

MUGGINTON Cof E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mugginton

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Headteacher: Mr J Green

Dear Parents, 16th May 2022

**Regarding this term’s Chick-Hatching**

I hope you have seen our exciting chick-news on the school Twitter Feed? Hubert, Henrietta, Cassie, Rodney, Ronnie and Teemu hatched at Mrs Wallen’s house over the weekend. I wish you could have seen the children’s faces when we introduced the chicks to them this morning.

We are all very aware of the ethical considerations involved in hatching chicks. I have spoken to one or two of our families about the issue and all schools receive information regarding the dangers of Hatching Projects from Animal Aid each year. In addition, prior to ordering our school eggs we read information from the British Hen Welfare Trust and the RSPCA.

As I understand it, the dangers include:

* The hatched birds are often sent to animal sanctuaries which are already over-whelmed with animals in need of re-homing.
* Hatching projects send the message that animals are disposable objects.
* Cockerels are often unwanted and are culled after birth.
* Because the Mother-hen is not able to care for her eggs there is a danger that they are not turned which, if not done, can lead to damage to the embryo.
* The eggs may be left unattended for long periods – for example over weekends.

It is important to remember that Mrs Wallen (Infant Lead) and I have over 60 years’ vegetarianism between us. The school ethos is based upon the key tenets of a love and appreciation of the outdoors and nature and a love of animals. We would never do anything to harm these values. A similar level of ethical consideration was given to the issue of whether or not to have a school dog. Anybody who has seen Milly or Monty in school would agree that they are not in any way disturbed by spending time in school.

Before ordering eggs, we researched a number of egg-providers. We chose incredible eggs because they were best able to address the dangers of chick-hatching listed above. Incredible Eggs are established, reputable and run on a small-scale over four farms. They are rare and pure breed poultry breeders and all four branch farms have signed the Rare Breeds Survival Trust Pledge to help protect breeds from extinction and support the ‘Five Freedoms’, which ensures birds have a good life and a life worth living. Incredible Eggs branch has the necessary facilities and experience in place to responsibly accommodate all birds hatched should we choose not to keep them in our care.

Furthermore, Incredible Eggs does not support the rehoming of birds with animal sanctuaries or rescue centres and sponsors the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (established in 1973, since when no native breed has become extinct).

**The Eggs**

Eggs ordered from Incredible Eggs are incubated in professional incubators prior to arrival, where they are automatically turned, and temperature and humidity is constantly monitored and accurately controlled. In the final days of incubation, when the eggs arrived in school, the eggs should no longer be turned because a mother bird would also stop turning the eggs at this point to allow the hatchling to position and orientate itself to hatch.

Humans have been incubating eggs since at least Ancient Egyptian times because, unlike mammals, the offspring of poultry do not feed from their parents, so their needs can quite easily be met by humans.

With these points in mind, we selected Incredible Eggs and made a plan to manage the final stages of the incubation and the time after the chicks hatch.

* Staff were all clear about how to use the incubator and what to do (and not to do) when the eggs begin to hatch.
* Mrs Wallen agreed to take the incubator and eggs home over the weekend to make sure they were looked after.
* We received permission from a farmer-family to contact them in the event of an emergency.
* We prepared a hutch with a heat-lamp, food and water for the chicks to stay in when they were born.
* We received an offer from a local farming family to house the birds, free-range, on their grounds if Mrs Wallen was not able to provide their ‘forever home’ at the bottom of her garden.
* In line with our Big Idea, ‘What a Wonderful World’, we are sharing this wonderful experience with the children and emphasising both the ‘awe and wonder’ of life and also making clear that these are living creatures with an intrinsic right to a dignified life free of pain.

I hope this letter reassures you that decisions relating to chick-hatching are taken carefully and with the interests of our children and the animals themselves at heart. I am reminded of a quote from Sir David Attenborough:

‘*If children grow up not knowing about nature and appreciating it, they will not understand it, and if they don’t understand it, they won’t protect it, and if they don’t protect it, who will*?’

Thank you very much

Mr Green