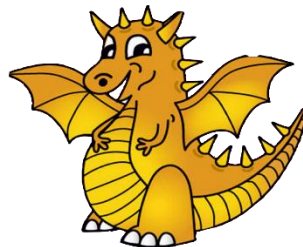




Wessex
Learning Trust
We Learn Together!

Early Years: Animals in the Setting Policy



Date approved by Trust Board: September 2024
Review Date: September 2027

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Wessex Learning Trust
Animals in the Setting Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees every three years.



Signature:

Name: Mr Gavin Ball

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 01/09/2024



Signature:

Name: Mr Paul Jacobs

Position: Chair of the Board

Date: 01/09/2024

1. Introduction

1.1 The Wessex Learning Trust recognises the importance of a broad and stimulating education for the children in its early years settings, and as such acknowledges the potential gains from introducing children to animals either in or out of the setting.

1.2 This policy outlines the procedures necessary for keeping children and staff safe while introducing them to animals and gaining the benefits thereof.

2. Pets

2.1 Before a pet is introduced to an early years setting, the views of parents /carers and children should be considered. Staff such as the pre-school/nursery manager and the Headteacher should also be consulted to ensure the animal is an appropriate addition to the setting. In addition to this a risk assessment should be conducted using the EEC system, considering any hygiene and safety risks posed by the animal, as well as the needs of any children or staff who may suffer from an allergy.

2.2 Only mature and toilet trained pets should be considered and the Headteacher should ensure that a knowledgeable person is responsible for the animal.

2.3 Once an animal has been selected, suitable housing and food must also be procured, and staff trained to be knowledgeable of the pet's welfare and dietary needs – including when the animal should be fed and how to clean and maintain the house. Arrangements must also be put in place to look after the animal at weekends and during holidays. If this is to be done by the family of a child who attends the setting they should be provided with the necessary information and guidance to ensure they look after the animal appropriately.

2.4 Pets in the setting must have up-to-date vaccinations and health measures such as de-worming, as well as being registered at a local vet. The setting may choose to take out appropriate pet health care insurance or other contingencies to pay for veterinary care. Animals should have recommended treatment and immunisations, be regularly groomed (including claws trimmed and checked for signs of infection.)

2.5 Children should be encouraged to engage with the animal and use it as a starting point for learning. Children may handle and pet the animal provided they are taught correct handling techniques and are supervised at all times. Children must also wash their hands after handling the animal and must not come into contact with animal faeces, or soiled bedding.

2.6 Members of staff should wear single use vinyl/latex free gloves when cleaning/handling soiled bedding and set positive examples to the children on how to look after animals.

2.7 Feeding areas should be kept clean and food stored away from human food and safe from vermin.

2.8 It should be noted that snakes and some other reptiles are not suitable pets for the setting due to infection risks.

3. Other Animals

3.1 To enrich children's experience at pre-school, staff may decide to introduce children to animals (for instance cows, or horses) via visits to farms/zoos, or by individuals or parents/carers bringing in animals for a one-off visit. The Trust recognises the benefits of such experiences and encourages settings to organise these opportunities, provided appropriate safety measures are taken.

3.2 For animals visiting the setting, staff should conduct risk assessments with the owners of the animal, taking into account any risks to the children or property, and how these can be mitigated. For instance, how the animal/creature is to be handled, how will the animal be stopped from escaping, what are the risks of the animal kicking/biting/etc., how will the setting deal with 'droppings' left by the animal. The owner should also advise the setting of the protocol for handling/petting the animal, and any specific needs or concerns the staff may need to be aware of. The owner of the animal/creature maintains responsibility for it in the setting. The risk assessment should be conducted using the EEC system.

3.3 Where children are visiting animals on another site – for instance a farm or zoo – the risks of children coming into contact with animals should be assessed as part of the normal risk assessment for the visit and appropriate mitigations put in place. Again, advice should be sought from the owner of the institution as to the potential risks and how they can be managed. Particular care should also be taken when visiting, for instance, working farms to account for the dangers besides the animals, which may exist (for example machinery and moving vehicles). The risk assessment should be conducted using the EEC system.

3.4 In both instances of coming into contact with animals, children should be again guided to wash their hands after handling/petting the animal and must not come into contact with animal faeces, or soiled bedding.

3.5 Parents/Carers are asked not to bring dogs on to site at the start and end of the day. They should remain outside of the school grounds.