



ANIMALS IN SCHOOL POLICY

Northgate Primary School recognises that the presence of animals in our school can provide a valuable learning experience but animals cannot be allowed to endanger pupil safety or to disrupt learning. For that reason, there should be a clear educational purpose for an animal to visit or reside in the school premises.

The school recognises that a visiting or resident animal offers the potential for a very positive educational experience for children; to learn about taking care and showing responsibility for animals as well as developing an understanding of the importance of the humane treatment of living creatures.

It is the school's policy to notify children's parents when an animal is being introduced into any particular year group, class or whole school event. The school is particularly keen to support the introduction of service animals such as hearing dogs or seeing dogs and this reflects the school's ethos of celebrating diversity, promoting inclusion and the Specialist Support Centre.

Procedures

1. Animals brought to school for short term / day visits

Before bringing an animal on to the school premises during school hours, a letter must be sent to parents explaining about the animal visit and asking families to advise the school of any allergies or fears the children may have.

2. Animals brought to school regularly or resident on the school site

Permission must be given by the Head Teacher prior to establishing resident animals in the classroom. Class teachers will take primary responsibility for the humane and proper treatment of any animal in their classroom. When a resident dog is staying in the school, for example as a therapy dog, then they must remain in the designated area unless being taken out for a walk or travelling to and from the car. The therapy dog can be off the leash when they are in this designated area, ensuring that all exit doors are closed securely.

3. In all circumstances

Animals must be in good health and have had all the necessary immunisations or vaccinations. Where possible, evidence should be provided.

Any animal brought to school must remain under control of a responsible adult at all times. The animal should be restrained on a leash or in a suitable carrier when moving around the school. This applies to days when school is in session, prior to the start of school and for any time after the school day, whenever the animal is on the school premises. Transportation of animals to and from school will be the responsibility of the owner.

No wild animals or protected animals will be purposely brought to the building or on to school grounds by anyone other than an authorized or licensed animal handler. There will be no physical contact between the animal and pupils unless it is an integral part of the learning with prior approval received from the Head Teacher.

Should any student or adult be scratched or bitten by an animal at school, First Aid must be administered immediately and in the case of a child, parents will be called. A copy of the incident report (signed by the Head Teacher) will be sent to the family and the policy for animals in school will need to be reviewed accordingly.

Children with medical concerns

Health issues must be considered when assessing the appropriateness of animals in the school. Prior to the consideration of the introduction of an animal to the classroom, the teacher should review the medical notes of the children in their class to ensure there is no conflict.

It is the policy of the school to consider the safety, health and well-being of every child when making decisions regarding the introduction of animals to the classroom. If children have petted an animal it is essential that they wash their hands after the activity and that this is supervised to ensure that it is thorough.

Responsibility

The owner or handler of any animal, including a service animal, is responsible for the animal at all times and must take responsibility in the event of any harm accidentally or otherwise that befalls a child. All staff must complete a risk assessment form prior to the introduction of an animal in the classroom which must be signed off by the Head Teacher and/or the Governing Body.

The care and humane treatment of animals

Animals within the school will be handled, treated and cared for in a humane manner. Enclosures must be appropriate to the animal and it is the responsibility of the staff member to ensure that the animal has sufficient food, water and a comfortable environment to reduce the stress for the animal. Habitats must be maintained and cleaned by the owner of the animal or by a member of staff.

Reviewed: September 2024
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