Chaucer Primary School

A place for all *Transforming lives* *Achieving potential*

Policy for Animals in School

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At Fleetwood Chaucer Primary School we understand that animals visiting or kept as pet in our school have a legal and moral entitlement to the following under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

- *its need for a suitable environment*
- *its need for a suitable diet (food and fresh water)*
- *its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns*
- *any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals*
- *its need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.*

This policy aims to ensure compliance with the following legislation:

- *Animal Welfare Act 2006*
- *Pet Animals Act 1951*
- *Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974*
- *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*
- *Dangerous Wild Animals (DWA) Act 1976*

Section 1: General Information about Animals in School

Introduction

At Chaucer we recognise that the presence of animals at school can provide a valuable learning experience, but animals cannot be allowed to endanger pupil and staff safety or disrupt learning. This policy sets out our procedures and guidance around animals in school. As we care for a variety of animals in school, the terms 'pets' and 'animals' are used interchangeably.

Rationale for having animals and 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.

Caring for animals in school:

At Fleetwood Chaucer Primary School we aim to promote good practice in animal care. Children are taught correct procedures in handling and caring for animals under the direct supervision of adults; they are encouraged to take a shared responsibility for the care of the animals. Children are taught how to interact gently with our school pets. Sensible measures are taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff.

For all our animals in school, we ensure that:

- A written risk assessment for each animal is in place including veterinary contact details and advice on recognising ill health in that species.
- The Animal Guardian will observe or keep the animal at home prior to introduction to the children to understand their nature, behaviour and health.
- We ensure that each animal enjoys an optimum environment, in social groups. If appropriate. We are aware that keeping opposite sex animals can lead to breeding and result in welfare problems. Where possible animals will be kept in same sex groups or pair.
- Any stroking or handling of the animal must only take place when the staff are happy that the children and animals feel confident enough.
- The environment and well-being of the animals is monitored to ensure that no animal is distressed by classroom or school environment characteristics (e.g. noise, pupil behaviours)

• Routine preventive health measures are sought and practised as advised by the vet – vaccination, flea prevention and worm control where appropriate. Veterinary care advice attached to each animals risk assessment. Any sick animals are promptly isolated and examined by a vet.
• Pets and their living areas are kept clean and safe at all times.
• A high quality, appropriate diet is provided.
• Children always wash hands after handling (See Health & Safety)
• Parents have the right to withdraw their child from any involvement or handling of the animals if they wish.
• Careful arrangements for holiday and weekend care are made, either onsite, at home with a member of staff or with an experienced and carefully vetted pupil's family.
• The keeping of animals does not impact on the class budget and other subject areas. The school has a small budget to cover the cost of veterinary care and classes may also run fundraising events to support their animals.

Health and safety
• Any allergies are 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.
• When animals are handled, good hygiene will be practised.
• When handling animals:
    - children will not consume food or drink
    - children will wash their hands with soap and water before and directly after handling animals

Examples of how the pets will be used in school

• Reading programmes: Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class, or even adults, are less likely to be scared to read to an animal.
• Nurturing and SEN support: school pets can be used within nurture and 1:1 sessions to teach empathy and responsibility.
• Reward & Engagement: Children can be rewarded with time with the school pet for good work or behaviour

Equal Opportunities

All pupils will have opportunities to access the animals under the supervision of an adult. A pupil may not have contact with an animal if they pose a threat to the animal. It will be the adult in charge's responsibility to encourage the pupil to have the right approach to animals.

Section 2: Procedures for Animals considered as resident pets and visiting animals

Introducing new resident pets

Permission must be given by the Head Teacher prior to establishing resident animals in the learning environment. Considerations to make in advance of acquiring a resident animal in school:

• Who will the named Animal Guardian be?
• Are there any children that may be:
    - Allergic or sensitive to any particular species or their food or bedding material
    - Immune compromised, and therefore more susceptible to zoological illnesses

• What is the purpose of acquiring the animal (how its care will fit into the curriculum)
• Is the animal diurnal (awake during the day)?
• What are the housing, dietary and veterinary care needs of this animal? What are the likely costs and how will these be met?
• How will any injuries (bites, scratches) will be managed should they arise?
• What will the arrangement for care during weekends, holidays and school closure be?

Animals in School Lead:

We have a named person responsible for the welfare of all animals (visiting and resident) in school. This named person will oversee relevant guidance relating to each animal and amend practice in response to changing guidance. Risk assessments and care sheets will be provided for each resident animal by the Pets in School Lead having researched the appropriate diet, housing, exercise, and socialisation. The Pets in School Lead will oversee all animal care and safety throughout the school, but day to day maintenance and feeding will be overseen by the designated staff (Animal Guardians).

Animal Guardians:

The guardian takes day-to-day responsibility for the humane and proper treatment of the animal in school and are responsible for ensuring that all of the animal's physical and psychological needs are met.

The Animal Guardian is responsible for:

• Ensuring that pets are housed in an appropriate area and that heat in the classroom will be kept within an acceptable range during the night time.
• Ensuring that the animal is fed appropriately, handled properly, and that its habitat is cleaned regularly.
• Working with the Pets in School Lead to arrange and deliver regular veterinary care

• Seeking emergency veterinary care for the animal. This may need to be paid upfront and reimbursed later by school.

Making arrangements for the animal's care and safety continuing through weekends and holidays.
• Reviewing the animal's risk assessments each September, with the Pets in School Lead
• Alerting the Pets in School Lead of any needs that arise e.g. additional or repairs to housing

The Animal Guardian must also be prepared to care for the animal at home, or find another suitably experienced member of staff to care for the animal at home in the event that:
• a future pupil is allergic and the animal is unable to live in the classroom
• they show any unsuitability with children (e.g. biting or aggression of any type)
• they become unwell at any time
• the school is closed under national 'lockdown' arrangements

Visiting animals
During school hours, no animal will be brought to school without prior authorisation from the Senior Leadership Team. Any animal brought to school must remain under control of the responsible adult at all times. The animal will be contained on a leash or in suitable carrier.

No wild animals or protected animals will be purposely brought to the building or on school grounds by anyone other than an authorised or licensed animal handler. There will be no physical contact between the animal and students unless it is an integral part of the objectives for the programme.

Dangerous animals, as defined by the Dangerous Wild Animals (DWA) Act 1976, may not be brought into school. This includes most monkeys and apes, crocodiles, alligators and poisonous snakes. It does not include domestic dogs and cats.