Wingrove Primary School

Animals in School

Policy and Guidance

INTRODUCTION

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

HANDLING ANIMALS

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

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.

Physical injuries

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

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

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 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.

Salmonella bacteria may be carried by reptiles; good hygiene is again Required. 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.

BRINGING PETS AND OTHER ANIMALS INTO SCHOOL

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.

ANIMAL SUPPLIERS

The majority of animals available through reputable suppliers present no hazards that good hygiene procedures cannot address.

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.

ANIMAL HEALTH

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.

Any animal looking sick or injured will be examined by a vet as soon as possible.

During weekends and holidays only members of staff will take the animals home. They will keep them in a suitable environment and attend their daily needs. Whoever is caring for the animals must have all the necessary information, equipment, food, skills, etc.

CLEANING AND HYGIENE

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.

UNSUITABLE ANIMALS

It goes without saying that certain animals present unacceptable risks and should not be brought into schools.
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.