



Highfields Inclusion Partnership

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Policy Title:	School Pet Policy		
Last Reviewed & Updated:	July 2020	Due for Review:	July 2022

SCHOOL PET POLICY

Introduction

The value of pet ‘therapy’ is widely accepted as a powerful aid to stimulation, communication and self-soothing. Studies have shown that the presence of companion animals can improve the well-being of young people and lower the rate of anxiety, simply by making the environment happier, more enjoyable and less forbidding.

The benefits of school pets are far reaching and can be broken down into the following **individual developmental 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. A school pet can form an important part of ‘Grounding Techniques & Self Soothing for Emotional Regulation’: <https://eddinscounseling.com/grounding-techniques-self-soothing-emotional-regulation/>
- **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.

Pets in school also have **community cohesion benefits**:

- Pets can **enhance the school environment**, creating a sense of family routine and warmth for the students – a school pet provides a positive mutual topic for discussion and focused interaction with others.
- Most students naturally **engage** with animals - school pets can provide an ‘in’ for students who feel disengaged from school.
- **Teaching students to respect and show care** for animals mirrors the attachment/caregiving cycle in human beings. This over time can reinforce and where necessary re-route attachment tendencies.



Key Protocols

It is a requirement of our animals that they are within the following recommended guidelines:

- Any proposal for an animal to be adopted for regular use by the school requires approval by SLT and governors. Factors in making a decision to approve include:
 - General nature of animal proposed – size, temperament, hygiene
 - Level of vulnerability / care needs – ability of staff to take responsibility (including during school holidays), cost of upkeep
 - Student voice
 - Staff voice
 - Ability to rehome if needed
- All animals have a named person responsible for the welfare of all animals in school. This named person will oversee relevant guidance relating to each animal and amend practice in response to changing guidance.
- All pets have a specific risk assessment and ways to reduce the risk will be made explicit.
- All animals should be regularly groomed and checked for signs of infection or other illness.
- Pets that are ill should be diagnosed and treated by a vet and should not be allowed in the school premises until their health is restored.
- All animals should have received relevant inoculations.
- Careful arrangements will be made for weekend and holiday care.
- They will have a high quality and appropriate diet.
- Claws should be kept trimmed to reduce the risk of scratches.
- All pets should have their coats cleaned regularly.
- It will be ensured that each animal enjoys an optimum environment.

If any parents, staff or students object to the animal's presence then arrangements must be made to ensure that they are kept away from them. If necessary, the animals may need exclusion from specific areas.

The named staff have the responsibility to ensure that:

- Animals are physically fit before being in the school environment and have a calm temperament to be suitable for therapy pets.
- There is a responsible adult with the animals at all times when socialising with students.
- The animals are discouraged from scratching and nipping (see risk assessment for further information).
- Other adults in school are confident and are trained how to handle the therapy pets.
- The animals are of an acceptable hygienic standard.

Equal Opportunities.

All young people will be treated equally, regardless of race, creed or gender. The policy will be applied regardless of culture, faith or belief.