

Animals in School Policy



Approved by:	Local Governing Body
Written by:	Mr G. Hawkins
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Next review date:	September 2028

1. Aims and Purpose

The aims of the policy are to:

- Provide clear guidelines on the principles of having dedicated school animals on school site, including how provision is managed to effectively cater for their needs.
- Provide clear guidelines as to when other animals are permitted on the school site.
- Provide a clear explanation of how safeguards are in place, monitored, assessed and reviewed.
- Explain how the school animals will be used to support the welfare of children.
- Identify roles and responsibilities.

2. Supporting Legislation

The following government legislation and advice can be applicable to the control and welfare of dogs in public places and in general, and in schools in particular.

- Health and safety Act 1974
- Environmental protection Act 1991
- The Litter (animal dropping) order 1991
- Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1977
- Clean Neighbours and Environment Act 2005
- Animal Welfare Act (2006)
See Appendix A for Frequently Asked Questions
- Department for Education Advice on Standards for school Premises (2015)

The following government legislation and advice can be applicable to rabbits and fish in schools in particular.

- Code of Practice under section 14 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006

3. Principles of a Dedicated School Pet

At Castlefort Academy, mental health and well-being are at the heart of ensuring that children are secure in their environment and are confident individuals able to undertake tasks and challenges that they may face in the world that they live.

Whilst pastoral support systems are useful in promoting positive well-being, we as a school recognise the importance of interaction with animals as a support system, which impacts positively on mental well-being.

At Castlefort Academy, 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, under direct supervision. Children are taught how to interact gently with our school pets. Pets and other animals in school can enhance the learning environment. Sensible measures are taken to reduce the risk of infection to the children and to staff.

At Castlefort Academy:

- The Headteacher is responsible for the welfare of all animals in school. The Headteacher will oversee relevant guidance relating to each animal and amend practice in response to changing guidance.
- Risk assessments are provided for each of the different animals in school.
- The Headteacher oversees all animal care and safety throughout the school, but day to day maintenance and feeding will be overseen by the designated staff.
- Animals remain the responsibility of their owner.
- We register all our animals with a veterinary practice and seek advice and treatment when appropriate
- We ensure that each animal enjoys an optimum environment
- We practise routine preventive health measures as advised by vets for example vaccination, flea prevention and worm control where appropriate
- We keep pets and their areas clean and safe at all times
- We make careful arrangements for holiday and weekend care are made
- We provide a high quality, appropriate diet
- We isolate and treat any sick animals promptly

4. Occasions when other animals are permitted on school site

As a school, we recognise that there may be occasions when other animals, including dogs, may need to enter school site. Such occasions include:

- Pre booked visitors involving animals that support curriculum development.
- Service animals, such as guide dogs.

Where parents are required to bring service animals onto the school site, this must be discussed with the Headteacher.

5. Systems to Safeguard the School Animals, and Those it Interacts with

Pippin, the school therapy dog, is owned by Mr Dan Shaw. Pippin is a Cavapoochon, which is a Bichon Frise, King Charles Spaniel and Poodle cross breed. This dog breed was chosen, as they are known to have a positive demeanour, be intelligent, be sociable, shed very little hair, respond well to training and are one of the least allergenic breeds.

We also have a selection of fish in school which are located at the school office and by the Year 5 classroom.

Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that there are animals in school. A risk assessment for them has been produced and this will be reviewed on an annual basis, or in light of any pertinent guidance released in the interim periods between annual reviews.

Staff, visitors and children known to have allergic reactions to animals must not go near, or interact with them unless written permission has been given by parents. All visitors will be informed about the school animals and related protocols on arrival and the office staff will relay visitor issues, or concerns, to the Headteacher immediately.

Pippin is up to date with her medical support, including inoculations, and if shew were to become ill, she would not be allowed into school.

Pippin will be kept on a lead when on a walk outside, and will be under the full control and supervision of a designated adult. Children will never be left alone with any of the animals, and an appropriate adult will ensure appropriate supervision at all times. Both dogs have received 'The dog mentor' training and there are 2 handlers who are trained - Miss Platt and Mr Hawkins.

Parents are consulted annually or when a new pupil joins the school (during the school year) and they decide whether to allow their child access to the school dog. Parents must give written consent for their children to interact with the school dog. This information is kept by the class teachers in the class file, as well as on the staff-drive for all year groups under consent forms.

The Headteacher or Senior Leadership Team will know the whereabouts of Pippin and which staff are supervising at all times.

The dogs will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of Miss Platt or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

6. Interaction Requirements and Guidance

Children will be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the school animals. Children should remain calm around the school animals at all times. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into a dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog. Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.

Children should never go near or disturb the school animals without a supervising adult, especially if they are sleeping or eating. Children must not be allowed to play roughly with any of the school animals.

Anyone interacting with the school animals must wash or sanitise their hands before and after interaction. Where an individual has open wounds or healing wounds on their hands, interaction is not permitted.

If an animal is surrounded by a large number of children, it can become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the animal must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.

Animals express their feelings through their body language.

Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs, she should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment and returned to the Headteacher.

Children should not eat close to the school animals.

Children should be careful to stroke Pippin on her body, chest or back, and avoid her face.

When feeding animals, the children are supervised at all times.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Governing Board:

The Local Governing Board is responsible for ensuring that the school has a written policy and risk assessment in place for all animals in school.

Headteacher:

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Evaluating the overall health of the school animals (Pippin and the school fish) to ascertain fitness to attend /remain in school.
- Ensuring appropriate health checks are carried out and medical needs are provided for the school animals.
- Identifying an appropriate engagement schedule for Pippin
- Supporting Pippin with access to relevant training, as required.
- Providing appropriate facilities for Pippin, her time in school, including sanitation and personal care.
- Providing appropriate food for all the animals in school.
- Ensuring that any accidents involving Pippin, the therapy dog, are reported using agreed school procedures and reporting processes.

School Staff:

The school staff are responsible for:

- Abiding by this policy.

- Ensuring and supporting appropriate interaction between pupils, other members of staff and the school animals.
- Ensuring that the school animal's personal care needs are appropriately supported.
- Ensuring that any injuries sustained by any of the school animals are reported to the Headteacher.
- Ensuring that any injuries sustained by pupils are reported using agreed school procedures.

Pupils:

The pupils are responsible for:

- Abiding by this policy
- Ensuring that all relevant interaction requirements are adhered to.

8. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher every 2 years or earlier if necessary, or in line with any pertinent guidance / legislative changes within an annual cycle as needed.

9. Linked Policies and Documents

- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour and discipline Policy
- Accident Reporting Policy
- Risk Assessment for Pippin and the school fish

10. Reasons to Have a School Animals

In summary, academic research has shown that animals working and helping in the school environment can achieve the following:

1. Improve academic achievement
2. Increase literacy skills
3. Calm behaviours
4. Increase social skills and self-esteem
5. Increase confidence
6. Teach responsibility and respect to all life
7. Help prevent truancy
8. Motivate children who are often less attentive
9. Improve mental health status

Here are some examples of how school animals benefit children:

Behaviour:

Children can identify with animals, and with empathy for the animals, can better understand how classmates / peers may feel. Challenging behaviours can occur in school and these can interfere with learning. Some schools are using school animals to improve behaviour by promoting positive behaviour in children.

Education:

Reading programmes with dogs are incredibly beneficial for some children. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. After all, a dog won't judge or correct. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud. With the presence of a calm and well-trained dog, students gain social support.

Dogs can be incredibly calm and happy to have children read to them or join a group of children whilst they are having a reading session. Dogs give unconditional acceptance, as they are non-judgmental, which is especially crucial to emerging readers. The dog also provides confidence to children, as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and reassurance.

Cognitive benefits:

It has been empirically proven that therapy animals stimulate memory and problem-solving skills.

Physical benefits:

Interaction with school animals has been shown to reduce blood pressure, provide physical stimulation and assist with pain management.

Emotional and mental health benefits:

School animals can lift moods in the classroom, often provoking laughter. School animals are there to offer friendship and as a comfort to children, which is even more important for our children as we see an increase of mental health concerns across the country.

Social Development:

Animals in school offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching children social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools can use animals to help older students build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Older children use animals, especially dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empowerment. With animals in school, children have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes feeding, walking and personal care. Children also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of an animal at school.

The school animals are used to aid the lessons taught across the school. For example, Year 1 learn how to care for animals in their PSHE lessons. To assist in these lessons, the pupils at Castlefort Academy, can use real life animals to support their understanding of this.

As a reward:

Animals will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the children. Those children who have performed incredibly well during the week or those who have made progress in a certain subject, or those who have achieved tasks set for them, will be rewarded with spending designated time to interact with one of the school animals.

Pupils can also choose to spend their earned 'Castle Coins' on time with Pippin the dog.

Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. When working and playing with an animal, the social skills and self-esteem of children can improve.

Support Dogs can work with children on a one-one basis and will especially help those children who have experienced negative behaviours such as bullying, abuse, experiencing hardship or upset, as well as those who are fearful or phobic of dogs.

Children who find social interaction challenging can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

The legal owner of the dogs is Mr D. Shaw; he will bear the costs associated with owning the dogs; the school budget will support with some costings as deemed appropriate (e.g. specific facilities or school-based equipment).

Are the dogs from a reputable breeder?

Yes. The dog is from a home where both parents were seen and has been specifically chosen for their temperament and are KC registered.

Will the animals be a distraction?

No. The dogs will be kept in the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher's office. This area is away from the classrooms and playground areas, but they is sufficient size for the school dog to walk freely. The Fish are located by the Year 5 classroom in a tank which are well positioned for security. All of the school animals will only come into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

Yes. The school has carefully considered having animals on site and sought advice from many sources, including other schools that successfully have a school animals and relevant breeders and trainers. There are risk assessments in place for the different animals- dogs and fish.

Who is responsible for dog training?

Mr Shaw will be the legal owner of the dog and, as a result, will be responsible for Pippin's training. Appropriate professional training will be obtained and completed in line with guidance and requirements.

How will the dogs be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

In the interest of health and hygiene, Pippin will be toileted when taken out for short walks around the grounds or in their designated garden, which is separate and secure from the rest of the playing areas. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground, cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed.

How will the animal's welfare be considered?

The dogs will be walked regularly and given time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during designated/identified times. This will also be used as a behaviour reward, in line with our behaviour policy. The dog will be kept in the Headteacher's and Deputy Headteacher's office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have access to food and water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

The fish tank is an appropriate size for the size of the fish. The environment includes water, plants, heating, filtration, and ornaments. The fish are cleaned regularly and fed daily.

How will allergies be managed?

Children will not need to touch the animals, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. We already manage a number of allergies at school and this will be no different for children and adults that are allergic to dogs. Individual needs will always be met and we are happy to work with parents to put additional control measures in place for individual allergies. The breed of dog is known for low shedding; they are given a high-quality food and regularly groomed to reduce any possibility of allergens.

My child is frightened of animals; how will you manage this?

Access to the animals is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with him unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of animals to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.