



ENHANCING PROVISION WITH ANIMALS IN SCHOOL POLICY

This policy has undergone an Equalities Impact Assessment in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Aims.....	4
3. Legislation.....	4
4. Registration of Animals	4
5. Duty of Care.....	5
6. The Headteacher	5
7. Responsible Person	6
8. Designated Dog Handler	7
9. Health and Safety	7
10. Resources	9
11. Monitoring and Review	9

1. Introduction

- 1.1 **Coastal Learning Partnership** expects **Headteachers** contemplating introducing an animal into a school environment to consider where responsibility lies and how the provision of consistent care will be delivered. The law states that “*a person commits an offence if he does not take such steps as are reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure that the needs of an animal for which he is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice*”. The law has many methods of recourse for the protection of animals, allowing them to be seized, their living conditions inspected, improvement notices issued and prosecution pursued. The law is enforced by bodies such as the RSPCA, local authorities and the police.
- 1.2 Prior research is extremely important. Elements such as care, legal considerations, cost, responsibility and suitability must be carefully considered along with how the animal will be introduced to the school and the classroom environment. Considerations include, what will the animal’s quality of life be like? Are they safe? Can they be funded? Who is responsible for their welfare? Are they suitable for a school environment? What is the impact on pupils and staff with allergies or fears?
- 1.3 Particular consideration should be given to **dogs**. There are added risks of dogs fouling, dogs biting or showing aggressive unpredictable behaviour. Even well-behaved dogs can behave unpredictably when placed in an unfamiliar, busy, noisy and crowded school environment and that this can lead to unexpected behaviour in even the best-behaved pet. Children can also behave unpredictably when in the presence of dogs especially where they are not used to being with them.
- 1.4 **Coastal Learning Partnership’s** competent person, RoSPA, strongly advise that dogs are assessed by a Certified Clinical Animal Behaviourist (CCAB¹) and that the Headteacher and the dog’s owner familiarise themselves with liability laws should there be an incident involving the dog at school.
- 1.5 The Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) provided by the Department for Education clarified on 17th August 2021, that cover extends to:
- 1.5.1 *We can confirm that unless covered under a more specific pet insurance policy, the RPA will provide an indemnity under Third Party Liability if a dog, or any other pet, brought into school for educational or therapy/wellbeing reason causes any third party property damage or injury to a third party (including pupils) if the school were held legally liable (negligent) subject to the school undertaking appropriate risk assessments. Employees are covered under the Employers Liability section if the dog causes injury to members of school staff to the extent that the school is legally liable (negligent).*
- 1.5.2 *The RPA would not provide an indemnity to the individual owner of the dog/pet for their legal liability.*
- 1.5.3 *The RPA rules do not exclude damage to the school property caused by the animal but cover for Material Damage claims are subject to the member retention (excess) of £500 each and every loss for all schools other than Nursery and Primary schools which is £250 each and every loss.*
- 1.5.4 *To confirm the RPA would not compensate the school if the pet dies or is stolen, and will not provide cover for vet fees if the pet becomes ill or is injured therefore separate insurance would be required, if needed.*
- 1.6 **Coastal Learning Partnership** will make insurance arrangements for animals it owns and will expect owners to make insurance arrangements for privately owned animals. Dog owners should be made aware that standard pet insurance may not cover the dog while on the school premises, as it is likely to be classed as a ‘working dog’ rather than ‘pet’, and that insurance arrangements should reflect the situation in which the dog operates, for example, a dog that is a staff support dog will require different provisions to a dog that is a therapy dog.
- 1.7 It is important to note that the RSPCA acknowledges the benefits of animals in education but ***strongly*** discourages the keeping of animals in schools².

¹ <https://abtc.org.uk/>

² <https://education.rspca.org.uk/documents/1494931/0/Animal+Friendly+Schools+Guidance+%28%29.pdf/c7c5fe97-e5a6-fa47-6205-8d22d45cf7c2?t=1558518337650>

2. Aims

- 2.1 **Coastal Learning Partnership** acknowledges its responsibility to provide a nurturing and supportive environment in order for children to thrive.
- 2.2 The value of pet ‘therapy’ is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation and communication. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of children and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding.
- 2.3 Animals in schools can help to:
- Provide a safe and secure environment where pupils can develop their communication, social and emotional literacy skills;
 - Strengthen pupils’ emotional wellbeing, enabling them to access learning more readily;
 - Help pupils re-establish good relationships with their peers and adults and see school as a place where they feel included;
 - Develop pupils’ sense of self, belonging and trust; and
 - See an improvement in behaviour, attainment and attendance of pupils.
- 2.4 **Coastal Learning Partnership** recognises that some children and adults have a fear of animals. Even if pupils have been reassured of the safety of a resident animal, fear or dislike can continue and if a child is afraid, their learning is unfairly impaired. This policy aims to put measures and safeguards in place.
- 2.5 **The aim of this policy is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors** to schools and to minimise the risk of accident or injury to people or animals within the school grounds. To this aim, **Coastal Learning Partnership** supports the use of animals in schools and insists that the arrangements and procedures in this policy are implemented.
- 2.6 **This policy does not cover the use of assistance dogs by visitors, pupils or staff.** The use of assistance dogs is provided for in the Equality Act 2010 and schools should support arrangements for their presence on site through their Accessibility Plans, pupil Educational Health Care Plans and staff Occupational Health / Reasonable Adjustments reports as appropriate.

3. Legislation

- 3.1 This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to:
- The Pet Animals Act 1951
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
 - The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
 - The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 - The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
 - The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
 - The Animal Welfare Act 2006
- 3.2 This policy also has due regard to other policies, including, but not limited to:
- CLP Health and Safety Policy
 - CLP First Aid Policy

4. Registration of Animals

- 4.1 Farm animals, such as sheep, goats, cattle, pigs or deer must be registered with the [Rural Payments Agency](#) and schools must follow all identification, registration and movement regulations set out on [gov.uk](#) regarding the keeping of farm animals.

5. Duty of Care

5.1 The *Animal Welfare Act 2006* states that an animal is a “protected animal” if:

- It is of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Islands;
- It is under the control of man whether on a permanent or temporary basis; or
- It is not living in a wild state.

5.2 All animals handled in a school will therefore fall under the protection and conditions of the *Animal Welfare Act 2006*. Section nine places a duty of care on those responsible for animals to ensure they meet the welfare needs of those animals to a recognised level of good practice. The law dictates five welfare needs which must be fulfilled:

- Its need for a suitable environment;
- Its need for a suitable diet;
- Its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns;
- Its need to be housed with, or away from, any other animals; and
- Its need to be protected from pain, suffering and disease.

5.3 Being responsible in law covers being in charge of the creature, or more generally, owning the animal. The law states that as a parent or guardian of a child under the age of 16 years old, the adult is responsible for any animal in their charge. Therefore, a member of staff, including teachers, with responsibility for an animal and its handling / interaction with and by pupils under 16, is responsible for that animal’s welfare.

5.4 Animals can experience stress. Canaries for example can suffer heart attacks when exposed to loud noises and raucous activity, sprinkler systems can harm animals averse to direct exposure to water such as certain types of lizard and some animals can become aggressive when startled. The impact of school events such as open days and fire drills on animals must be properly considered.

6. The Headteacher

6.1 The **Headteacher** will ensure that the duty of care under the *Animal Welfare Act 2006* is met.

6.2 The **Headteacher** will appoint a single person responsible for overseeing the welfare of all animals even though others may be looking after them on a day-to-day basis.

6.3 In the case of dogs, they should also appoint a **designated dog handler**.

6.4 The Headteacher will ensure a risk assessment is undertaken prior to the introduction of any animal into a school setting, and ensure this considers paragraphs 7.3, 9.1 and 9.2.

6.5 The **Headteacher** must notify the **Local Governing Body** at the beginning of each academic year:

6.5.1 The name of the **Responsible Person**, and

6.5.2 The name of the Designated Dog Handler (if appropriate).

6.6 Where the animal is school owned, the **Headteacher** will:

- Consider arrangements for who is responsible for the animals on weekends and holidays;
- Ensure a budget for food, maintenance supplies and vet bills; and
- Consider who will transport the animal/s to the vet.

6.7 The **Headteacher must** ensure suitable animal / pet insurance and behaviour assessments are in place for animals that are both school owned and privately owned **before** allowing animals on school premises by:

6.7.1 Ensuring that the **Central Operations Manager** is informed of any intention for the school to own an animal in advance so that insurance arrangements can be made.

6.7.2 Recording sight of all insurance certificates and behaviour assessment outcomes for privately owned animals.

6.7.3 Paying particular attention to the insurance and assessment of dogs that are privately owned. In this case it will be for the owner to procure the necessary insurance cover and registration and the **Headteacher** to:

6.7.3.1 confirm the insurance policy allows for the dog to be in school;

6.7.3.2 confirm the insurance policy provides adequate indemnity cover; and

6.7.3.3 confirm a behaviour assessment has been carried out by a certified clinical animal behaviourist. This will likely be required as a condition of the insurance policy but should still be carried out even if not required for insurance purposes.

6.8 When using external agencies to provide therapy dog services, **before** the dog is bought on site, the Headteacher is responsible for obtaining evidence of insurance (to include public liability insurance, professional indemnity insurance and employer's liability insurance) and written assurance that the dog has been trained and undertaken a behaviour assessment. A record must be kept and be available for inspection as requested.

6.9 The **Headteacher** may use their delegated budget to cover the additional cost of insurance premiums, registration and behaviour assessment costs if they are able to demonstrate that the dog forms an important part of the school's planned intervention and support work.

6.10 The **Headteacher** will ensure all staff involved with the animals receive basic training to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities when looking after the animals, including feeding, hygiene, handling and how to spot signs of infestation and disease.

7. **Responsible Person**

7.1 The **Responsible Person** must be contactable should an emergency arise.

7.2 This person is responsible for the duty of care for the animals on the school site and will ensure the criteria outlined in this policy regarding the welfare of the animals is met.

7.3 The **Responsible Person** will:

- Conduct a risk assessment prior to the arrival of the animals to ensure that all risks are manageable and controlled;
- Obtain and supervise relevant guidance relating to each animal and amend practice in response to changing guidance;
- Provide care sheets for each different animal;
- Support others involved in the care of school animals;
- Monitor the health and of the animals;
- Research ailments the animal is susceptible to and be vigilant for symptoms. In any case of infestation or disease, they will seek expert advice immediately and administer appropriate treatment. If the animals are found to have any disease which is contagious to humans, they will inform the **Headteacher** immediately and follow any expert advice to remove the animal(s) from the premises for appropriate treatment;
- Establish and coordinate a cleaning regime as set out in the Health and Safety section of this policy;
- Keep records of the creature's behaviour, to allow any distress or deterioration in health to be noted promptly;
- Be responsible for the training of the animals, if required;
- Where animals are brought in for a short period, for example for a day, they will ensure an appropriate and detailed protocol is implemented that ensures the wellbeing of the animal and the health and safety of others for the duration of its visit. This will include the provision of assurances from the owner as to the means of transporting and housing the animal, and the responsibility to bring any equipment, food or water likely to be required during the day;

- Establish a rota for looking after the animals before, during and after the school day, as well as during holidays and weekends. This rota will include a strict schedule for feeding and changing the water, be given to all necessary members of staff and will be posted in the school office;
- Ensure all animals have continuous access to a supply of clean, fresh drinking water and an adequate supply of food available at all times;
- Ensure food for the animals is sourced from a reputable supplier to ensure it is of appropriate nourishment suitable to the age and breed of the animal. A dry, vermin-proof container will be used to store the different animals' food, keeping it dry and preventing waste. Food will be provided accordingly, depending on the animal, by a member of staff and/or pupils supervised by a member of staff;
- Put measures in place to reduce the disturbance of all animals from the noise generated from the educational environment;
- Ensure all farm animals, including poultry, have access to suitable shelter at all times and that shelters and cages are checked regularly for repair and maintenance;
- Ensure farm animals have company of their own kind and are not isolated from the sight, sound or smell of other farm animals;
- Ensure that incompatible species or animals requiring different environmental conditions are not housed in the same room or, in some cases, within a distance where scent or sound can be detected;
- Ensure health check-ups and vaccinations are arranged as required.

7.4 The **Responsible Person** must inform the **Headteacher** immediately of any concerns or if they are unable to provide suitable care for the animal.

8. Designated Dog Handler

The Designated Dog Handler is responsible for:

- Permitting people to touch the dog;
- Ensuring the dog is given no opportunity to come into contact with wild rodents on or off the school premises;
- Ensuring the dog is fully inoculated and treated monthly for fleas and worms;
- Ensuring the dog is suitably toilet trained and the designated area for the dog to defecate is situated away from pupils and staff;
- Immediately collecting faeces, using a clinical waste bag, and disposing of into the clinical waste bin;
- Immediately disposing of any soiled dog bedding in sealed clinical waste bags, and into the clinical waste bin;
- Taking the dog's bedding home to wash it;
- Ensuring pupils/staff/visitors who touch the dog are advised to wash their hands afterwards;
- Ensuring anyone touching the dog, who has an exposed wound, has the wound suitably covered;
- Ensuring, with the **Responsible Person**, that a dog with an infection or disease does not return to the school until it has recovered.

9. Health and Safety

9.1 The following preventative measures will be taken by the **Headteacher** to minimise health and safety risks to pupils, staff and visitors:

- Pupil's parents / carers should give permission for their child to interact with school animals;
- Staff are required to indicate their wishes for interacting with school animals;
- For both pupils and staff, schools should understand allergies, fears or beliefs and these must be recorded on the risk assessment together with mitigation;
- Pupils and Staff who do not wish to be near the animals are highlighted to the **Responsible Person** and handler if appointed;
- Photographs of the school animals are available in reception together with their location so visitors are aware and can inform school staff if they are not comfortable around them;

- If a pupil or staff is allergic to an animal it will be moved to another area of the school; and
- The duty of care regulations for animals (outlined below) are adhered to in order to prevent risks to pupils, staff, visitors and animals.

9.2 **Early Years settings.** The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework does not explicitly prohibit dogs or other animals in pre-school settings, but it does require that providers ensure children are kept healthy and safe. This means any interaction with animals, including dogs, must be carefully managed and interaction with pupils carefully considered to meet these standards. A risk assessment should be conducted before introducing the dog to the setting, covering the points listed in 9.1 and considering the age and needs of the pupils.

9.3 **Evacuation:**

- 9.3.1 The first priority in the event of an evacuation is to evacuate staff and pupils safely and quickly in accordance with the school's evacuation procedure. If there is an animal on site, its evacuation must also be considered within the Evacuation Plans as under the *Animal Welfare Act 2006*, the school remains responsible for its wellbeing.
- 9.3.2 The **Responsible Person** must be consulted about and inform the school Evacuation Plans.
- 9.3.3 School staff must be informed of necessary action to take in an emergency.
- 9.3.4 The **Responsible Person** must ensure means of evacuation are to hand, including pet carriers, leads or muzzles. In the event of a prolonged evacuation, an alternative location for the animal with suitable provision must be established
- 9.3.5 The evacuation of animals should form part of practice drills.

9.4 **Animal behaviour:**

- 9.4.1 Animals are unpredictable. Even those subject to a consistent handling regime can attack. They may be handled too roughly, be scared or unwell.
- 9.4.2 The nature of animals in school should be common knowledge to the staff and pupils of the school. An understanding of the animal will allow children to amend their behaviour in its presence and thereby reduce risk. For example, rodents bite when distressed, so children should be reminded of the need to be quiet and move gently when around them.
- 9.4.3 Staff are expected to encourage and teach children to safely interact with animals.
- 9.4.4 For dogs, a behaviour assessment carried out by a certified clinical animal behaviourist must be undertaken prior to the dog being on the school premises.

9.5 **Injuries:**

- 9.5.1 Any animal injuries sustained to pupils, staff or visitors will be reported to the **Responsible Person** immediately and **must** be recorded on the Trust's H&S management system.
- 9.5.2 All near miss incidents **must** be reported to the **Responsible Person** and recorded on the Trust's H&S management system.

9.6 **Cleaning and Maintenance:**

- 9.6.1 The **Responsible Person** will establish a written cleaning rota to ensure each animal is cleaned and cared for to a specified standard.
- 9.6.2 Cleaning routines and arrangements for the disposal of animal waste will be carried out with due regard for good hygiene standards.
- 9.6.3 Hands will be washed before and after cleaning cages.
- 9.6.4 The **Headteacher** will ensure personal protective equipment, such as plastic gloves, and appropriate cleaning materials, such as a shovel, bucket, stiff brush and disinfectant cleaner, is provided and worn/used. The disinfectant cleaner, as well as any other chemicals purchased, will be checked to ensure that they are not hazardous to the animals or to the members of staff using them.
- 9.6.5 After removing soiled litter material, cages must be scrubbed with an animal friendly disinfectant solution. Solid litter will ideally be incinerated; more conveniently, it could be sealed in strong plastic bags and placed with other waste in dustbins if it cannot be composted. Dog faeces must be disposed in clinical waste.

- 9.6.6 All bedding will be removed and replaced and all droppings will be scraped into the bucket provided. Both the bedding and droppings will be disposed of appropriately.
- 9.6.7 The water and food feeders will be cleaned on a weekly basis to avoid any build-up of green algae which can be harmful to animals.
- 9.6.8 Pregnant staff and anyone with suppressed immunity will exercise particular caution and avoid all contact with animal waste products.

9.7 **Animal Handling:**

9.7.1 The following considerations must be checked in advance of activities in which animals are handled or picked up:

- The animal is used to being handled;
- The animal is not likely to be stressed by excitable children; and
- Where there is a correct way to hold any animal, this is taught to children from the outset.

9.7.2 When handling animals, staff and pupils must:

- Not consume food or drink;
- Cover any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and arms with waterproof adhesive dressings;
- Wash hands with soap and water before and immediately after handling animals; and
- Keep animals away from the face.

9.7.3 Children must be taught by a knowledgeable person the correct way to hold each animal. Handling small animals will always be carried out while the children are sat down.

9.7.4 Mammals will be handled daily if possible (unless breeding or nursing, when they will be disturbed as little as possible). In this way they will normally become quite tame and accustomed to being handled.

9.7.5 Gloves will not 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, which does not particularly reduce dexterity, is a sensible precaution.

9.7.6 The handling of certain animals will be avoided altogether. Those which are nervous, nocturnal or prone to biting or scratching will only be observed and not touched. Other creatures, such as invertebrates, can be too fragile to be handled any more than absolutely necessary.

9.7.7 Animals will be given adequate rest periods away from disturbances.

10. **Resources**

- [Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and Other Childcare Settings](#)
- [Animal Welfare Foundation: Pet Care Advice](#)
- [GOV.UK: Animal Welfare](#)
- [RSPCA: Animal Friendly Schools](#)
- [NASUWT Dogs on School Sites](#)

11. **Monitoring and Review**

11.1 The **Central Operations Manager** will monitor the implementation of the policy and will report to the **Trust Board**.

11.2 The policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required such as following a 'near miss' or other incident.