



Animals in School; Policy and Guidance

Introduction:

This document details our schools policy for allowing animals in school and provides a summary of basic health and safety issues associated with handling and keeping animals.

Policy statement:

- Only animals authorised by the headteacher may be brought into or onto school premises. Before allowing any animal into school the headteacher will determine whether it is likely to present a high level of risk to anyone. Animals deemed to be high risk will not be allowed onto the premises.
- Suitable arrangements for the well-being of animals must be made in advance of them being brought into school; regardless of the length of time they are on the premises.
- Parents will be advised about any animals we keep in school.
- Wild animals taken (even if legally) from the wild, may not be brought into school in any circumstances.
- The school may choose to have a therapy animal; usually a dog. A specific risk assessment covering therapy animals will be undertaken and reviewed annually. See **Annex A** for guidance and information on keeping a therapy dog.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- The Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for animals in School.
- The headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The head teacher may delegate this responsibility to a deputy head.
- Everyone on the premises is required to abide by this policy.
- The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

Handling animals

When handling animals, we will:

- Not consume food or drink.
- Cover any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and arms with waterproof adhesive dressings.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and directly after handling animals.
- Wash hands before and after cleaning cages, tanks etc. Rubber or plastic gloves should be worn where possible.
- Keep animals away from the face.
- Restrain animals sufficiently so that they cannot damage themselves or the handler.
- Ensure dog foul (or any other animal waste) is cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult.

Allergies, diseases, parasites and injuries

The likelihood of diseases being passed on from pet animals is low. However allergic reactions from contact with animals cannot be discounted. Staff will watch for the development of any allergic reactions in pupils who come into contact with an animal on the premises. In most cases, an allergic reaction will subside once the animal and the affected person are kept apart.

- Children known to have allergic reactions to specific animals will have their access to any animal on the premises that may trigger an allergic response restricted.
- In extreme cases of an unexpected allergic reaction to an animal on the premises medical advice must be sought.

Salmonella bacteria may be carried by reptiles; good hygiene is again required. Good general hygiene and hand washing essential for risk reduction.

- Children under five may not have contact with reptiles or the environment they live or exercise in.

Any physical injuries sustained when handling animals will be dealt with in accordance with our policy for treating injuries.

Animal Suppliers

The majority of animals available through reputable suppliers present no hazards that good hygiene procedures cannot address. Unless animals are known to originate from a reliable source, it will not be possible to be confident that they are disease free.

- In order to minimise the risk to humans of disease being transmitted from animals kept in school we will only obtain them from accredited or high quality sources.

Animal welfare

If animals are not kept in scrupulously clean conditions or if they come into contact with animals from unreliable sources, it is not possible to assure they will remain disease free.

- Any animal looking sick or injured must be examined by a vet as soon as possible.

- On weekends and holidays, only staff members may take a school animal home. The animal must be kept in a suitable environment and attended to appropriately. Whoever cares for a school animal at home must have the necessary information, equipment, food and skills necessary to care for them.

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Review: Autumn Term 2024

Annex A: Therapy dogs in school

Therapy dogs aren't assistance dogs. Assistance dogs focus on their owners to the exclusion of all else. For example assistance dogs are trained to provide specific support for individuals with disabilities such as visual or hearing difficulties.

The role of a therapy dog in our school is to react and respond to people and their environment, under the guidance and direction of its owner. For example, our children might be encouraged to talk to a therapy dog to teach sensitive touch and help them be calm. Research into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- Improved attendance
- Confidence building
- Reduced anxiety that can lead to improved learning outcomes
- Better motivation
- Enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust from a therapy dog. This in turn helps students learn how to express emotion and enter into more trusting relationships.

Children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

Guidance for handling a therapy dog in school

- An ioniser will be placed beside the dogs' pen to minimise the presence of any potential allergens.
- If a dog is ill it will not be allowed into school.
- Dogs will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under supervision of an adult.
- Students must never be left alone with a dog. There must be appropriate adult supervision at all times when a dog is present with students.
- Students should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around a dog. Students should remain calm around the dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Students should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.
- Students should never go near or disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Students must not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- If a dog is surrounded by a large number of students, it could become nervous and agitated. Therefore the adult in charge of a dog must monitor the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that a dog is frightened or nervous. If a dog is displaying any of these warning signs it must be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children must not feed a dog or eat close to a dog.
- Children must wash their hands after handling a dog.