



Dear all,

At this time of extreme challenge for all, we wanted to share a future and exciting proposal and opportunity at Simon Balle All-through school!

Our ambition is to launch Simon Balle All-through school mini farm. Animals have an incredible ability to teach children (and indeed adults) so much. There are countless examples where the impact of animals has been clear, particularly working with children at times of need or vulnerability. At Simon Balle, having the farm as part of our community could reinforce and bring alive much of our values teaching and learning - responsibility, compassion, patience, kindness. It would be a farm for the all-through, positioned on the rectangle of grass by Reception and Year 1. Integrating its use through the curriculum would be easy - Early Years across areas, primary science, and learning for life. More than this, the daily life of the farm, together with the vegetable allotment area (being re-ignited now!), will provide students with leadership opportunities and another area of the school to which they belong.

Our practical plans include the following:

- Initially, we would like to welcome four rabbits, four guinea pigs, a tortoise (or two), and six hens.
- We will create a specially designed and safe fenced area, with double gates and enclosures.
- Some areas will begin empty where the farm could expand or where we could even welcome visiting animals.
- Finances have been carefully planned to include hutches and homes, food and bedding, vaccinations, storage and accessories needed (for example, gloves, brooms etc). We have links with local businesses who are prepared to help.
- I am already indebted to a number of parents who have specialist skills in this area who have helped the planning so far! Any other parents with expertise to offer, please be in touch!
- Risk assessments are in the process of being written. Hertfordshire County Council are very helpful here and risk assessments will be developed overall for the farm, and for any individual children who may need this.
- We would be asking for family support with rotas for looking after the animals at weekends, bank holidays and holidays (in all weathers!) but we hope that this would be possible and welcomed by the community. Staff will, of course, help too and again, I am indebted to a number of staff members who have offered expertise in the planning so far.

Clearly there is a huge financial implication here. As a school we want to invest in the farm, because we believe in its potential (which is shown by research too). But we are writing now, following the agreement of our plans by the finance and resources committee of the governing body, to ask if parents can support us as well.

If you can, please could you make a voluntary contribution via this [link](#). We appreciate that finances may be tricky for families right now; any contribution is welcome. To give an approximate idea of costings, if each child in the Larch were to contribute £10, this would be sufficient to go ahead with the launch (and we know that some families may be able to contribute more and some less). Gift aid is incredibly important as this will allow us to claim 25% more on each donation, where eligible.

Thank you for reading and we will keep you posted as to our progress. Our aim is to launch the farm on 1st March 2021, though obviously this will be dependent on Covid-19 and our ability to plan, build and purchase during the early spring term.

I hope that this provides an indication of our plans and that it is exciting to read! I can't include everything in this letter but I am more than open to questions.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Rachel Kirk
Vice Principal