



ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ANIMALS IN SCHOOL POLICY

Date of Approval	November 2025
Date of Next Review	November 2028
Review led by	Headteacher
Approved by	Headteacher
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents	Health & Safety policy
Notes	

School Mission Statement

Our Mission statement demonstrates our commitment to inclusion at English Martyrs school:

To accept each individual as they are and to enable them to develop their full potential within a Christ-centred, worshipping community in a spirit of love, happiness and understanding

‘A Learning Community in Christ’

Studies show that encouraging children to take an interest in animals can have a positive effect on them and can be used to improve human and animal welfare. Some of the benefits have been identified as follows:

School animals have been found to:

- motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment of animals
- encourage a respect and reverence for life in pupils and thereby improve their relationships with other pupils, parents and teachers
- foster a sense of responsibility in children teach children to nurture and respect life lead to
- the development of hobbies /careers in animal care improve academic achievement
-
- Animals in schools can also have social benefits for the school community:
- enhance the learning environment, creating a sense of security and family warmth for the children
- encourage the involvement of parents and the wider community in school activity help to
- promote the school as an important nurturing influence in the community

This policy sets out the standards and health & safety considerations that will be put into place in the event of animals being brought into school as a one-off or short term event, up to animals being obtained to be kept at school for the benefit of the children.

It should be noted that other animals should not be brought onto the school premises by parents or staff without the permission of the headteacher. This includes parents bringing their pet dogs (walked or carried) onto school property at the start and end of the school day; we cannot assess how they will react to being around children, and therefore cannot allow them on site in case a child, parent, staff member or volunteer is bitten or otherwise injured. Assistance dogs are an exception to this.

Looking after an animal in school

At English Martyrs Catholic Primary School we aim to promote good practice in animal care. Children are taught correct procedures in handling and caring for animals; they are encouraged to take a shared responsibility for the care of the animals, under supervision. Children will be taught how to interact gently with animals in school whilst under adult supervision.

At English Martyrs Primary School we will:

- abide by the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which places a duty on animal owners to ensure their animal's welfare needs are met. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has produced guidance on this act: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/farmanimalslooking-after-their-welfare>
- ensure that all staff, children, parents and volunteers coming into contact with animals follow careful handwashing routines, washing their hands with soap and warm water

Where animals are kept for a longer period in school (thus becoming 'school animals' rather than 'animals in school' we will:

- Ensure that each animal enjoys an optimum environment, in social groups, if appropriate. We are aware that keeping mixed gender animals can lead to breeding and result in welfare problems.
- Ensure that routine preventative health measures are practised as advised by the vet – vaccination, flea prevention and worm control where appropriate
- Ensure that a high quality, appropriate diet is provided
- Ensure that animals and their quarters are always kept clean and safe
- Ensure that careful arrangements for holiday and weekend care are made.

Handling animals

If animals will be handled, a key consideration is the maintenance of good hygiene. When handling animals, we will ensure that pupils, staff, parents and volunteers:

- 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 their hands with soap and water before and directly after handling animals
- keep animals away from the face
-

Careful handling of small animals and other animals is most important; the animals should be restrained sufficiently so that they cannot damage themselves or the handler.

Gloves will 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 it is a sensible precaution to wear a pair of rubber gloves, which does not particularly reduce dexterity. However, where it is known that an animal is likely to bite or scratch, all adults potentially coming into contact will be made aware and children will not be allowed to handle this animal.

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

For all animals, we will only allow them to be handled by children if they have been socialised and are used to being handled, and only after the children have received instruction upon how to handle the animal safely to reduce the risk of harm to themselves or the animal.

Diseases, parasites and allergies

The likelihood of diseases being passed on from animals is low. However, allergic reactions to mammals, birds and a few other animals 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.

Teachers should watch for the development of allergic reactions in pupils who come into contact with the animals.

Children with allergies specific to animals are identified via the Confidential Admission Form. Children known to have allergic reactions to animals have restricted access to those that may trigger a response. In most cases, an allergic reaction will subside once the animal and the affected person are kept apart; however we will seek medical advice if we are in any doubt.

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.

Most animals available through reputable suppliers present no hazards that good hygiene procedures cannot address.

For there to be minimal risk to humans of diseases being transmitted from animals kept in schools, if English Martyrs Catholic Primary school were to obtain animals for the purpose of keeping them at school, they would be 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.

Animal Health

We ensure that school pets are kept in scrupulously clean conditions and steps are taken to ensure that they do not come into contact with other animals from dubious sources. If this were to happen it will no longer be possible to guarantee that the animals will remain in a disease-free condition.

During weekends and holiday times, a decision will be made whether it is in the animal's best interest to remain at school or to go to an appropriate home. If animals are taken off-site that the Government 'Welfare of Animals During Transport' (2024) guidance should be followed:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-welfare-in-transport>

The following criteria must also be satisfied when a school animal is taken off site to be cared for elsewhere:

- It can be guaranteed that the animals will be looked after as well as usual.
- Training is provided for whoever is caring for the animals. We ensure that those caring for the animal have all the necessary information, equipment, food, skills, etc.
- Steps are taken to ensure that the school's animals will not be able to come into contact with pet animals (cats, dogs, rodents or other mammals).

Should a school animal fall ill whilst off site during a weekend or school holiday, or if the carer has concerns, then the first point of contact is headteacher. Other points of contact are the other members of the school senior leadership team.

Occasionally there may be a request that animals are brought in as a special 'Show and Tell' or as part of an educational workshop. In these instances, the Headteacher will need to approve the visit or workshop following the completion of a risk assessment by the class teacher. Any necessary precautions will need to be put in place by the class teacher and or owner of the pet to ensure the safety of the children and staff.