



Gaddesden Row JMI

Keeping/Handling Animals in School

Policy Review

The policy was written and agreed in September 2021.

It was reviewed in September 2025.

Next Review date: September 2026

Signature Date
Head Teacher

Signature Date
Chair of Governors

1. Objective

This policy covers the keeping and handling of animals in school and aims to reduce any risk to staff, pupils and the animals themselves.

The policy applies to all staff, pupils and visitors of the school. This policy does not form part of any employees' contract of employment.

2. Principles

- This policy outlines the basic health and safety issues associated with handling and keeping animals in schools.
- Herts County Council give more information of their Health and Safety Guidance of Keeping animals in school.
- Further guidance can be found in CLEAPS guidance documents.

3. Rationale for having pets in school.

Encouraging children to take an interest in animals can have a positive effect on them and be used to improve human and animal welfare.

School pets may:

- Motivate children to think and learn, as they have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals.
- Encourage a respect and reverence for life in children and thereby improve their relationships with their peers, parents and teachers.
- Foster a sense of responsibility in children.
- Teach children to nurture and respect life.
- Improve academic achievement.

The benefits of school pets are far reaching and can be broken down into the following development aspects:

- Cognitive development – companionship with a pet stimulates memory, problem solving, game-playing and can improve reading skills.
 - Emotional development – a school pet improves self-esteem, acceptance from others and lifts mood, often provoking laughter and fun. Animals can also teach compassion and gives relief from anxiety.
 - Physical development – interaction with a pet reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses.
- Environmental benefits – a pet in a school contributes towards the creation of a home-style environment, with all of the above benefits continuing long after the school day is over.
- Social benefits – a school pet provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encourages responsibility, wellbeing, developing social skills and focused interaction with others.
 - Pets in school also have social benefits for the school community: enhance the learning environment, creating a sense of security and family warmth for the pupils
- encourage the involvement of parents and the wider community in school activities help to promote the school as an important nurturing influence in the community.

Children naturally identify with animals, we can use the children's interactions with animals to teach them how to respect each other and how to show empathy.

By looking after school pets at Gaddesden Row School we can aim to promote good practice in animal care. Children can be taught correct procedures in handling and caring for animals under the direct supervision of adults; they can be encouraged to take a shared responsibility for the care of the animals, under direct supervision.

Children will be taught how to interact gently with any school pets we may have or have in the future. Pets and other animals in school can enhance the learning environment. Sensible measures are taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff.

4. Health and Safety

Risk assessments will be provided for any animals in school.

Children's parents or carers to sign a consent form for interaction with any animals/pets at school.

- **Physical Injuries** – There is always a danger of bites and scratches, we will aim to ensure that all animals kept at school are friendly or young so that they can be brought up in the company of children so that they are very comfortable with them.

Children will be taught how to handle any animals in school and not to poke fingers into enclosures/cages etc. When handling animals keep them away from the face.

- **Diseases and Parasites**

The likelihood of diseases being passed on from pet animals is low and good animal welfare will keep the risks minimal.

- **Allergies**

Parents/Carers to advise school of any allergies that are known so that children with allergies can be kept at a safe distance from any animals.

Unknown allergic reactions can occur which might result from handling animals or just being near them. Staff will be aware to watch for any signs such as skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties.

5. Animal Health and Welfare

A suitable environment will be provided for any animals kept in school. All animals kept in school will be protected from pain, suffering, injury or disease as far as humanly possible.

Animal areas and enclosures/cages will be kept clean and as tidy as possible.

Sufficient cover to care for the animals needs must be organised to cover weekends and school holidays.

Children will be taught how to handle any animals in the correct manner and always be reminded to be gentle and caring. Animals will be handled daily so that they are used to and happy with human contact.

Animals to be checked regularly for any signs of injury or illness and veterinary advice/care should be sought in a timely fashion if needed. Sufficient stimulation will be provided to keep any animals mentally alert and content.

Food and clean/fresh water will always be provided at regular times on a daily basis. The correct diet and amounts will be given.

Any grooming needs will be carried out as and when needed.

Food and water bowls/troughs to be kept clean.

6. Cleaning and Hygiene

Hands to be washed before and after cleaning any animal enclosures/cages.

Hands to be washed before and after handling animals.

No food or drink to be consumed when handling animals.

When handling animals cover any cuts or abrasions.

Soiled litter to be double bagged and disposed of in the large outside bin.

7. Phobias

Where staff or pupils have phobias or fears about particular animals, these will be respected and appropriate arrangements made to ensure separation.