# HAYNES LOWER SCHOOL AND NURSERY

# Animals in School Policy

**Policy Review:**

**This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years.**

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| **Reviewed** | **March 2025** |
| **Next Review** | **March 2028** |

# Contents

Our aims in bringing animals into the school environment: ....3
School pets and livestock: ....3
Handling Animals ....4
Diseases, parasites and allergies. ....5
Animal Health ....5
Visiting Animals: ....6
Appendix 1: Keeping animals in school: RSPCA guidance ....7
Appendix 2: Keeping exotic animals: guidance ....7
Appendix 3: Handling animals: guidance for schools ....7

Haynes Lower School and Nursery believe that opportunities to work with animals provide unique opportunities for learning. We recognize our responsibility to provide a safe environment and positive learning experiences for all pupils and a high standard of care and welfare to all animals involved. This policy sets out how this will be achieved. It has been written with reference to the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and our existing school policies.

**It is the Head Teacher's responsibility to ensure that staff members have read the policy and risk assessment.**

## Our aims in bringing animals into the school environment:

1. To help pupils develop increased respect, empathy and a sense of responsibility for living things.
2. To encourage pupils to consider the experiences and needs of other living things, including other pupils, school staff, and their families.
3. To promote an interest in the natural environment and support hands-on learning across all areas of the curriculum.
4. To help pupils develop a calm, confident, and sensitive manner when interacting with animals.
5. To demonstrate best practice in the care of pets and other animals.
6. To encourage pupils to consider careers working with animals.

Studies show that 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. Some of the benefits have been identified as follows:

School animals have been found to:

- motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals
- encourage a respect and reverence for life in pupils and thereby improve their relationships with other pupils, parents and teachers
- foster a sense of responsibility in children
- teach children to nurture and respect life
- lead to the development of hobbies /careers in animal care
- improve academic achievement

Animals in schools 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 activity o help to promote the school as an important nurturing influence in the community

## School pets and livestock:

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and animals we will take the following measures before acquiring any school pets or livestock:

- Any member of staff wishing to introduce a class animal or animals must seek permission from the Head Teacher and agree to take on responsibility for the care and welfare of the animal for the duration of its life. This includes the responsibility to care for the animal themselves, or find a suitable alternative home, if the classroom situation or the health/ temperament of the animal changes and it is no longer appropriate for it to love at school.
- We will ensure there is a robust plan in place for weekend and holiday care of the animal.
- Wild caught and nocturnal animals will not be considered as suitable for school pets.

- We will fully be researching the needs, habits and temperament of the relevant species to ensure it will make an appropriate addition to the school and that we can fully meet its welfare needs in the school environment.
- We will produce a comprehensive written risk assessment for all activities associated with keeping and caring for the animal/s. This risk assessment process will consider the safety of any pupils with allergies, a compromised immune system, or behavioural issues. In the case of outdoor animals, we will take steps to ensure that they will not impact negatively on residents or existing uses of the school grounds.
- We will confirm that a local vet will be able to treat the animal/s if needed.
- We will keep parents informed of the plans to introduce the animal/s and ensure they know how to withdraw their child from activities related to the animal if they wish.
- We will produce a written plan for how the animal will support the curriculum.
- We will research where the animal is to be acquired to ensure it has come from a reputable source. If appropriate it will live at home with the member of staff responsible for its care, or access to it will be restricted, for a period of quarantine and/or socialisation.

The animal or animals will only be introduced to the school once they have been assessed as safe and appropriate for the classroom environment, and those involved are confident that their needs can be met.

Once the animal is resident in the school, we will take the following measures:

- We will ensure housing of a suitable size is provided, with all necessary features and enrichments. The housing will be chosen with the safety of pupils in mind and checked for any unanticipated risks. If second-hand housing is used then it will be thoroughly cleaned and sterilised.
- We will always keep the housing and surrounding area clean and in good condition.
- We will ensure a suitable single-sex social group for the animal/s is provided, if appropriate. We are aware that keeping mixed gender animals can lead to breeding and result in welfare problems
- We will ensure the correct quantity of suitable feed is provided. All feed will be stored correctly.
- We will carry out preventative health care measures as appropriate.
- We will ensure that any sick or injured animals are isolated, treated, and seen by a vet if necessary.
- We will monitor the behaviour and health of the animal on an ongoing basis.
- Pupils will only handle animals under close supervision from a member of staff.
- We will implement strict hand-washing procedures for all pupils encountering the animal or associated equipment.
- Any cleaning chemicals or animal medications will be stored in accordance with our COSHH policy.

## Handling Animals

If animals will be handled, the most important 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 o
  keep animals away from the face

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

Gloves will 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.

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

## Diseases, parasites and allergies.

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.

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.

Children with allergies specific to animals are identified via the Confidential Admission Form. Children known to have allergic reactions to animals 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, we seek medical advice.
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.

Children under five should not have contact with such reptiles or the environment in which the reptiles live or exercise.

Most animals available through reputable suppliers present no hazards that good hygiene procedures cannot address.

For there to be minimal risk to humans of diseases being transmitted from animals kept in schools, animals at Gulval School 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.

## Animal Health

We ensure that school pets are kept in scrupulously clean conditions and steps are taken to ensure that they do not come into contact with other animals from dubious sources. If this were to happen it will no longer be possible to guarantee that the animals will remain in a disease-free condition.

During weekends and holiday times, it is preferable that the animals remain at school or at an appropriate alternative home. If animals are taken off-site then the following criteria must be satisfied.

We ensure that:

- It can be guaranteed that the animals will be looked after as well as usual.
- Training is provided for whoever is caring for the animals. We ensure that have all the necessary information, equipment, food, skills, etc.
- Steps are 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).

When transporting animals DEFRA 'Welfare of Animals During Transport' (2006) guidance should be followed.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/193680/pb135 50-wato-guidance.pdf

Occasionally animals can be brought in as a special 'Show and Tell.' In this instance the Headteacher will need to approve the visit following the completion of a risk assessment by the class teacher. Any necessary precautions will need to be put in place by the class teacher and or owner of the pet to ensure the safety of the children and staff.

## Visiting Animals:

Visits from domestic, exotic and farm animals can enrich learning. We will take the following measures to ensure any such visits are safe and humane:

- No animals will be brought onto the school premises without prior planning and permission from senior management staff.
- We will produce a written risk assessment for all animal visits, considering the safety of any pupils with allergies, a compromised immune system, or behavioural issues.
- We will carefully check the credentials of any potential providers, requesting risk assessments, suitable public liability insurance, welfare policies and references as appropriate.
- We will require animal visit providers/ owners/ handlers to provide details of proposed contact between pupils and animals and assurance that all animals are vaccinated as needed.
- Any animals on site will be safely and humanely restrained or contained when not being held by their owner/ handler.

## Appendix 1: Keeping animals in school: RSPCA guidance

Pages 4-6 of the RSPCA guidance linked to above cover the welfare needs of classroom animals. The guidance says that where animals are kept in schools, “any staff responsible for classroom animals must ensure that the needs of these animals are met”. This includes ensuring that:

- Accommodation is appropriate to the animal and its size
- Suitable fresh food and water is provided
- The animal has the freedom to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- The animal has suitable companionship
- The animal is protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease
- A named person is responsible for the welfare and husbandry of the animals at all times
- Any contact between children or young people and animals is supervised and controlled
- The animals are given adequate "rest" periods away from disturbance
- The animal's lifestyle (according to its species) fits with the academic day
- Any animals kept are prevented from indiscriminate breeding

## Appendix 2: Keeping exotic animals: guidance

The RSPCA also has guidance on keeping exotic animals. It explains that before getting an exotic pet, you should consider:

- How long the animal will live and how large it will grow
- What it eats and how much
- What environment the animal needs. For example, does it need a carefully controlled environment?
- The size of the enclosure
- Whether the animal should be kept alone or with others
- Whether the animal is nocturnal
- Whether there is a vet specialising in exotic animals nearby who can treat the animal if it becomes sick
- Whether you need a licence or other legal paperwork to keep the animal

## Appendix 3: Handling animals: guidance for schools

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has advice on animals in education. It says on page 4 that before letting pupils hold a pet, the school should check that:

- The animal is used to being handled
- The animal is not likely to be stressed by excitable children
- Whether there is a correct way to hold the animal, which has been taught to the pupils

It adds:  The handling of certain animals should be avoided altogether. Those which are nervous, nocturnal or prone to biting or scratching should be observed and not touched.

Children and adults should wash their hands soon after coming into contact with any animal or its equipment. The guidance explains that to reduce the risks of diseases being passed from animals to humans:

- Cuts and abrasions on hands and arms should be covered to minimise the risk of infection
- Cleaning routines and arrangements for the disposal of animal waste should be carried out with due regard for good hygiene standards
- Contaminated surfaces should be properly washed and disinfected