

Gwladys Street Primary and Nursery School - Keeping animals in school Policy



Links To Whole School Aims

We want our school to be one:-

1. Where everyone has access to an engaging, creative and challenging curriculum that promotes a love of learning.
2. Where everyone feels safe, happy and secure in our learning community.
3. Where everyone works in partnership with the wider school community.
4. Where Golden Opportunities are provided in an Inclusive Setting.
5. Where everyone respects each other and works as a team to achieve our GOALS.
6. Where children develop lively, enquiring minds, self confidence and independence.
7. Which promotes a healthy lifestyle and positive, spiritual and moral values.

At Gwladys Street Primary and Nursery School we recognise that the presence of animals at school can provide a valuable learning experience but animals cannot be allowed to endanger pupil's safety or disrupt learning.

There should be a clear instructional or therapeutic purpose for keeping an animal in a school classroom. In addition, we recognise that instruction related to the care and treatment of animals teaches students a sense of responsibility and promotes the humane treatment of living creatures.

It is the policy of the school to notify parents of students in a classroom when an animal is being introduced.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This summary details the basic health and safety issues associated with handling and keeping animals in schools.

Further guidance is provided in CLEAPSS guidance documents L56 Housing and Keeping Animals and the Laboratory Handbook (section 14.1).

2.0 HANDLING ANIMALS

2.1 If animals will be handled, the most important issue is the maintenance of good hygiene.

When handling animals:

- do not consume food or drink,
- cover any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and arms with waterproof adhesive dressings,
- wash your hands with soap and water before and directly after handling animals.
- keep animals away from the face.

2.2 Careful handling of small mammals and other animals is most important; the animals should be restrained sufficiently so that, they cannot damage themselves or the handler.

2.3 Mammals should be handled daily if possible (unless breeding or nursing when they should be disturbed as little as possible). In this way they will normally become quite tame and accustomed to being handled.

2.4 Gloves should not normally be worn unless it is known that an animal for one reason or another is likely to bite or scratch. In this situation a pair of rubber gloves which does not particularly reduce dexterity, is a sensible precaution.

2.5 Handling small animals should always be carried out over a table or trough filled with a soft material such as sand / sawdust.

2.6 Physical injuries

2.6.1 There is always the danger of bites and scratches, and teachers or technicians should check that any animals kept / brought in are docile, friendly and gentle in the presence of children.

2.6.2 Small fingers poked towards the mouths of normally non-aggressive animals may be interpreted as an offering of food and obligingly bitten.

2.7 Diseases, parasites and allergies

- 2.7.1 The likelihood of diseases being passed on from pet animals is low. However allergic reactions to mammals, birds and a few other animals cannot be discounted. These might result from handling the animals or just from being near them and be detected by the development of skin rashes, irritation to the eyes and nose or breathing difficulties.
- 2.7.2 Hand washing soon after handling animals will help. Teachers should watch for the development of allergic reactions in pupils who come into contact with the animals.
- 2.7.3 Children known to have allergic reactions to specific animals must, of course, have restricted access to those that may trigger a response. In most cases, an allergic reaction will subside once the animal and the affected person are kept apart; in extreme cases, seek medical advice.
- 2.7.4 Salmonella bacteria may be carried by reptiles; good hygiene is again required, especially if aquatic reptiles, such as terrapins, are kept. Good general hygiene and hand washing are essential for risk reduction.
- 2.7.5 Children under five should not have contact with such reptiles or the environment in which the reptiles live or exercise.

3.0 BRINGING PETS AND OTHER ANIMALS INTO SCHOOL

- 3.1 In addition to the general guidance given above it is important that suitable arrangements are made in advance for the well being of animals for the short time they are to be on the premises
- 3.2 When a variety of animals will be together, consider carefully the possibility of unwanted interactions. Animals must be housed properly and separately whilst on the premises, any containers used to transport them must be appropriate and retain the animal securely.

- 3.3 A full risk assessment should be completed by the teacher organising the event or a risk assessment should be provided by the visiting group.

4.0 ANIMAL SUPPLIERS

- 4.1 The majority of animals available through reputable suppliers present no hazards that good hygiene procedures cannot address.
- 4.2 In order for there to be minimal risk to humans of diseases being transmitted from animals kept in schools, it is important that animals are obtained from accredited or high-quality sources. Unless these are known to have originated from a reliable source, it will not be possible to be confident that they are disease-free.

5.0 ANIMAL HEALTH

- 5.1 If animals are not kept in scrupulously clean conditions, or come into contact with other animals from dubious sources, it will no longer be possible to guarantee that the animals will remain in a disease-free condition.
- 5.2 Holiday times, particularly in primary schools, can obviously create real difficulties.
It is preferable that the animals remain at school and suitable arrangements made for their normal feeding, watering and cleaning. If, however, this is impossible and animals have to be taken out of school at holidays, they should not be sent home with pupils or other people unless all of the following considerations can be satisfied.
- It can be guaranteed that the animals will be looked after as well as usual.
 - Whoever is caring for the animals must have all the necessary information, equipment, food, skills, etc.
 - Parents must have been informed and given their consent.
 - Steps will be taken to ensure that the school's animals will not be able to come into contact with pet animals (cats, dogs, rodents or other mammals).
 - That small mammals cannot come into contact with wild rodents (mice, rats, etc) while off the school premises.

6.0 CLEANING AND HYGIENE

- 6.1 This is clearly important, both for the health of the animals and for those people looking after them. Hands should be washed *before* and, of course, after cleaning cages, tanks etc. rubber or plastic gloves should preferably be worn.
- 6.2 After removing soiled litter material, cages should be scrubbed with hot water and liquid detergent.
- 6.3 Frequency of cleaning (Small Mammals)
 - 6.3.1 As a general rule, this should be done at least every 10 days. Gerbils produce very little urine and so require relatively infrequent changes. Hamsters produce a little more urine; mice, rats, guinea pigs and rabbits urinate in relatively large amounts. These animals should be cleaned at least once a week. Your nose is always a good guide - cages which are even slightly offensive should already have been cleaned! Arrangements must be made for cages to be cleaned as regularly as normal at holiday times.

7.0 SOILED LITTER DISPOSAL

- 7.1 Soiled litter should ideally be incinerated; more conveniently it could be sealed in strong plastic bags and placed with other waste in dustbins.

8.0 UNSUITABLE ANIMALS

- 8.1 It goes without saying that certain animals present unacceptable risks and should not be brought into schools.
- 8.2 Wild birds and mammals taken, even if legally, from the 'wild' should not be brought into schools directly as they may be harbouring diseases or parasites transmissible to humans.

Appropriate species:

Guinea Pigs—can be well socialized when handled appropriately and regularly; need room for exercise and ample housing

Ferrets—are generally very social animals; need very large cage space and plenty of supervised time out of the cage for exercise, so more

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appropriate for upper elementary levels; ferrets are required by law to be rabies vaccinated

Gerbils—sociable and curious; may be difficult for children to handle because of their small size, but they are fun to observe

Domestic Rats—sociable if handled regularly; very intelligent

Domestic Mice—sociable; may be difficult for children to handle because of their small size, but they are fun to observe

Fish—a good choice if a robust species; not generally interactive, but fun to observe

Inappropriate species:

Red-Eared Slider Turtles—reptiles require very consistent tank heating; their lifespan is over 30 years

Anoles (American chameleons)—amphibians require consistent tank heating; require very delicate handling

Hamsters—nocturnal (sleep through the day and awake at night), more likely to bite

Rabbits—most are relatively large and need a good amount of cage space and room to exercise; are naturally skittish and difficult to pick up; require a calm environment

Chinchillas—most need a good amount of cage space and room to exercise; they are naturally very curious and prefer exploration to being held and sitting calmly in one's lap; they are more prone to illness due to fluctuations in temperature and humidity, which can be difficult to control in a classroom