



Pets on Site Policy

For

The Beckmead Trust

Name of Policy	Pets on site Policy
Policy Level	Trust
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Author	Board of Trustees
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Signature	Dr Jonty Clark
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Rationale for having Pets in School

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

School pets may:

- motivate children to think and to 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.

Health and Safety

Whilst pets and other animals in school can enhance the learning environment, contact with animals can pose a risk of infection including gastro-intestinal infection, fungal infections and parasites. Some people, such as pregnant women and those with a weakened immune system, are at greater risk of developing a severe infection. However, sensible measures can be taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff.

Only mature and toilet trained pets should be considered and the Headteacher should ensure that a knowledgeable person is responsible for the animal. There should be a written agreement within the school detailing:

- the types of animals allowed in the school
- how to manage them and permitted behaviour whilst on the premises
- where they can go and where they cannot go when in the school
- any insurance liability of owners and handlers

Animals should always be supervised when in contact with the children and those handling animals advised to wash their hands immediately afterwards. Animals should have recommended treatments and immunisations, be regularly groomed (including claws trimmed) and checked for signs of infection. Bedding should be laundered regularly.

Litter trays should be cleaned daily wearing disposable gloves. It should not be placed near food preparation, storage or eating areas. Wash hands immediately after removing gloves but pregnant staff members should not carry out this task because of the risk of toxoplasmosis.

Feeding areas should be kept clean and their food stored away from human food.

Children's parents or carers sign a consent form for the school pets during induction. This will allow parents to indicate whether they give consent for their child to be in contact with school pets. Any allergies are also highlighted during children's induction, which should alert us to allergies to other pets. The likelihood of diseases being passed on from pet animals is low. However, allergic reactions to mammals, birds and animals cannot be discounted. These might result from handling the animals or being in close proximity and be detected by the development of skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties. Staff will watch for the development of allergic reactions in pupils who come into contact with the animals. Children known to have allergic reactions to specific animals will have restricted access to those that may trigger a response.