surveying 'minibeasts'), copses and a wet area populated by willow and alder.

Climate:

Temperate! (Do come dressed for the vagaries of English weather!)



Who works here:

The work at the farm is overseen by the Farm Manager, Chris Holloway, who undertakes the majority of the arable work and engineering on the farm. In addition to teaching BTEC Animal Care to our Year 10 and Year 11 students he delivers a Level 3 National Extended BTEC Certificate in Animal Management designed to support our Sixth Form students, wishing to follow a veterinary career path.

Isabel Hands, the Assistant Farm Manager is responsible for much of the livestock work and delivers and assesses vocational courses on the farm.

Philip Holt is the Animal Care Technician and helps look after the livestock.

Marie Jones delivers the school visits and the Farm's programme of outreach visits & workshops to schools and other local organisations. Marie is a qualified Forest School Leader.



Land Management / Encouraging wildlife:

Hedges – managed through coppicing or laying. Trimming then takes place on a three year rotation.

Grassland – all grassland is low input, with minimal use of artificial fertilizers. We make use of clover leys for nitrogen and farmyard manure for recycling phosphates and potassium. Low stocking densities and late hay cuts encourage ground nesting birds and allow wild flowers to set seed.

Woodland – the woodland is managed on a 20 year rotation with a range of techniques, including coppicing, pollarding, felling and replanting. Where possible, standing and felled dead wood is left in situ, to provide habitats for invertebrates, birds and small mammals. The willow trees in the wet area are pollarded on a rotation.

Arable land – 40 acres of conventionally managed arable land form part of a rotation with grassland. Our policy is to minimise environmental impact through fertilising and spraying only if it is required, using species specific sprays.

Habitats

Whilst we farm commercially, our policy is to maintain and enhance existing habitats and create new ones where the opportunity arises.

Bird boxes for a variety of species, including sparrows and barn owls have been erected around the farm. We aim to provide further wildlife habitats whenever the opportunity presents itself, including artificial nesting boxes for more species of birds and roosting sites for bats. There are 2 wildlife ponds in the Conservation Area.

Much of the land is in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This has enabled us to plant new hedges, coppice and lay others and improve the fencing. Small areas have been planted with trees. In autumn 2003 we planted 6m grass and wildflower margins around most of the arable land. Some of these margins have a mixture of plants supplying nectar and pollen, and one area is planted for the winter feeding of birds. We have split the arable fields with beetle banks of tussocky grass to provide refuge for insects which are beneficial to the crop.

Environment

Water - the farm currently operates water capture from the stable roof and the water is used for the horses and chickens. We intend to increase this practice to other farm buildings in the future.

Recycling – all paper is recycled, including feed sacks.

Mileage – we endeavour to minimise food miles. Where possible we use local suppliers and outlets for our livestock feedstuffs, we also grow as much of our own ration as possible. We use our local slaughterhouse. Our surplus weaner piglets are sold to a local farm where they are fattened before they sell the meat through their own farm shop.

Environmental Impact of Visiting groups

Habitat - there are no particularly sensitive habitats on the farm and most recover rapidly from any damage caused by the foot traffic / interaction of visiting groups. Areas that may be damaged by excessive foot traffic in very wet conditions are avoided at those times and alternatives routes taken. Visitors are shown the wildflower conservation margins, but are not taken on to them unless the group is undertaking an activity such as a biodiversity workshop, and are surveying the species present, using quadrats etc.

Wildlife – we are unaware of the presence of any species that are endangered or at risk on the farm. All visitors are briefed about the importance of replacing any animal that is being studied in its correct habitat, also to take care to put any materials such as turned logs back in their original position to avoid habitat destruction.

Children are shown how to handle animals correctly to avoid damage, particularly to delicate invertebrates, and are discouraged from keeping any animal out of its habitat for an extended period of time.

All visitors are expected to take any litter away with them, or at least to dispose of it in the bins provided around the farm. When visiting groups eat their lunch on site, separate containers are provided for compostable waste. A compost bin has also been placed in the outdoor classroom for visitors' use in addition to the litter bin.

Ground damage – if there is a risk of ground damage during or after particularly wet spells, we do not take visiting groups out for certain activities.

Pollution - visitors are encouraged to car share if they are not arriving by coach. Smoking is not permitted on any area of the site.

Involvement under Countryside Stewardship and any special designations, e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

We encourage wildlife by having field margins and beetle banks. We are maintaining our hedgerows by laying them in the traditional way, pollarding some of the older trees and coppicing areas. We have some fine examples of ridge and furrow.

We have resurfaced a stretch of the footpath that crosses our land to create a wheelchair / buggy accessible circular route to the village.

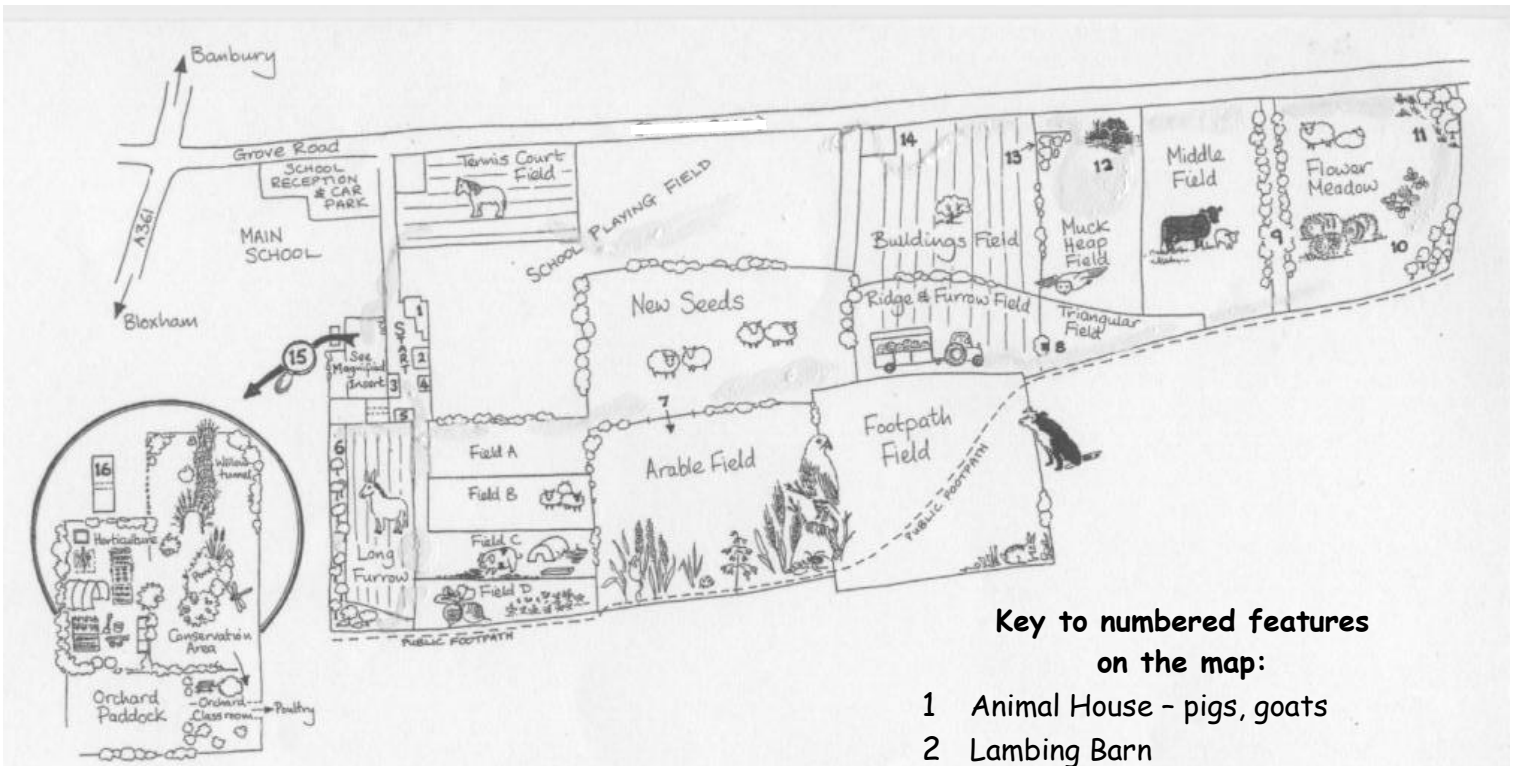
Other enterprises:

We are primarily an educational resource.

Farm eggs and honey are available to be purchased from the school reception. Periodically some farm meat products are also available.



Using the land



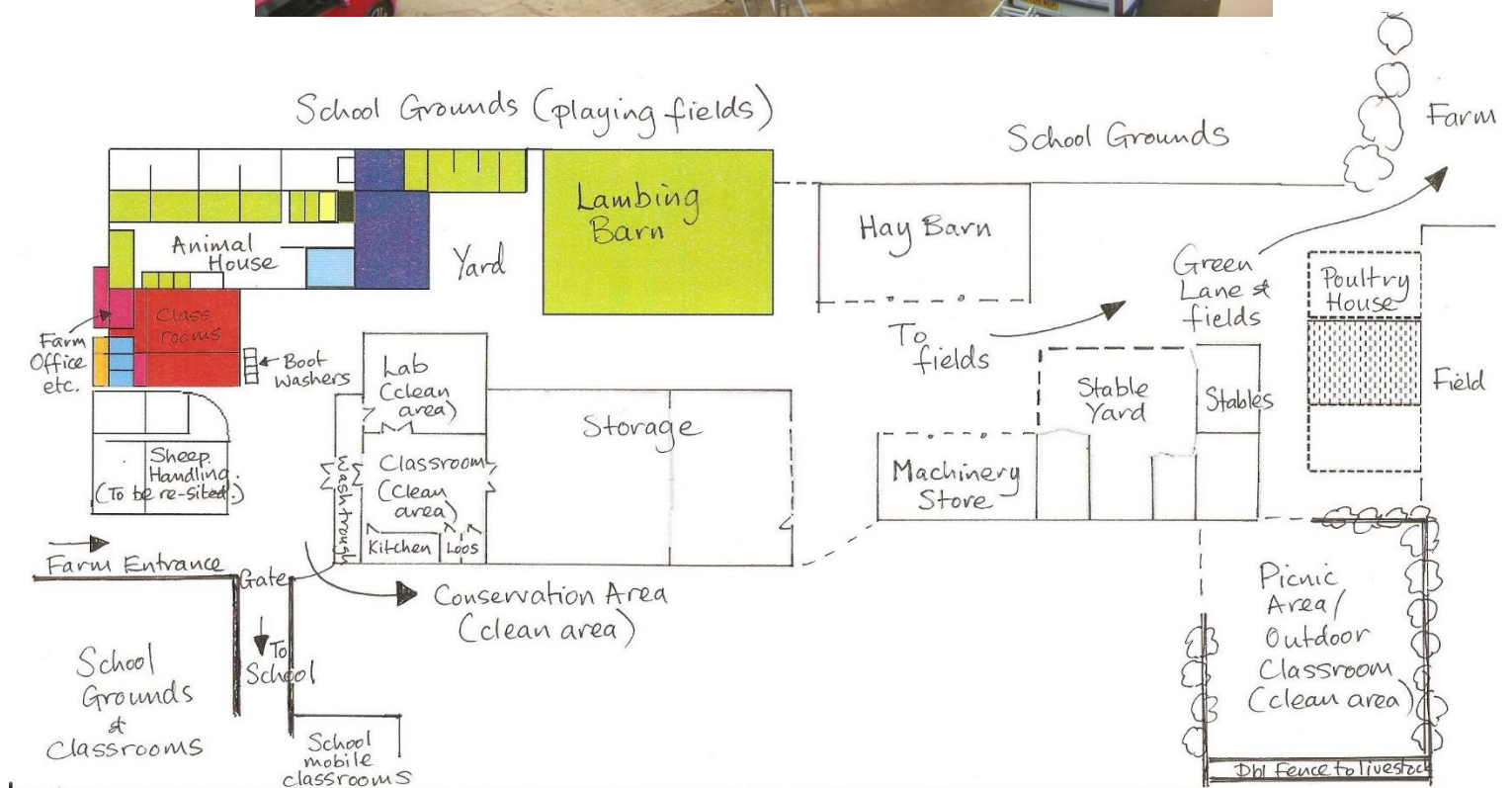
Key to numbered features on the map:

- 1 Animal House - pigs, goats
- 2 Lambing Barn
- 3 Stable Building
- 4 Goose Pen
- 5 Chicken House
- 6 Woodland Walk
- 7 Viewpoint for Arable Field
- 8 Owl Box
- 9 Double Hedge, planted in 2001
- 10 Chapman's Copse, planted in 2006
- 11 Wet Area - willow osiers
- 12 Muck Heap
- 13 Spinney
- 14 Town Farm Buildings
- 15 Conservation and Horticulture Areas (see magnified view)
- 16 Farm Classroom

This map shows the main points of interest around the area of the Warriner School Farm that is open to visiting groups. Obviously, the animals may be in different fields at different times but the main layout remains the same. Different crops are grown in Arable Field each year.

The magnified area to the left of the map has many useful and interesting features for visitors from schools. There are picnic areas, playing and shaded areas and the pond and horticulture area.

Farm buildings



Dairy goats

Some farmers keep cows to produce milk but on our farm, we keep as small herd of goats as our demonstration dairy ruminants.

We have Anglo Nubian cross goats, British Toggenburgs, Saanan cross and our Billy (Timmy) goat is a Boer goat. The Boer is a heavier breed of goat, giving us more muscled offspring enabling us to rear the offspring for meat.

The goats are kept in the fields in the summer, they are browsers rather than grazing animals and are very good at climbing up to reach tasty branches in the hedgerows. They are particularly fond of elder. In the winter, the goats come inside to live in the animal house as they are very unhappy in wet and cold conditions.

Just like dairy cattle, a nanny goat must give birth in order to produce milk. Usually, a dairy cow will have a calf every year until she is 8-10 years old. The black and white dairy cattle that you see in the countryside are usually Friesians or Holstein-Friesians. These are lean cattle that put all their food energy into producing milk. They are much larger than the cattle that we keep here on the farm



Beef cattle

Most of our cattle are pedigree Dexters. We keep 10 cows (females) and 1 bull (male). They are all either black or red in colour. There is a third colour of Dexter, the dun – a kind of beigey-brown which is quite rare.

Dexters are the smallest of the European cattle breeds, originally from Ireland. They are about half the size of a traditional Hereford and about one third the size of a Friesian milking cow.

A 'heifer' (a young female cow) can have calves after she is two years old. Forty weeks after mating she gives birth to one or rarely two calves. They stay with their mother and feed on her milk until old enough to graze for themselves.

Our cattle are grazed on our grassland during the summer months, and in winter they come into the open-fronted sheds around the yard and at Town Farm. (See number 14 in 'Buildings Field' on the map.) Through the winter they eat the grass that we preserved in the summer as hay and silage.

Our cattle are run as a suckler herd. The calves are weaned at around 8 months, when they are sold to a farmer near Towcester who fattens them for meat.



Sheep

We keep 50 ewes (females) and 2 rams or 'tups' (males). We have pedigree Lleyns, Suffolk crosses and Dorset Down crosses. They live out in the fields during most of the year, grazing our grassland.

In October the tups go in with the ewes, wearing special harnesses called 'rattles' which have a sticky crayon that marks the ewe's rump when she has been mated. We change the crayon colours at intervals so that we know when to bring in the ewes to have their lambs. Ewes are pregnant for 5 months – we aim for all of our lambs to be born in March. 6-8 weeks before they are due to give birth, we feed the ewes the barley and pea mix that we grew in the summer. This is a protein supplement to help them to produce strong, healthy offspring.

A few days before the first lambs should arrive, we bring the ewes into our lambing barn, where Isabel can keep an eye on them and assist any that have difficulty giving birth. The ewes and newborn lambs stay inside in 'mothering up' pens for a minimum of 24 hours then move to the 'hardening off' pen with the other new mums for about 3 days. When the lambs are strong enough, (usually at just under a week old) they will be moved back out into the fields.

The lambs will live on fresh grass throughout the summer and will be ready for new season lamb meat production from about the age of four months. The sheep will be shorn in early summer once the danger of frosts is past and their fleece will be sold to the wool marketing board. Although we have to shear the sheep to prevent them from getting too hot in the summer, wool is no longer a profitable product. The majority of the sheep that you see in the countryside nowadays are kept to produce meat.



Pigs

We keep Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs, a rare breed, notable for producing tasty meat and for being relatively docile.

We have 2 sows (female) who are artificially inseminated in an ongoing cycle of pregnant sows. The gestation period for a pig is 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days. Each sow gives birth to approximately two litters per year, and we hope for about 8-12 piglets in each litter.

The pigs are fed a controlled diet of commercially produced concentrated feed and rolled barley, grown here on the farm.

Our pigs are kept for sausages and bacon, which we sell periodically from the school reception. Any surplus weaner piglets are sold to a local farmer who specialises in Gloucestershire Old Spots pork.



Chickens

We have around 35 hens (female) and 2 cockerels (male) on the farm. We keep Cream Legbars as an example of autosexing breeds and White Leghorns as commercial layers. In addition we have some Light Sussex hens that are a traditional breed. Autosexing chicks hatch with different markings on the male and female birds. This enables the poultry keeper to separate or mark any cockerels with leg rings straight away, as older chicks are often very difficult to sex and there is very little use for a surfeit of cockerels.

Farmers who keep laying birds would not normally keep cockerels in with the hens as they do not need fertilised eggs. Our cockerels are kept as we incubate eggs as part of our education programme. The resulting chicks are reared to be sold on or kept as replacement birds.

Our chickens are fed a complete feed in pellet form. They also scratch about in their runs for supplementary food such as grass, weeds, seeds and worms
Most of the chickens are kept in our chicken house, which has pens with outdoor runs leading off them. It keeps them safe from predators both during the day and at night time.

We keep our layers for egg production, available from the school reception. 'Broilers' are the type of chickens that are kept for meat. We don't rear broilers here but the farm staff have been known to eat the occasional spare cockerel!



Geese

The Farm's famous 'guard dogs' are our geese. The one thing that almost all ex-students of The Warriner School remember about their time here is being terrorised by the geese, even if they didn't come to the Farm very often, as the geese used to regularly patrol the playground looking for scraps of childrens' lunches left lying around!

Nowadays, the geese are very much 'home birds' and do not stray into the school, in fact they are a very docile flock in comparison to some that have been here over the years. They are more likely to run away from children than to chase them.

Geese lay a large clutch of eggs once a year during late spring, sitting into the early summer. It takes approximately 30 days to incubate a goose egg. During that time the mother goose will not leave her nest other than for short periods to feed, drink and defacate. Sadly the current geese have had no success in raising goslings although the present gander did sire one clutch of young with his previous mate.



Donkeys

We have 2 miniature donkeys on the farm called Pedro and Matilda, they spend some of their time grazing in the fields and some of the time in their stable and corral at the end of the farm yard.

Members of our lunchtime and after school farm club look after the donkeys, mucking out, feeding and grooming them.





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