



The Good Life

A CITY centre farm is bringing a touch of the good life to students with complex needs after being restored to working order in an initiative designed to boost life-chances.



Talk to the animals, Trinity Academy student Jack is inspired down on the farm



DONKEYS, goats, rabbits and ducks are among a host of animals helping students with learning difficulties or disabilities at Trinity Academy, Newcastle.

The Dr Doolittle approach is helping youngsters with behavioural issues develop greater empathy and trust with adults and their peers as well as newfound skills for life. Until recently the farm had fallen into disrepair becoming overgrown and unusable. Students have helped staff restore the urban farm as an invaluable resource for young people of primary school age to post-16.

The facility is proving particularly valuable for students with emotional issues, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder bringing a greater air of calm and control to their learning.

Three kids and a number of baby rabbits are the latest addition to the farm, which also sees students hone their enterprise skills by growing vegetables and collecting eggs which are offered to staff for donations.

For Joe, 20, the initiative has opened up a host of opportunities as he pursues his dream of working with horses.

"I find being with the animals a real comfort," he said. "There is no chance of arguing with animals and just being around them makes me feel happy. It is hard work but it's

great as you forget any troubles you may have. It also improves your skills as you get to do things you might not have experienced if you hadn't been on the farm."

Liam, 18, has also benefited from the bespoke project. He said: "I have been making planters and animal hutches which has been really rewarding. I'm now thinking about a career in construction."

Jack, 20, added: "I have really enjoyed working with the younger children and animals, talking to them and having fun while working. It has made me think I would like a job working in sport and I have done some work experience at a trampoline park."

Trinity Academy programme leader Marie Bennett said: "The whole ethos is about preparing young people for adulthood so they can participate actively in our society.

"The farm provides a safe, happy, non-judgmental and calm environment for learners acting as a therapeutic tool which also broadens horizons. It allows them to access fresh air, exercise and offers the chance to interact with their peers.

"Many young people feel they do not have any control over their lives. On the farm they can control the environment and we find that as they learn to talk to the animals they become more able to chat to us."

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