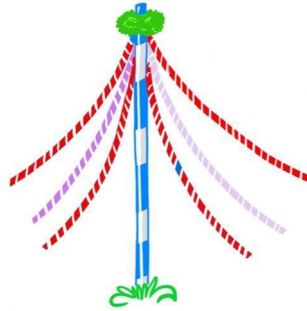


Maypole School



ANIMALS IN SCHOOL POLICY

2026-2027

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is our aim to create a learning experience in which every pupil will achieve and realise their full potential. Maypole School will create a caring environment that supports the pupils to care for each other, the school community, the environment and the world around them.

Maypole School recognises that the presence of animals in our school can provide a valuable learning experience, as well as having a therapeutic benefit, for pupils of all ages. There are many areas of the curriculum where keeping animals in school can be of benefit, as well as providing the enjoyment of having living creatures around us, and the fun it can bring. It can also help develop a love of nature and wildlife.

This policy outlines the basic health and safety issues associated with handling and keeping animals in school, as well as the care and wellbeing of the animals.

2. HANDLING ANIMALS

The Importance of Hygiene

When handling animals the most important issue is the maintenance of good hygiene. Therefore 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

Careful handling of small mammals and other animals is most important; the animals should be held in such a way that they cannot damage themselves, the handler or others around them. Mammals should be handled daily if possible (unless breeding or nursing when they should be disturbed as little as possible). In this way they will normally become quite tame and accustomed to being handled.

Use of Gloves

Gloves should 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 or similar that does not particularly reduce dexterity, is a sensible precaution.

Handling of Small Animals

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

3. MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Risk of Physical Injury

There is always the danger of bites and scratches and teaching staff should check that any animals kept or 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. Therefore close supervision is essential. Staff should always adequately prepare pupils beforehand. Social stories before meeting and handling any wildlife may be beneficial for some pupils.

Diseases, Parasites and Allergies

The likelihood of diseases being passed on from pet animals is low. However, allergic reactions to mammals and birds 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. Teaching staff 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 and must not be allowed to handle them. In most cases, an allergic reaction will subside once the animal and the affected person are kept apart but in the case of a severe allergic reaction, medical advice/attention must be sought immediately. Any suspected allergic reaction must be reported to parents/carers.

Salmonella

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.

4. BRINGING PETS AND OTHER ANIMALS INTO SCHOOL

Advance planning

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.

Dogs especially can be of immense value to the learning and therapeutic experience of the pupils. Staff may bring their dog into school, but it must always be planned, with the permission of the Principal or Executive Head Teacher and fully risk assessed. Only one dog should be brought in on any one day and it must be in the best interest of the pupils and their education, and not for 'dog minding' purposes. Any dog brought into the school must be kept on a lead at all times.

Unwanted interactions

When a variety of animals will be together, careful consideration must be given to the possibility of unwanted interactions. Animals must be housed properly and separately whilst on the premises; any containers used to transport them must be appropriate and retain the animal securely.

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, their food and their bedding 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.

Responsibility for cleaning and health

Animals must be kept in scrupulously clean conditions. Prior to obtaining animals it must be decided who will be responsible for looking after them and also for supervising the pupils when they undertake cleaning and caring duties.

Hygiene is important, both for the health and well-being of the animals and for those people looking after them. Hands should be washed before and after cleaning cages and tanks and also before and after feeding. Ideally disposable gloves should be worn when cleaning.

Clearing away soiled litter material should be done daily. As a general rule, thorough washing of cages with hot water and a safe liquid detergent, should be done weekly.

Care of animals during weekends and holidays

Where it is not feasible for the animals to remain on the school premises at weekends or during holiday times, it must be decided who will take care of them during this time. This must be decided and agreed by the Principal and Executive Head Teacher prior to obtaining the animals. Pupils will not be allowed to take animals home over the weekend or at school holiday times.

Animal welfare

It is essential that any animal kept in the school is housed in a safe environment that does not cause stress to the animal. A protocol for the animal's daily routine must be displayed and followed. It would be unfair to expect an animal to be handled and disturbed frequently during the day. The purpose of keeping animals in school is to provide learning opportunities for the pupils but it must also be in the best interests of the welfare of the animal.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be produced whenever any animal is to be kept in school.

Soiled Litter Disposal

Soiled litter should be sealed in strong plastic bags and placed with other waste in dustbins.